

Influence of Organizational Learning on the Quality of Work of Employees in Selected Ghanaian Organizations

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ABSTRACT: The study sought to examine organizational learning in relation to employees' quality of work life (QWL). The study sought to find out the influence of organizational learning on the quality of work life among employees in Ghanaian organizations. The design of the study was approached quantitatively where 234 respondents were successfully selected using the stratified and convenience sampling technique. A questionnaire measuring learning opportunity and quality of work life were administered to the respondents. Data was analyzed using Pearson Product-Moment correlation coefficient and standard multiple regression analysis. Interview guide was developed based on the outcome of the study for further probing. A significant positive relationship was observed between the variables. Organizational learning was found to have a significant positive relationship with employees' QWL. Learning at the organizational level was found to predict a significant portion of the variance in QWL that at the individual and team level. The outcome of the study was discussed and recommendations made accordingly.

Keywords: Organizational Learning, Employee work life quality

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I. INTRODUCTION

In order to adapt to the global changes 'hitting' organizations from different angles across the globe, organizations must embrace and also create opportunity for learning and flexible environment where employees can bring on board novel ideas toward better performance. Learning has been found to correlate with employees' QWL. Fonseca and Verma (2001) conducted a study and found that increasing workplace demands such as learning, even though necessary for achieving competitiveness, are not contributing to the QWL of employees. According to them, when learning demands are increased in the organization, it tends to have a negative impact on the perception of work life balance which in turn affects the psychological wellbeing of employees, hence their QWL. Again, studies have found that it is essential that work environments support ongoing learning and continuous development, as well as the utilization of employees' knowledge. This expands their thinking beyond training programs to consider how skills and knowledge are continuously renewed on the job, what is often termed as a "learning based work environment". Such an environment enables the use of skills, knowledge, and abilities; ability to take initiatives and learning of new ways to do one's job better" (Graham, 2006; Chenoweth, Jeon, Goff & Burke, 2006; Korst, Eusebio-Augeja, Chamorra, Aydin & Gregory, 2003), thereby enhancing employees' wellbeing and QWL.

Furthermore Yeo and Li (2012) posited that employees' perception of QWL has the potential to impact their learning orientation simply because they can rely on learning to help them seek new opportunities to improve their overall job satisfaction which in turn affects their life outside of work. Therefore, giving the opportunity and support, employees, are more likely to be more open to learning and training opportunities as it enhances their ability to take up new and challenging opportunities. Darafs (2012) on the other hand conducted a comparative study and found that there is a significant relationship between application of learning organization components and QWL, however, he found that the strength of relationship was different between the two populations (India and Iran) he studied. This implies that QWL is perceived differently in different context and situations. The present study would be conducted in the Ghanaian context. The rationale is to expand and bridge the knowledge gap in this area. Review of literature reveals an inconsistency in the relationship between learning and employees' QWL. The current study therefore contributes to literature by probing further into the relationship between organizational learning and employees' QWL whiles looking at organizational learning at the individual, team and organizational level.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Observe-Assess-Design-Implement-Cycle

Learning is undoubtedly a core concept of human resource development which focuses on various techniques for developing employees of an organization that are knowledge management, learning organizations, training and development, management development and others. Organizational learning has been defined by Miller (1996) as the knowledge acquisition made by actors (individual and groups) when it can and are available to apply it in decision making process, or use to influence others within the organization. Kim (1993) presented the “Observe-Assess-Design-Implement-Cycle” for the individual learning. This cycle, he believed, is helpful for the individuals to concrete new experiences with the help of observing and learning. Although individual learn through various mechanisms and initiate self-learning at diverse stages of professional life, yet this individual learning is ineffectual for an organization unless it is not been transformed in “institutionalization” which transforms individual learning into organizational learning. He further stressed that an individual initiate self-learning (intuition) and finds his own meaning of real world (interpretation), then share these mental models in teams of individuals and integrates ideas to reach on mutual consensus (integration). This team learning leads to organizational learning when team mental models are being institutionalized in an organization. It shows that foremost and imperative process is of team learning which proves to be a bridge between individual and organizational learning. Teams are the building blocks of an organization, which manage knowledge of human capital and accelerate organizational development. As Fauske and Raybould (2005) pointed out that basic essence of organizational learning lies in team learning, companies with hyper growth rate need to address team learning at every stage so that organizational learning can be achieved.

The theory is, learning in the organization is in a cyclical form, beginning from the individual level where individuals are given the opportunity to acquire new knowledge, then to the team level, where acquired knowledge is shared among the members, and then to the organizational level, where new knowledge acquired is transferred or institutionalized in the organization. In view of this, it is theorized that merely acquiring knowledge, and or sharing of acquired knowledge among members, do not adequately boost employees satisfaction or wellbeing, unless there is an opportunity to transfer and see the effect of the acquired knowledge on the organization’s growth and development. Therefore, learning at the organizational level is imperative if organizations seek to harness the QWL of their employees.

Learning and quality of work life

In order to adapt to the global changes ‘hitting’ organizations from different angles across the globe, organizations must embrace and also create opportunity for learning and flexible environment where employees can bring on board novel ideas toward better performance. Learning has been found to correlate with employees’ QWL. Fonseca and Verma (2001) conducted a study and found that increasing workplace demands such as learning, even though necessary for achieving competitiveness, are not contributing to the QWL of employees. According to them, when learning demands are increased in the organization, it tends to have a negative impact on the perception of work life balance which in turn affects the psychological wellbeing of employees, hence their QWL. Again, studies have found that it is essential that work environments support ongoing learning and continuous development, as well as the utilization of employees’ knowledge. This expands their thinking beyond training programs to consider how skills and knowledge are continuously renewed on the job, what is often termed as a “learning based work environment”. Such an environment enables the use of skills, knowledge, and abilities; ability to take initiatives and learning of new ways to do one’s job better” (Graham, 2006; Chenoweth, Jeon, Goff & Burke, 2006; Korst, Eusebio-Augeja, Chamorra, Aydin & Gregory, 2003), thereby enhancing employees’ wellbeing and QWL.

Furthermore Yeo and Li (2012) posited that employees’ perception of QWL has the potential to impact their learning orientation simply because they can rely on learning to help them seek new opportunities to improve their overall job satisfaction which in turn affects their life outside of work. Therefore, giving the opportunity and support, employees, are more likely to be more open to learning and training opportunities as it enhances their ability to take up new and challenging opportunities. Darafs (2012) on the other hand conducted a comparative study and found that there is a significant relationship between application of learning organization components and QWL, however, he found that the strength of relationship was different between the two populations (India and Iran) he studied. This implies that QWL is perceived differently in different context and situations. The present study would be conducted in the Ghanaian context. The rational is to expand and bridge the knowledge gap in this area. Review of literature reveals an inconsistency in the relationship between learning and employees’ QWL.

This study contributes to the literature by investigating more into the relationship between learning and employees' QWL, assessing organizational learning at the individual, team and organizational level. The following hypothesis is therefore proposed:

H1: There will be a significant positive relationship between learning and employees' QWL.

Kim (1993) while explaining his Observe-Assess-Design-Implement-Cycle model, indicated that individual learning and team learning have a positive effect on organizational learning. According to him, individuals and teams bring on board their acquired knowledge and experiences to their job which leads to organizational improvement. For example, individuals tend to share, support and exchange their ideas, knowledge, opinions, experiences and others with other members of their team when performing their task in the organization. In view of this, Barker and Neailey (1999) indicated that team learning occur where sharing of knowledge among individuals leads to an expansion and improvement of the team members knowledge base and overall effectiveness in future problem solving and decision making. Furthermore Edmondson (2002) asserted that organizational learning on the other hand occur when opportunity is made available for new found or acquired knowledge to be transferred to other sections of the organization. This he believed could be achieved through cross-functional team learning or inter-departmental learning. Furthermore, using a structural equation model to analyse a total of 200 cases, collected from 50 different Small and medium size enterprises, Song, Jeung and Cho (2011) found that individual learning process has a significant impact on team or group learning process, which in turn influences the overall organizational process sequentially. Since the study seeks to investigate learning at the individual, team and organizational level, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H2: Learning at the organizational level will predict a significant portion of the variance in employees' QWL more than at the team and individual level.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study employed the quantitative study to assess the relationship between organizational learning and quality of employee work life within selected Ghanaian organizations. The target population was all banking staff in Ghana Commercial Bank Limited, high street branch, lecturers at University of Cape Coast, department of psychology, nurses in University of Cape Coast hospital, customer service and marketing staff at Vodafone Ghana and Ghana Post Office and all staff in Global Brigade Non-Governmental Organization. Using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) formulae, the study focused on a sample size of 255 who were selected using the stratified and balloting sampling procedure. The stratified sampling procedure was used to group organizations in Ghana into health, financial, education, telecommunication and non-governmental organization. The balloting technique was then used to select the organization for the study. Sample was selected using convenient sampling procedure. Individuals in the selected organization which met the inclusion criteria (for example, been a staff of the organization) and those who were willing to be part of the study were sampled for the study. However, a total of 234 questionnaires were answered and returned.

IV. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Table 1: Pearson-Product Moment Correlation among the Variables in the study (N=234).

VARIABLES	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. QWL						
2. Learning	0.87**	0.77**				
3. Work Demands	0.64**	0.53**	0.71**			
4. Stress Risk	0.57**	0.59**	0.63**	0.71**		
5. Type of work	-0.54**	-0.51**	-0.55**	-0.53**	-0.76**	
6. Gender	-0.17*	-0.16*	-0.12*	-0.08 ^{ns}	-0.06 ^{ns}	0.01 ^{ns}

Statistical significance: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, ^{ns}=Not Significant

The results from table 1 indicated that all the variables (independent and moderators) significantly correlated with the criterion variable. The descriptors developed by Davis (1971) were used to interpret the magnitude of the relationship between the variables. The indicators are as follow:

- 0.70 or higher = very strong association
- 0.50 - 0.69 = substantial association
- 0.30 - 0.49 = moderate association
- 0.10 - 0.29 = low association
- 0.01 - 0.09 = negligible association.

Partial correlation showed a significant relationship between learning and QWL ($r=0.75$) and creativity and QWL (0.55). According to Kenny (2009), for a moderation effect to occur, a significant relationship between the predictor variable and the criterion variable must be established.

Hypothesis 1 explored the relationship between learning and employees' QWL. The hypothesis was stated as "there will be a significant positive relationship between learning and employees' QWL. Results of a Pearson product moment correlation coefficient, indicated that (from table 3) a significant positive relationship exist between learning and QWL ($r =0.87, n =234, p< 0.01$). This implies that where learning opportunities are made available and supported, QWL of employees is harnessed. Therefore the hypothesis that "there will be a significant positive relationship between learning and employees' QWL" was supported.

Hypothesis 2 stated that learning at the organizational level (OL) will predict a higher QWL of employees than at the team (TL) and individual level (IL). This hypothesis was tested using the standard multiple regression analysis. The result is presented in tables 2 and 3 below;

Table 2: Summary table of the Pearson-Product Moment Correlation among Variables (N=234).

Variables	QWL	IL	TL	OL
QWL		0.84*	0.82*	0.84*
IL			0.89*	0.88*
TL				0.89*
OL				

Statistical significance: $p < 0.05$

Table 3: Summary of a Standard Multiple Regression Model for the Predictive Ability of Creativity on QWL

Variables	B	SEB	Beta	t	P	F
Constant	35.12	2.94		11.94	0.00	241.61*
IL	0.99	0.20	0.39	4.89	0.00	
TL	0.54	0.38	0.12	1.42	0.16	
OL	0.53	0.10	0.40	5.11	0.00	

$R = 0.87; R^2 = 0.76; Adjusted R^2 = 0.76; p < 0.05$ *significant at $p < 0.05$

Table 1 revealed the correlations of the predictor variables in relation to the criterion variable (QWL). It could be observed that all the predictor variables significantly correlated with the criterion variable. Tables 3 depicted a standard multiple regression analysis conducted to investigate the best predictor of QWL with regards to learning at the individual, team and organizational level. The model was statistically significant ($F(3, 230) = 241.61, p < 0.05$). It could be observed from the table that individual learning and organizational learning significantly predicted QWL when all three variables were included (beta=0.39 and 0.40 respectively; $p < 0.05$). However, organizational learning predicted QWL (beta=0.40; $p = 0.00$) more than individual and team learning. The adjusted R^2 value was 0.76%. This indicates that 76% of the variance in QWL was explained by the model. According to Cohen (1988) this is a large effect. The prediction that learning at the organizational level will predict employees QWL more than at the team and individual level was supported by the data.

V. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Relationship between learning and employees' QWL.

The next hypothesis which examined the relationship between learning and employees' QWL predicted that there will be a significant positive relationship between learning and employees' QWL. This assertion was supported by the data. This implies that employees will perceive an improved QWL in a work environment where opportunities to acquire and transfer new knowledge is supported and encouraged. In contrast to this outcome, Fonseca and Verma (2001) in their study found that increasing workplace demands, focusing on learning, even though necessary for achieving competitiveness, are not contributing to the QWL of employees. According to them, when learning demands are increased in the organization, it tends to have a negative impact on the perception of work life balance which in turn affects the psychological wellbeing of employees, hence their QWL. Learning however has a great number of relevance to employees which I

personally hold strongly that Fonseca and Verma (2001) might have overlooked. For instance, some of the importance of learning has been confirmed by studies to improve employees' QWL. For instance learning increases job satisfaction and morale among employees, employee motivation, increased efficiency and effectiveness, increased capacity to adopt new technologies and methods, adapt effectively to change, increased innovation in strategies and products, reduced employee turnover, enhanced company image. It also helps optimize the development of human resource that helps the employee to achieve the individual as well as organizational goals (Benson, 2006). Furthermore, where learning is encouraged, it increases the job skills and knowledge of employees at all levels and expands the horizons of their intellect and their personality, helps in indicating the sense of team work, team spirit, and inter team collaborations, aids the employees to be more effective in decision making and problem solving, develop leadership skills, better attitudes, and other aspects that successful workers usually display (Price 2007; Bratton & Gold, 2003, Armstrong and Foley, 2003). Majority of these outcomes as have been mentioned earlier, have been confirmed by studies to improve employees QWL. For instance conducting a survey to determine the nature and construct of QWL, the European Foundation for improvement of living and working condition (EWON) (2002) identified dimensions such as job security, job satisfaction, competence development and others. Lokanadha and Mohan (2010) also found other dimensions such as job security, job satisfaction, competence development and others. Walton's eight (8) categories of QWL included immediate opportunity to use and develop human capacity, opportunity for continuous growth and security, social integration in the work organization, constitutionalism in the work place and social relevance of work life. The outcome was however, in agreement of Darafs (2012) study, conducting a comparative study and using Pearson correlation coefficient, he found that a significant positive relationship exist between learning and QWL. Furthermore Yeo and Li (2012) posited that employees' perception of QWL has the potential to impact their learning orientation simply because they can rely on learning to help them seek new opportunities to improve their overall job satisfaction which in turn affects their life outside of work. Therefore, giving the opportunity and support, employees, are more likely to be more open to learning and training opportunities as it enhances their ability to take up new and challenging opportunities. Learning therefore equip employees to face and meet change as it occurs, this in a way assures them of their job security knowing they are not rendered obsolete.

Learning at the organizational level will predict a significant portion of the variance in QWL of employees than at the team and individual level.

It was hypothesized that learning at the organizational level will predict a significant portion of the variance in QWL than at the team and individual level. This assertion was accordingly supported by the data. This result implies that where employees perceived learning opportunities at the organizational level, they are more likely to perceive QWL than at the individual and team level. Although literature is very scarce in this field, several studies have found a significant effect of organizational learning on job satisfaction, and indicator of QWL (Lokanadha & Mohan, 2010). For instance conducting a study on organizational learning culture's influence on job satisfaction, organizational commitment and turnover intentions, Hsu (2009) found a positive effect of organizational learning and job satisfaction. Also, Tsai, Yen, Huang, and Huang (2007) asserted that workplace learning promotes a high level of job satisfaction among employees, when conducting their study on motivating employees' learning commitment. Furthermore, while working on the role of organizational learning on emotional intelligence and job satisfaction, Chiva and Alegre (2008) posited that where there is a stimulating context, organizational learning develops employees' competencies and their job satisfaction. Chang and Lee (2007) on the other hand, focusing on sample of employees from the financial, insurance, manufacturing and service industries, found a positive relationship between organizational learning and job satisfaction.

This can be explained from Kim's (1993) assertion. According to him, individual learning and team learning have a positive effect on organizational learning. He continued to explain that individuals and teams bring on board their acquired knowledge and experiences to their job which leads to organizational improvement. For example, individuals tend to share, support and exchange their ideas, knowledge, opinions, experiences and others with other members of their team when performing their task in the organization. In view of this, Barker and Neailey (1999) indicated that team learning occur where sharing of knowledge among individuals leads to an expansion and improvement of the team members knowledge base and overall effectiveness in future problem solving and decision making. In addition, Edmondson (2002) asserted that organizational learning on the other hand occur when opportunity is made available for new found or acquired knowledge to be transferred to other sections of the organization. This he believed could be achieved through cross-functional team learning or inter-departmental learning.

Furthermore, using a structural equation model to analyses a total of 200 cases, collected from

50 different Small and medium size enterprises, Song, Jeung and Cho (2011) found that individual learning process has a significant impact on team or group learning process, which in turn influences the overall organizational process sequentially. From this perspective, it can be argued that learning at the individual and team level is embedded in organizational level learning. The two interplay in a sequential manner to affect organizational learning. Hence individual learning and team learning in themselves cannot affect organizational learning. For instance Wang and Ahmed (2003) indicated that individual learning itself does not guarantee organizational learning, unless a transference process of knowledge among people with the purpose of institutionalization occurs.

According to Marsick and Watkins (1994), organizational learning was developed based on the prediction that organizations can learn. Although organization in itself has no brains to enable it learn, it possess cognitive systems and memories, inherent in it members (employees). Organizations therefore learn through the opportunities given to employees to transfer acquired knowledge to problem solving and decision making in the organization or making use of the knowledge new employees bring on board the organisation which the organisation previously did not have. In view of this, Hodgkinson (2000) defined organizational learning as coming together of individuals to enable them support and encourage one another's learning which will in the longer term be of benefit to the organization (p.157). The result was however in contrast with the outcome of the interview conducted. All the organizations interviewed, indicated that they provide learning at the individual, group and organizational level. It was however, observed that most of the employees preferred individual level learning to organizational and team level learning. An interview with about ten (10) employees revealed that those who preferred individual level learning indicated that it builds them up and gives them a sense of authority over their work, and a sense of security in this era of change. Those who preferred organizational level learning indicated that although they prefer learning at the individual level, they feel no use of it if they are not allowed to transfer what they learn to their job. One lady made the following statement: *"I like to develop myself a lot, but tell me, what is the essence of it all if after all the knowledge I acquire, I am not given the opportunity to employ them to my job. I will feel much better if I am given the opportunity to transfer the knowledge I have acquired from the numerous trainings, seminars, lectures, schools organized, etc. to my job. At least in that way I will feel my effort is not wasted but rather helpful to the organization."*

VI. RECOMMENDATION

Organizations are entreated to provide and create a conducive atmosphere of learning and creativity, and also provide a room for employees to make use of these opportunities in solving problems and making decisions about the task they perform. Other socio-demographic variables such as, age, educational level, total years of working experience, occupational category, work practices and years of operations were not considered in the analysis. It is, therefore, suggested that these personal and professional factors should be taken into account as other antecedents of QWL of employees.

VII. CONCLUSION

In order to adapt to the global changes 'hitting' organizations from different angles across the globe, organizations must embrace and also create opportunity for learning and flexible environment where employees can bring on board novel ideas toward better performance. Employees' QWL experiences are limited not only to them, but are also a matter of concern for the employers as well. In order to survive and keep up in today's competitive world of work, organizations need high quality personnel instead of merely capital, technology or long-lived products. In fact, employees are the soft assets and the hidden value of a company (Abdeen, 2002). Hence, if organizations are concerned about developing their human resources and gaining a competitive advantage in the marketplace, it deems necessary that they attend to one of their most precious assets, namely, human resources, by employing high-quality working-life experiences in consonance their various needs eliciting favorable job-related responses in return.

In sum, in the 21st century era, there is no doubt that sometimes genuine innovation and creativity is needed to solve problems and satisfy stakeholders. In most organizational settings, leaders are expected to be able to think creatively and come up with innovative solutions to work-based problems. And they often do. But encouraging and supporting work place learning as well as fostering and harnessing the creative abilities of every employee is likely to produce an even richer selection of essential and efficient knowledge and creative ideas and solutions to work tasks and problems. This is because diverse group members collectively possess knowledge and a variety of perspectives not found in just one person. The selected working condition factors (creativity and learning) show that to some extent, they have influence on QWL. Organizational learning and employees' creativity are the significant predictors of QWL. Therefore, if these components of work environment are ignored by the management, they would have substantial impact on the QWL of their staff and hence the organization as a whole.

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