Organizational Creativity: A Substantial Factor to Growth

Malikeh Beheshtifar

Management Department, Rafsanjan Branch, Islamic AZAD University, Iran

Fateme-Begom Kamani-Fard

Management Department, Rafsanjan Branch, Islamic AZAD University, Iran

Abstract

Organizations are increasingly seeking to foster creativity, because it is an important source of organizational innovation as well as competitive advantage. Creativity has been studied from different perspectives and is associated with a number of defining factors and elements. creative organization define as encompassing factors concerning the removal of barriers demonstrating managed innovation, idea evaluation procedures, motivational stimuli, communication procedures, development of idea sources, and evidence of the creative planning process; and organizational creativity is as the creation of a valuable, useful new product, service, idea, procedure, or process by individuals working together in a complex social system. The creative climate encourages people to generate new ideas and helps the organization to grow and increase its efficiency and at the same time it enables members to generate and implement creative ideas more effectively.

Keywords: creativity, organizational creativity, creative climate

Introduction

Role of organizations are inevitable to improve any country, and according to Wall, a successful organization is one which could adapt itself to environmental changes during a long-term, create a purposeful management structure, and develop key competencies (Beheshtifar & Zare, 2012); and human resource is one of those capital resources of an organization which not only increases the efficiency and the effectiveness of the organization but it act as a sheer source of competitive advantage which is inimitable (Mosadeghrad, 2003). Considering this fact organization's success is based on employee's creativity.

As organizations become more complex and are confronted with increasingly difficult challenges associated with globalization, technology, risk management, and driving innovation, the entrepreneurial role emphasized by Schumpeter (1934) becomes more important than ever (Handfield, et al. 2009).

Creativity research has a long history in psychology, focusing on individual differences in personality, cognitive abilities, and problem-solving styles. However, recent theoretical and

empirical work has looked at creativity as something the brain does naturally. That is, creativity is an adaptive feature of normal cognitive functioning that evolved to aid problem solving under conditions of uncertainty. Under such circumstances, novel approaches and invention are highly advantageous (Simonton, 2000).

Within every individual, creativity is a function of three components: expertise, creative-thinking skills, and motivation. Can managers influence these components? The answer is an emphatic yes – for better and for worse – through workplace practices and conditions (Amabile, 1998). On the other hand, creativity in an organizational context is the conceptualization and development of novel ideas, products, processes or procedures by individuals or a group of individuals working together (Shalley, 1991). An understanding of organizational creativity will necessarily involve understanding (a) the creative process, (b) the creative product, (c) the creative person, (d) the creative situation, and (e) the way in which each of these components interacts with the others (Harrington, 1990). This study will investigate only the role of creativity in organizations.

Concept of creativity

Organizations are increasingly seeking to foster creativity, because it is an important source of organizational innovation as well as competitive advantage (Oldham and Cummings, 1996). Creativity has been defined as a judgment of the novelty and usefulness (or value) of something (Pirola-Merlo and Mann, 2004). Due to its undisputable relevance to individual, groups and organizations, the concept of creativity has been widely discussed over the last decades in a variety of disciplines including psychology, sociology, organizational behavior, and IS (Styhre and Sundgren, 2005).

Study about creativity and its elements were begun by social science of one century but main motive of study was offered by Gilford in 1950.Gilford knew that creativity has some meaning with different thinning. Creativity in the point of view of psychology is determined new ideas by making evidence from now resource (Khanifar, et al., 2012). Bruce and Bessant (2002) define innovation as the successful application of new ideas in practice in the form of new or improved products, services or processes.

Torrance (1965) defined creativity as: The process of becoming sensitive to problems, deficiencies, gaps in knowledge, missing elements, disharmonies, and so on; identifying the difficulty; searching for solutions, making guesses or formulating hypotheses about the deficiencies; testing and retesting them; and finally communicating the results.

In an overview of creativity and what it entailed, Rhodes (1961) described four overlapping themes:
• Characteristics for personal creativity (e.g.curiosity, openness),
• Creative process (e.g., properly defining problem or opportunity),
• Outcomes or products (e.g., focus on clients', donors', ultimate users' needs),

• Context or climate (e.g., workplace that encourages individual, group, and organizational creativity) (Barrett, et al. 2005).

Individual creativity as dependent variable consists of:
1) Need for achievement;
2) Locus of control;
3) Encounter to ambiguity conditions; and 4) Creativity-related skills (Shilling, 2008).

So, creativity has been studied from different perspectives and is associated with a number of defining factors and elements. As stated by Unsworth (2001), "These perspectives range from Royce's discussion of inventions in 1898 to Guilford's call for creativity research in 1950; research into creativity in classrooms to research into creativity in organizations; and Freudian accounts to cognitive accounts; personality accounts, sociological accounts, interactionist accounts, and psychological accounts".

According to conventional wisdom, creativity is something that creative people have or do (Amabile, 1997). Creative individuals have several features that distinguish them from their less creative peers, that is, they have a rich body of domain-relevant knowledge and well-developed skills; they find their work intrinsically motivating; they tend to be independent, unconventional, and greater risk takers; and they have wide interests and a greater openness to new experiences (Simonton, 2000).

On the other hand, Creative climate has extensively been studied just in the last ten or fifteen years. Ekvall (1996) appoints 10 dimensions of climate which are characteristics of climate in a way they reflect the possibility for certain, creative behavior that enables change/innovation:
1. Challenge (How emotionally involved, and committed are employees to the work).
2. Freedom (How free employees are to decide how to do their job).
3. Idea time (The amount of time employees have to elaborate ideas).
4. Trust and openness (Do employees feel safe speaking their minds and offering different points of view).
5. Dynamism (The eventfulness of life in the organization).
6. Playfulness (How relaxed is the workplace).
7. Debates (To what degree do people engage in lively debates about the issues)
8. Conflicts (To what degree do people engage in interpersonal conflicts).
9. Risk-taking (The promptness of response to emerging opportunities and fear of failure).
10. Idea support (Are there resources to give new ideas a try) (Bavec, 2009).

Creative thinking

Wertheimer (1959) suggested that creative thinking involved breaking down and restructuring our knowledge about something in order to gain new insights into its nature. Understanding our own cognitive model of reality may therefore be an important determinant of our ability to think creatively.

Many techniques exist to stimulate creative thinking and whilst the following list is not exhaustive, the examples below can work well when solving business problems. No special tools are needed.

Brainstorming: The process that organize the team, materials and scribe; appoint a chairperson; state the problems we are trying to solve; restate the problem a number of times (How to reduce time to ..., How to speed up ...); inhibit the left brain; have a warm up session.

A bridge - process flow analogy: A congested road bridge makes a good theme for a brainstorming session. There are many conceptual similarities between traffic and process flows. Many solutions fall into one of the following classes: Speed up the flow, Reduce the flow, Divert the flow.

The six thinking hats: An approach that helps to avoid confrontation and which channels our critical analysis is the 'Six Thinking Hats' approach (Dr Edward de Bono). Using this technique a group can evaluate an idea and can argue both the pros and cons whilst remaining as objective as possible. A chairperson should formally facilitate the process. An individual may 'wear' a hat to produce a comment without any possible attached stigma - 'wearing the black hat for a moment I don't think that this will work… The person who is always critical without being constructive has to become constructive (or lose face) when asked by the chair - 'now let us wear the yellow hat and see what good things may result from this idea'. The hats…

1. White hat - neutral - (think of white paper) Information - What do we know? What information do we want? What do we need?
2. Red hat - fire, warmth Feelings, emotion, intuition, hunches,
3. Black hat – caution Legality, judgement, morality,
4. Yellow hat – sunshine Positive, optimism, benefits,
5. Green hat – growth, new ideas, new slants, options, opportunities,
6. Blue hat - sky Overview, control of the process, agenda, next step, action plans, conclusions (Brown & Kusiak, 2007).

Organizational Creativity

Despite a majority of research attributing creativity to individualized efforts, a focus on creativity at the organizational level has appeared in the literature.

The subject of managing creativity is important for all organizations with the desire to stay competitive. In this reasoning, a creative organizational climate is a prerequisite for innovation. Therefore, it is interesting to assess the creative climate of an innovative organization, especially in relation to the growing concept of open innovation (Gassmann et al., 2010).

Organizational requirements for innovation include: creativity, experimentation, internal communications and learning. It will be shown that the formation of close feedback loops between designers, developers and users can contribute significantly to the identification of

new ideas and the discovery of new concerns from experimentation. As well as designers and developers, non-specialist actors such as users and intermediaries play an active role in providing knowledge to increase creativity by fitting products to their purposes and imparting significance. The product is considered 'unfinished', evolving and acquiring its meanings in its implementation and use (Williams, et al. 2000).

There are various definitions of organizational creativity. The outcomes of organizational creativity should be new and useful, i.e. be valuable to the organization (Isaksen and Ekvall, 2010). Williams and Yang (1999) defined organizational creativity as an adaptive entity "highlight[ing] the need for … [greater] employee autonomy, intrinsic motivation and commitment" (p. 389).

Majaro (1991) defined the creative organization as encompassing factors concerning the removal of barriers demonstrating managed innovation, idea evaluation procedures, motivational stimuli, communication procedures, development of idea sources, and evidence of the creative planning process. Woodman et al. (1993) who define organizational creativity as the creation of a valuable, useful new product, service, idea, procedure, or process by individuals working together in a complex social system.

The two main organizational creativity models in the literature are Amabile`s (1988) componential model and Woodman, Sawyer and Griffin`s (1993) interactionist model (Shalley and Zhou, 2009). According to Amabile (1997), an organization is motivated to innovate if it places explicit value on innovation, is oriented towards risk rather than sticking to status-quo, takes a proactive approach to change rather than following a defensive strategy, expresses pride in employees' capabilities and efforts, and finally provides supervisory and work team encouragement on employees. Resources needed for innovation are defined as the financial, material and informational resources made available to employees, training provided to improve creative thinking skills, and sufficient time allocated to think creatively and explore new ways of doing tasks. Appropriate managerial practices conducive to innovation are organization of work teams according to the skills of employees, provision of regular and clear feedback, provision of project autonomy and goal setting that is tied to the overall mission, but flexible at procedural progress (Amabile, 1997).

The inter-actionist model (Woodman, Sawyer and Griffin, 1993) assumes that creativity is a phenomenon that is affected by situational and behavioral factors in particular emphasizing the interactions among individuals, groups and organizations. The model explicitly recognizes intra-organizational influences that either stimulate ("enhancers") or inhibit ("constrainers") organizational creativity.

Conclusions

Many researchers believe that creativity is very important for the long-term survival of organizations because it enables organizations to remain competitive in a rapidly changing environment and to achieve a competitive advantage.

Shapiro (2002) agrees that today's business world thrives on creativity and innovation in a climate of uncertainty, volatility, and continuous change. As more organizations vie for significance in the global marketplace, creativity and innovation have become the most important factors in establishing and maintaining a competitive advantage (Meisinger, 2007).

The creative climate encourages people to generate new ideas and helps the organization to grow and increase its efficiency and at the same time it enables members to generate and implement creative ideas more effectively (Ekvall et al., 1983). However, developing organizational creativity and innovation requires such customs to be questioned however the role of the researcher as a catalyst to this process is made problematic by the potential power asymmetries formed through an 'expert' position (Dworski-Riggs and Langhout 2010). Therefore, we expect much of response to reflect the real creativity and organizational creativity in the organizations as perceived by the employees, whether creative or not!

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