

Chapter 14

Attributes of the Learning–Innovation Transformational Leader

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines the role of transformational leadership in transforming the learning organization into an innovative one. Important features of the leader, such as the ability to assist in developing and accommodating the implementation of knowledge management programs, learning organization concepts, and innovation protocols, are discussed in this chapter. This chapter demonstrates that shifting from learning organization to become an innovative company could involve some unique attributes of a transformation leadership. In that regard, the chapter also demonstrates that organizations need first to create, capture, transfer, and mobilize knowledge before it can be used for learning and then for innovation. The chapter presents a method of studying how successful innovation leaders of companies could find themselves acting in three roles, namely knowledge leader, learning leader, and then innovation leader. The leadership styles and characteristics that could transform the organisation from learning to innovation are discussed. The type of innovative leadership required to enhance the organizational performance is also highlighted. This chapter provides details for understanding innovative leadership based on the concepts for leadership characteristics and styles. The chapter also discusses different leadership styles and the proposed model of innovative leadership used by most firms in their efforts to improve performance. This chapter examines whether the attributes of leaders and styles of leadership could also influence the behaviour of some leaders towards the transformation from learning to innovation settings.

INTRODUCTION

Current competition coupled with globalization have led to revisiting competition models and

theories. For instance, the Porter five forces model (Porter, 1980) has also opened a wider debate among practitioners as to what else organizations should do to sustain their competitive advantages?

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This debate prompted Stata (1989) to propose that “*the rate at which individuals and organizations learn may become the only sustainable competitive advantage*”. It should be noted that in a response to these rapid changes to business environments, Senge’s (1990) proposed the learning organization model which identifies five disciplines of learning organization as central theme of any learning organization.

Furthermore, López, Montes Peón, and Ordás (2006) also suggested that some organizational failures could be attributed to lack of appropriate management of organizational learning which is closely related to unsatisfactory management of or organizational knowledge. This view was supported by Senge (2006) who also suggested that the traditional competitive advantages may be overridden by new set key competitive advantages such knowledge management, learning and creativity.

In addition, Christensen (2007) also argued that knowledge sharing is indeed a process and therefore it must have objectives. Some of these objectives may be exploiting and identifying existing but accessible knowledge, in order to solve specific complex tasks more effectively than other traditional methods. Maqsood, Walker, and Finegan (2007) added further that satisfactory management of knowledge and learning activities not only a prerequisite for innovations but also the link between knowledge, learning and innovation and that knowledge management should be considered a key organizational activities. This view was supported by Garvin, Edmondson, and Gino (2008) who noted that one of the main aspects of dynamic and continuously evolving organizations is that the organization must be truly learn organization (Rebelo & Gomes, 2008; Kalkan, 2008; Mehrez, 2010; Soliman, 2010a, 2010b).

Transforming from learning organization into an innovative firm require strategies designed to utilize knowledge to foster learning at later stages. Some of these strategies would involve the engagement of managerial staff that could

facilitate the implementation of the appropriate learning management programs. In other words the transformation from learning organization knowledge is a task that needs to be carefully executed so that the transformation does not hinder the organization’s efforts in delivering goods or services in accordance with the organizations strategic plans.

In addition, leaders must learn how to operate in challenging environments that have competitors fighting for limited resources. For leaders to remain relevant in their respective industries, they must create an environment for innovation. This requires them to be innovation leadership with different skills that and characteristics and innovative thinking (Horth, & Buchner, 2009). The leadership style that supports innovative leadership is transformational leadership, because it supports changes and gives followers freedom to enlarge their innovative thinking. Transactional leadership does not support innovative leadership because it provides no room for change, and followers must adhere to set instructions and rules. This means that there is no room for expansion thinking and for innovative ideas. The attributes of transformational leadership that support innovative leadership include creativity, good social skills, ability to work with teams and to use expertise in leadership operations, ability to sacrifice financials and time for the success of innovation. Leadership styles contribute to innovativeness of leaders. It should be noted that some leadership styles support positive relationship with innovation, while others do not.

Transactional Leadership

Transactional leadership refers to managerial leadership that focuses on performance, organization and supervision (Hood, 2007). A transactional leader promotes compliance of followers through punishments and rewards. Transactional leaders do not contribute to changing the future as much as the transformational leaders. Instead they focus

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