CHAPTER – VII
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

→ INTRODUCTION
→ MAJOR FINDINGS
→ IMPLICATIONS
→ DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH
→ CONCLUSION
INTRODUCTION

The central purpose of this study was to measure and assess the employees’ perceptions of learning culture, learning environment and the extent of realisation of individual learning outcomes on the one hand and to understand the nature of relationship among learning culture, learning environment and learning outcomes in organisations on the other. Furthermore, the key determinants of the impact of learning culture and learning environment on learning outcomes have been identified and discussed based on the findings of this qualitative–empirical study.

The results and discussions of this study were based on organisational characteristics and cultural setting of 10 case study organisations in Karnataka, and 334 perceptual responses of employees (managers and non-managers) from the above case study organisations in respect of learning culture, learning environment and learning outcomes. Besides descriptive statistics (Mean and Standard Deviation), the researcher employed relevant and more rigorous statistical tools and techniques such as analysis of variance (ANOVA), multiple correlations and hierarchical regression analysis to confirm the possibility of any variations between the perceptions of managers and non-managers; perceptual differences across organisations; relationship (magnitude and direction) among learning culture, learning environment and learning outcomes as perceived and reported by the respondents; and the major factors influencing the impact of learning culture and learning environment (individually and collectively) on the learning outcomes.
MAJOR FINDINGS:

The key findings of this multiple case study research along with diagnostic evaluation of employee perceptions pertaining to the presence of positive learning culture, sound learning environment and intended individual learning outcomes are briefly highlighted in the following section.

(1) Out of 44 organisations short-listed (based on research criteria) from the database of Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) Directory, 2004 and Greater Bangalore Chamber of Industry (GBCI) Directory, 2004, only 10 organisations in Karnataka permitted the researcher to conduct detailed case study investigations pertaining to the current theme of research. They were: Indian Telephone Industries Limited (Public: manufacturing), Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (Public: service), Hindusthan Machine Tools Limited (Public: manufacturing), Syndicate Bank (Public: service), Auma India Limited (MNC: manufacturing), Kaytee Switchgear Private Limited (Private: manufacturing), Precision Sheet Metal Works Private Limited (Private: manufacturing), SKF India Limited (MNC: manufacturing), Suprajit Engineering Limited (Private: manufacturing), Wipro Limited-Consumer Care (Private: manufacturing)

(2) Profile of the 334 respondents indicated that 67 per cent belonged to the age-group of 30-50 years (mean age: managers – 43.6 years, non-managers – 39.1 years); 81.7 per cent were male members; 86.5 per cent were either graduates or post-graduates with or without professional/technical qualifications; 86.5 per cent were married; 50.5 per cent of the managers were in the cadre of Junior Managers,
34.7 per cent middle-level and 14.8 per cent were senior managers; 53 per cent of the non-managers belonged to the highly skilled category while 38 per cent were semi-skilled with varying position tenure (mean: managers – 8.6 years, non-managers – 13.4 years) and organisation tenure (mean: managers – 17.4 years, non-managers – 14.8 years).

(3) Cross-case analysis revealed that each organisation had a unique "learning profile" and the perceptual responses of employees in respect of learning culture, learning environment and learning outcomes significantly differed from organisation to organisation (RQ–1 & H₁).

It is worth noting that Suprajit Engineering Limited purposefully adopted innovative learning mechanisms accommodated by positive learning culture and environment such as knowledge circles, kaizen, meet the learner, meet the leader, and collaborate to compete. The cycle of continuous learning and development is strengthened through supportive management practices such as selection decisions based on 'learnability' of the candidates, tailor-made recognition and reward policies, widespread use of information technology, adaptive and flexible organisational structure, more egalitarian culture, and visionary leadership of the top management. These institutionalised structural and procedural arrangements allowed this organisation to systematically collect, analyse, store, disseminate, and use information that is relevant to the performance of the organisation and its members. These observations bear sufficient
testimony to suggest that this organisation is totally committed to change, innovation and continuous improvement.

On the contrary, a weak or negative learning culture tends to create unintended barriers to the learning process resulting in poor individual, team and organisational effectiveness. Employees lack a proper understanding of the mission, vision and values of the organisation; lack opportunities to apply new knowledge and skills; mistakes are unacceptable and organisation assigns people to positions they can perform without error; staff engage in ritualistic learning without a sense of purpose, pride, direction, and commitment; situational constraints impeding learning and performance are conveniently ignored; supervisors and co-workers discourage the generation and implementation of new ideas; and the organisation lacks cohesive policies and practices to maximise the effectiveness of training and development in the organisation. In this study, KSRTC reflected several learning disabilities contributed by its negative learning culture and unfavourable learning environment. Eventhough, KSRTC is decentralised, its bureaucratic structure reinforced past behaviours and certain deep-rooted assumptions and norms within this organisation only promoted a culture of complacency. Moreover, a clear mismatch was evident between its unsuccessful learning mechanisms (suggestion schemes and quality circles) and its work environment. This suggests that organisations need to learn and change their mental maps and administrative processes in order to successfully implement new learning programmes. It is only through the exercise of transformational leadership that barriers embedded in
the culture and structure of an organisation can be overcome (Hamlin et al., 2000).

(4) Based on the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), “category” of the employees (Managers Vs Non-managers) did not seem to influence their perception of learning culture, learning environment and learning outcomes in the case study organisations (RQ–2 & H₂).

(5) The bivariate correlations between learning culture and learning environment were in the anticipated direction and significantly correlated. Hence, perceptual responses in respect of learning culture and learning environment were positively correlated with mutually reinforcing power (RQ–3 & H₃).

(6) The hierarchical regression analysis ascertained whether the learning culture or learning environment or the interaction between the two added significant increments in explained variance on particular ‘individual learning outcomes’ and the variables accounted for these increments. Not surprisingly, ‘learning culture’ influenced the ‘learning environment’, and the ‘collective influence’ (interaction between the two) of both had greater impact on the ‘learning outcomes’ of the individuals in the case study organisations (RQ–4 & H₄).
Table – 7.1: Testing of Hypotheses: Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Research Hypothesis</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H₁</td>
<td>There exist significant differences in learning culture, learning environment, and learning outcomes across organisations.</td>
<td>Confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H₂</td>
<td>There exist significant differences in the perception of learning culture, learning environment, and learning outcomes 'within' and 'between' managers and non-managers in organisations.</td>
<td>Not confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H₃</td>
<td>There exist significant positive correlation between learning culture and learning environment in organisations.</td>
<td>Confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H₄</td>
<td>Positive learning culture and strong learning environment, individually and collectively, tend to have greater impact on the learning outcomes of the individuals in organisations.</td>
<td>Confirmed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In spite of certain limitations common to multiple case study research, the present study made an earnest attempt to answer all the four research questions, rigorously test and report the inferences pertaining to four research hypotheses, and achieve all the five objectives revolving around the central theme of 'the impact of learning culture and learning environment on learning outcomes in organisations'. Most of the findings and conclusions arrived at are in line with the earlier research work in this domain.

IMPLICATIONS

Learning organisations practise the following “cultural values” being reflected through innovative HRD systems and processes:

1. **Openness** (free interaction among employees, each respecting others’ feelings, competence and sense of judgement).
2. **Confrontation** (facing and not shying away from problems).

3. **Trust** (offering moral support and help to employees and colleagues in a crisis).

4. **Authenticity** (minimum gap between what people say and do).

5. **Proaction** (preventive action on most matters).

6. **Autonomy** (taking independent action relating to their jobs).

7. **Collaboration** (teamwork and team spirit).

8. **Experimentation** (encouraging employees to take a ‘fresh look’ at how things are done).

Learning organisations facilitate continuous individual, team and organisational learning by creating and nurturing a sound “learning environment” characterised by the following key elements present in the work environment:

1. **Opportunity to learn** (providing employees with the opportunity to learn new things).

2. **Tolerating mistakes as part of learning** (encouraging people to try different approaches to solve problems).

3. **Error-free performance** (assigning employees to positions they can perform without error).

4. **High performance expectations/accountability** (employees are responsible for demonstrating on the job what they have learnt in training).

5. **Openness to new ideas/change** (new ideas are highly valued)
6. **Supportive training policies and practices** (all employees have the opportunity to attend some type of training).

7. **Supervisors supporting training** (supervisors and coworkers helping reschedule work so that employees can attend training).

8. **Coworkers supporting new ideas** (open to new ideas and suggestions)

9. **Awareness of “big picture”** (understanding how one’s job relates to others in the organisation)

10. **Successfully handling “situational constraints”** (e.g., unclear task assignments/instructions, lack of necessary tools/equipment/machines, inadequate financial resources).

Ultimately, these learning organisations will be able to achieve the following individual learning outcomes through the “synergy” created by a positive learning culture and a strong learning environment:

1. **Self-efficacy/self-related competency**
   (domain specific up-to-date knowledge, updated skill-mix, positive attitudes, result-oriented and progressive values, productivity-centred work habits).

2. **Positive view about training** (employee development is encouraged, recognised and valued in the organisation).

3. **Satisfaction with development** (employees are satisfied with what they have learnt since joining the organisation).
The implications for creating, nurturing, and sustaining a positive learning culture, strong continuous learning environment to generate positive learning outcomes vary from organisation to organisation. The nature of learning and the way in which it occurs are governed by the strength of learning culture and environmental conditions present in a given organisation. The positive elements of learning culture and environment will enable the learning structures and processes to influence how easy or hard it is for learning to occur, and the amount of effective learning that takes place. Favourable conditions of learning culture and environment should exist simultaneously to provide a complete picture of a continuous learning and development process with positive learning outcomes.

A positive learning culture reinforced by basic values and beliefs such as OCTAPACE promotes a strong learning environment and strengthens the process of continuous individual, team and organisational learning and development. Individuals experience learner-friendly physical, social, and psychological conditions in their place of work. In such organisations, employees understand how their job relates to others in the organisation; hold positions that stretch them and provide opportunities to apply new knowledge and skills; mistakes of learners are tolerated and individuals who apply new ideas and skills are recognised and rewarded; employees willingly seek learning opportunities and generate relevant ideas; situational constraints likely to hamper performance improvement are identified and minimised; supervisors and co-workers offer much needed social support to learn and implement new ideas; and appropriate policies and practices exist to support training and development activities. Organisations that fail to manage the cycle of continuous learning and development both effectively
and efficiently will not be able to benefit from their investment in employee
development. From this it follows that organisations must periodically
diagnose their learning culture, learning environment, and their linkage to
the individual, team and organisational learning outcomes (Rosenblum &
Keller, 1994).

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research needs to recognise that the organisational contexts
(internal and external) may moderate the observed relationship among
learning culture, learning environment, and learning outcomes. Hence, it
would be an interesting and a relevant proposition to examine how learning
profiles vary within and across different companies and industries based on a
larger sample with diverse organisational characteristics (e.g., technology,
structure, size, organisational life cycle stage, business strategy,
unionisation, industrial characteristics, national culture). In addition,
replication of this study elsewhere with cross-cultural assessments would
help clarify whether the relationship among learning culture, learning
environment, and learning outcomes is consistent across cultures. Besides
these, one of the major research challenges to be addressed by future
research is to establish the relationship between the perceptual measures of
learning culture, learning environment, learning outcomes, and the objective
measures of organisational performance. In this context, Baldwin &
Danielson (2002: 23) observed: ‘However intuitive the value of learning and
however strongly many organisations support learning, documenting
relationships between learning strategies, interventions, and critical business
performance outcomes has proven elusive’.
CONCLUSION

This study observed that each organisation has its own unique learning profile characterised by a combination of learning culture, learning environment, and learning outcomes. Accordingly, the implications for enhancing continuous learning and development varied from organisation to organisation. A work environment characterised by a positive learning culture and strong continuous learning environment can generate more favourable learning outcomes beneficial to both individuals and their organisation. Ineffective learning environments hinder continuous learning and, hence, organisational and individual effectiveness (Tannenbaum, 1997: 449). Core values and beliefs facilitating continuous learning and development should be comprehended by all employees and should be evident in every action taken. The primary responsibility of management and the focus of management practices (e.g., organisation’s culture, strategy, structure, information technology, reward and recognition systems, staffing, and leadership) should be to create and foster a climate that promotes learning.

Senior managers and HRD practitioners may use these research findings to strengthen the linkage between the elements of positive learning culture and the features of strong learning environment to promote continuous learning and produce positive individual, team and organisational learning outcomes. Despite the positive associations suggested by this research among the perceptual measures of learning culture, learning environment, and learning outcomes, there are some limitations. This study is based on a small sample of 334 respondents drawn from only 10 case study organisations. Different results might have been obtained if the study had included more and different organisations in the sample. Furthermore, the inclusion of other perceptual measures of learning culture, learning environment, and learning outcomes might have yielded different results.
These limitations, however, represent promising opportunities for further research in this field.

Technological advancements, dynamic customer demands, increasing globalisation, the blurring of organisational boundaries, and increasing competition are all combining to produce organisational environments ‘more turbulent and volatile than ever before’ (Parry & Proctor – Thompson, 2003: 377). As a matter of fact, every organisation is, to some degree a learning organisation but are differentiated by the degree to which they learn better, faster or more completely (Mai, 1996). It is needless to say that a culture that supports the acquisition of information, the distribution and sharing of learning, and provides rewards and recognition for learning and its application is critical for successful learning organisations.

There is considerable consensus today that a key competitive advantage for organisations lies in their ability to learn, be responsive, and to innovate. The capability and commitment of managers and key workers throughout an organisation’s hierarchy are the most important factors in determining the provision and effectiveness of workplace learning. Organisations have to realise the mutually reinforcing power of positive learning culture and a strong learning environment with a view to achieving intended learning outcomes. Barriers to continuous individual, team and organisational learning and development should be identified and eliminated. All said and done, workplace learning (formal and informal) should be recognised, nurtured and valued to earn and sustain competitive advantage. Ultimately, this growing body of knowledge will strengthen the theoretical and evidential base of HRD and contribute to improving the efficacy of HRD practice in organisations.
References


