CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

6.1 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The general viewpoint is that the culture in education institutions (HEIs) is full of examples of competitive ratings and rankings, acceptances and rejections, and authoritarian and hierarchical structures in the departmental, school, and university-wide environment (White & Weathersby 2005). Generally, organizational learning for knowledge performance is perceived as a strategic phenomenon by many contemporary thinkers (Garvin 1993; Senge 1992). They have argued that the concept of ‘the learning organization’ as purposeful learning for competitive advantage. However, the model in this study emphasized that learning at the strategic level is due to the result of learning at the operational level. In higher education institutions, where strategies often evolve out of traces from past learning processes, this model for knowledge performance can be seen as a process of organizational evolution. An evolutionary process happens as an incremental process based on the past experiences in which the organizational past can be seen as imposing itself on the present through retention of organizational experience in organizational knowledge (Levitt & March 1988; Huysman 1996). Further, university performance is also being scrutinized by students and parents, who want to know that they are getting value for their investment. Therefore, understanding the perceptions of the stakeholders in an institution can help the management to design and implement its learning strategies for improved performance. Thus, the knowledge performance model of this study captured
the learning culture at three levels viz. individual, group/team, and organizational level. This is because whenever organizational learning is treated as an individual phenomenon, it considers the learning to happen for individuals in the organization. But at the other end of the continuum, learning is considered as an aggregate of individual learning that can be regarded as social process that arise out of human relationships and human association. Thus, the important implication from this study is for the management to go beyond mere theoretical explanations such as adaptation to environmental changes and consider triggers to learning at all levels which influence the actual process of learning. This would help the university leaders to gain visibility into the perceptions of its stakeholders on the institutional factors through its activities, efforts, and results that would support the university’s strategic plans.

Some of the implications of this study for the management to foster a performance-driven culture that includes research and innovation in the institutions of higher education in a self-sustaining manner are as follows:

- It is imperative to create a suitable creative work climate for better knowledge performance in HEIs.

- It is necessary to enable and encourage learning by providing systems that supports continuous learning, team work, and communication.

- It is seen that knowledge management practices such as knowledge creation, knowledge sharing, information storage and retrieval play an important role in the institutional performance of HEIs.

- It is necessary to provide systems that support the knowledge workers with timely, relevant information and data that would support their work process.
Although there are several models for rating universities, the knowledge performance model developed in this present study was based on the learning organization concept. This was because the literature review showed that the learning organization models received more focus from consultants and practitioners, whereas organizational learning models received more focus from researchers (Örtenbald 2001, 2004). Therefore, it can be implied that this study can be more valuable for practitioners in the field of education. Further, this study considered organizational knowledge creation was influenced by the feedback learning. This feedback learning was due to various underlying dynamics which may in fact complicate the learning process. For example, the instrument in this study collected the perception of the respondents based on the performance of their institutions for the past one year. The respondents associated with longer duration in the institution find better institutional knowledge performance. Therefore, the universities employing this model must take care to translate the feedback information it receives from its stakeholders in the way it is intended and also try to include as many variables that is required to give a better perspective to understand the requirements of its stakeholders.

As pointed out by Dirani (2006) that HRD, as a field of practice, focuses on unleashing the resources that the humans bring to the success of individuals and the institution (Swanson & Holton 2001). The implication of this study is that it is imperative for universities to concentrate on human resource development (HRD) initiatives that demand a new view of leadership to support learning (Senge 1990b). This calls for new managerial roles for department heads and deans of colleges and universities to devise strategies that promote well-defined learning organization characteristics for better institutional performance. Therefore it is crucial that university leaders are equipped with tools to discover, analyze and share data and information to create knowledge to a performance-driven culture in their institutions. The model in this study enables the administrators, decision makers, government,
and other funding agencies of higher education to make data-driven decisions that can improve performance and competitiveness, and which in turn leads to document improvement for funding and accreditation sources. Further, faculty in these institutions can use this study for academic advising, retention improvement, and institutional assessment purposes. It is also accepted that the higher education leaders are in a “catch-22” situation where they are being asked by the policymakers to improve academic aspects of institutional performance, yet they emphasize to hold the line on tuition increases. Although analyzing the effect of technology and infrastructure on the institutional performance was beyond the scope of this study, the researcher found during data collection that a surprising number of colleges and universities continue to struggle with the baseline technology and the information infrastructure. Hence, this implicates that the respondents would have rated the creative climate and knowledge creation practices in those institutions as low. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze the findings of this model at all levels to understand the areas where the performance and efficiency of the institutions need to be improved upon. This gives valuable information to the administrators and other stakeholders of these institutions.

With the impending Foreign Education Providers Bill to permit foreign universities to set up campuses in India, the educational sector as a whole is challenged with heavy competition. The above findings suggested that successful application of learning organization strategies and standardized measures can help Indian HEIs to explore ways to modernize their knowledge to achieve sustainable competitive advantage. As rightly pointed out by Dixon (1994) who argued that accumulated knowledge is of less significance than the processes needed to continuously revise or create knowledge, HEIs can use this study to identify, implement and institutionalize continuous improvements. The study also found an efficiency and ranking mechanism that can supplement the existing systems used in the evaluation of HEIs. This can be utilized in introducing norm-based funding based on
competitive grants and performance contracts in state universities and their affiliated colleges. Further, it should be noted that effective implementation of this model appears to hold considerable promise for developing professional learning communities which has become a ‘hot topic’ in many countries (Stoll et al 2006). To conclude, it is found that by using the findings of this study the administrators can adopt positive changes in the internal environment of their respective institutions for improving the institutional performance with respect to its knowledge outcomes.

6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Based on the findings from this research, there are several recommendations for further study.

First, several studies indicated that performance of higher education institutions is contingent on several different individual variables, such as commitment, motivation, knowledge, skills, and creativity. An interesting direction for future study might be to assess the extent to which these individual variables might interact with the knowledge performance model of this study. For instance, it is possible that a leader with high commitment or leadership skill may influence the learning culture and practices. In this present study, the focus was predominantly on the organizational factors and not on the individual factors. It is suggested that future research address the individual factors that might contribute to the organizational learning culture, climate, and practices for improved organizational performance.

Second, it is suggested to compare the efficiency of HEIs in different countries based on the model presented in this study. For instance, Agasisti & Wolszczak-Derlacz (2014) have compared the efficiency in a cross-country perspective. Hence, future studies can work on comparative studies between the HEIs in different states or between the countries. This
will help in benchmarking the HEIs and improve the institutions that are underperforming.

Third, it is suggested to examine if there are any differences in the outcomes of the model due to training and development interventions that could modify perceptions and behaviours of the respondents over time. This could provide a valuable insight for measuring the outcomes of the teaching and learning initiatives in HEIs.

Lastly, it is recommended that future research examine the validity of this model in other institutions of higher education besides the sample universities of this study. In fact, it is highly recommended to test this model in various other sectors too.

6.3 CONCLUSION

Higher education institutions (HEIs) have gained a significant prominence during the past few decades in India with the entry of private institutions both Indian and foreign. Government, taxpayers, and funding agencies want to see a measurable return on their investment in higher education. Therefore, it is imperative to understand the institutional characteristics that would improve the performance and efficiency of universities and colleges. Generally, the concept of organizational learning has often been approached as a two-sided phenomenon viz., single loop learning or double loop learning (Argyris & Schön 1978), lower level learning or higher level of learning (Fiol & Lyles 1985), adaptive learning or generative learning (Senge 1990). In contrast, this study identified various other factors in organizational learning that would lead to better performance in terms of organizational knowledge outcomes. First, creative climate is considered both as an antecedent to learning organization culture and also as a moderating factor in the hypothesized model. Second, the knowledge creation practices were analyzed to determine how the institutions of higher education
create or manage knowledge dispersed within the institution. Further, it was found that these practices mediated the hypothesized model. Thus, the SEM model generated through this study known as ‘Knowledge Performance Model’ implied that organizational learning can manifest itself differently and there is no ‘one best way’ of learning. Additionally, this research study employed non-parametric approach called Data Envelopment Analysis (DEA) to analyze the complex nature of involving the respondent’s perceptions associated with their institutional knowledge performance. The study found the efficiency and ranking of the sample universities and this methodology can be useful for the accreditation agencies and other governing bodies in higher education.

To conclude, this study revealed that when it comes to the performance of HEIs, the structural and cultural dimensions of the learning organization approach play a vital role in transforming the institutional structure into an organic one. Generally, an organic organizational structure adapts itself to the changing demands of the environment and this is seen as the need of the hour for HEIs. Thus, the model in this study fits the assumptions held by the practitioners that institutional interventions must focus on open communications, creativity and innovation, team learning and building learning networks to promote continuous learning. In a nutshell, the results of this study encourage the application of organizational theory in higher educational settings for improving institutional performance. Further, this study conducted in the Indian HEIs context evinced findings as in previous studies despite the differences in national and cultural settings. Thus, this research work is expected to bridge the gap in quantitative research which considers universities as learning organizations since most of the previous studies rely heavily on qualitative methods (Tosey & Smith 1999; Lopez et al 2005; Kiedrowski 2006).