



# Learning Organization Perceptions in Elementary Education in terms of Teachers and the Effect of Learning Organization on Organizational Commitment\*

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## Abstract

In this study, it was tried to determine to what degree the learning organization predicted organizational commitment according to primary school teachers' perceptions. Descriptive survey model was used in this study and 429 teachers were chosen among 2387 teachers who worked in primary schools in Van in 2010-2011 education years and were included in the sample. Regression analysis was applied in the data analysis of the study. Durbin-Watson test was used to determine whether there is autocorrelation in the model. It was found that there was a significant relationship between organizational commitment dimensions and the dimensions of learning organization perception scale. Maximum three dimensions of the learning organization scale were included in the model. These were shared vision, team learning, and personal mastery. When shared vision and team learning are the predictors of compliance dimension, they explain 18% of compliance commitment. When shared vision, team learning and personal mastery are predictors of identification dimension, they explain 36% of identification commitment. When team learning and shared vision were the predictors of internalization dimension, they explain 25% of internalization commitment. It was seen that there was a low negative relationship between the dimensions of the learning organization and compliance dimension of organizational commitment; however, there was a positive but low relationship between identification and internalization dimensions.

## Key Words

Learning Organization, Organizational Commitment, Teacher, Elementary Education.

## Learning Organization

Learning organization stands out as one of the concepts, which have been emphasized and discussed in accordance with the changes undergoing in recent years in the field of management. Learning organization is an organization that continuously encourages, maintains employee development, provides opportunities to learn and develop, and

considers learning as an investment, which aims to increase the success and capacity of the organization (Celep, 2004). Learning organizations, as the places where employees try to achieve their aims through full commitment (Hoy & Miskel, 2010) differ from other organizations with their quality of learning (Yücel, 2007). The purpose of learning organization as a management mentality is to build a structure that can learn and manage by itself (Tur-

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an, Karadağ, & Bektaş, 2011). Therefore, learning organization has a quality that can learn from its mistakes and experiences and consider research and learning as the dynamo of transformation and development (Balci, 2000).

According to Senge (1993), learning organization has five main characteristics such as systems thinking, personal mastery, mental models, shared vision and team learning, which are vitally significant for each other. The fact that organizations' transforming into a learning organization primarily starts with their employees' learning (Özalp, Uzun, & Yelkikalan, 1998; Yalçın & Ay, 2011). In this context, organizational learning takes the greatest support from organizational commitment levels of employees who have the intellectual power in enabling the transformation of individual knowledge into organizational knowledge (Akpınar, 2007).

### **Organizational Commitment**

Organizational commitment, which explains the psychological relationship of the employee with the organization, is discussed in different concepts by the researchers. In this study, organizational commitment model was used, which O' Reilly III and Chatman (1986) examined the organizational commitment in three dimensions such as compliance, identification and internalization.

Although researchers have different approaches towards organizational commitment, O'Reilly III and Chatman's (1986) compliance commitment, Allen and Meyer's (1990) continuity commitment, Mowday, Koberg, and McArthur's (1984) behavioural commitment and Katz and Khan's (1977) affective commitment show similarities in terms of employee's declaration of commitment to the organization for his/her benefits. Once again, O'Reilly III and Chatman's internalization commitment, Allen and Meyer's emotional commitment Mowday et al.'s attitude commitment and Katz and Khan's affective commitment show similarities in terms of employee's declaration of commitment to organization's objectives and values, not for their own benefits (Erdem, 2010).

The employees who are committed to the organization make more efforts to achieve the duties and the targets, spend more time in the organization, have more positive relationships with the organization (Balay, 2000b; Şama & Kolamaz, 2011) and therefore, their performances increase (Özdevecioğlu, 2003) and they make positive contributions to the organization's product and service quality (Doğan & Kılıç, 2007). Organizational commitment is affecting employees'

performance in a positive way in reaching organizations' goals and maintain their activities and assets; furthermore, it decreases the unwanted behaviours such as absenteeism, frequent tardiness (Ünal, 2011) and leaving work early (Sabuncuoğlu, 2007).

Studies have shown that there is a relationship among all these concepts: organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Çekmecelioglu, 2011; Mahmutoglu, 2007), the quality of working life (Erdem, 2008), organization culture (Demir & Öztürk, 2011; Sezgin, 2010), organizational climate (Kılıçoğlu, 2010; Yüceler, 2009), organizational health (Korkmaz, 2011), organizational support (Köse & Gönüllüoğlu, 2010), organizational communication (Ada, Alver, & Atlı, 2008), organizational justice (İmamoğlu, 2011), interactionist leadership (Yavuz & Tokmak, 2009), supportive and constructive leadership characteristics of the administrators (Şama & Kolamaz, 2011), interactionist and transformative leadership behaviours (Buluç, 2009), cultural leadership roles (Uygur & Yıldırım, 2011), bureaucratization in schools (Tüzel, 2010), personal characteristics of the employees (Erdoğan, 2006; Şengül, 2008), employees' performance (Sarıkaya, 2011). It was thought that there is a similar relationship between learning organization and organizational commitment since most of the concepts related to organizational commitment affect learning organization.

### **The Relationship between Learning Organization and Organizational Commitment**

Elementary schools are the foundation of education system. Therefore, it is vital for elementary school teachers to have organizational commitment, which enables them to adopt the school's goals and values and have a strong faith for them and also to have a strong motivation to remain in the system and moreover to use all their potentials for the school and make more effort than expected. In this respect, it is expected from schools to give importance to organizational learning and make it a part of school culture (Çelik, 1996), continuously improve learning process for the teachers and for other personnel (Töremen, 2001) and organize and evaluate the information obtained (Çakır & Yükseltürk, 2010).

When it is taken into consideration that in an organization, learning begins with the individual and then spreads to the whole organization, organizations can only maintain continuity through their employees' commitment, therefore they can build an organizational memory and then transform into

a learning organization (Atak, 2009). On the other hand, the expectations about the fact that the efficiency of the employees who have job satisfaction is higher make the organizational commitment an issue which is becoming more and more important for the organizations (Aslan, 2008; Demir & Öztürk, 2011; İnce & Gül, 2005; Özdevecioğlu, 2003).

While on the one hand, organizations make efforts to be a learning organization, on the other hand, their need to build their employees' commitment to the organization increases the interest/attention towards these two issues (Akpınar, 2007; Atak, 2009; Çöl & Ardic, 2008). However, it is seen there is a limited number of studies that can manifest the relationship between learning organization and organizational commitment in elementary education. Therefore, this study focuses on determining the relationship between learning organization and organizational commitment according to teachers' perceptions.

### The Objective/Purpose

The general purpose of the study is to determine to what degree the learning organization predict organizational commitment according to teachers' perceptions. To be able to reach this general purpose, these questions tried to be answered:

1. What is the learning organization perception in elementary education in terms of teachers?
2. What is the level of organizational commitment of teachers in elementary education?
3. To what degree do the sub-dimensions of learning organization such as personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, system thinking and team learning predict the sub-dimensions of organizational commitment such as compliance, identification and internalization?

### Method

In this screening model study, to what degree the learning organization predict organizational commitment is examined according to the perceptions of the teachers who work in elementary schools.

### Population and Sample

The target population of the study is 2387 teachers who worked in state primary schools in Van Municipality during 2010-2011 education years. According to the Directive on Education Zones and Education Boards (The Ministry of National

Education), five education zones could be formed in city centres and central districts considering the factors such as types of schools, the number of students, equipment in schools, the capacity of the other facilities, transportation facility and reliability, geographical integrity, communication and coordination facilities (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı [MEB], 1999). Van central district was divided into five education zones during the education years of 2010-2011. Considering the difficulty of reaching all the teachers that existed in the population, three elementary state schools were randomly chosen from each education zone to represent the population according to their zones and 429 teachers in fifteen schools in these three zones were included in the sample. Nearly 46% of the participant teachers were females and 54% of them were males. While 57% of the participants were class teachers, 43% of them were branch teachers. 36% of the teachers who participated in the study had 1-5 years work experience, 32% of them had 6-10 years experience and 32% had 11 and more years work experience.

### Data Collection Tools

In the study, as data collection tool, "Learning Organization Perception Scale" developed by Güçlü and Türkoğlu (2003) and "Organizational Commitment Scale" developed by Balay (2000a) were used after taking permissions. Besides, "Personal Information Form" was developed with the purpose of getting information about the personal characteristics of the teachers.

Learning organization perception scale is composed of 42 items and 5 sub-dimensions such as personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, system thinking and team learning. The structure validity and reliability of the scale, which were applied to elementary school teachers, were measured by Güçlü and Türkoğlu (2003). Sperman-Brown and Cronbach Alfa values were examined for the reliability of the scale; however, expert opinions were asked for the validity of the scale. Sperman-Brown test of the scale was found as .93 and Cronbach Alfa test was found as .97.

Organizational commitment scale is composed of 24 items and 3 sub-dimensions such as compliance, identification and internalization. Balay (2000a) applied the scale on the high school teachers; therefore, the validity and reliability studies of the scale were done again to see whether it differs on elementary school teachers. The result of the analysis done is similar to Balay's validity and reliability study. The items, which existed in the scale, were collected

under three factors as in Balay's scale and the order of the items in the factor did not change. It was seen that load factor values of the items range between .40 and .80. Cronbach Alfa values of the scale were found as .92 for the first factor, .90 for the second factor and .75 for the third factor.

### Data Collection and Analysis

The scales of the study were handed out to the teachers in person by the researchers and they were collected by the researchers themselves. The researchers distributed the scale to 450 teachers but ten scales were not returned and 11 scales were not evaluated due to incomplete and incorrect responses. 429 scales were evaluated in total. In the study, percentage and frequency were used for the analysis of the personal information. Arithmetic average/mean and standard deviation values were found for item analyses of elementary school teachers' perceptions of learning organization and organizational commitment. Hierarchical multiple regression analysis was done to determine whether the dimensions of learning organization perceptions is a predictor of the dimensions of organizational commitment.

Multiple regression models were applied between the dimensions of learning organization perceptions and the dimensions of organizational commitment. "Stepwise selection and adding variables processes were done in multiple regression model. This process involves adding each variable to the model gradually and being evaluated in the model. If the variable contributes to the model, it remains. If it did not significantly contribute to the model, it is dropped. Thus, the model is explained with the help of the least number of variables. Durbin-Watson test shows whether there is an autocorrelation in our model. Usually a Durbin-Watson test value ranging between 1,5 and 2,5 shows that there is no autocorrelation (Kalayci, 2005).

## Results

### Findings about Learning Organization Perceptions

While elementary school teachers strongly agreed on team learning ( $\bar{X} = 3.49$ ), which is the sub-dimension of learning organization, they strongly disagreed on personal mastery ( $\bar{X} = 3.10$ ). Teachers "usually" agreed to sub dimensions of team learning ( $\bar{X} = 3.49$ ;  $ss = 0.64$ ) and mental models ( $\bar{X} = 3.45$ ;  $ss = 0.71$ ), they "sometimes" agreed to other sub-dimensions such as shared vision ( $\bar{X} = 3.30$ ;  $ss = 0.77$ ), system thinking ( $\bar{X} = 3.22$ ;  $ss = 0.70$ ) and personal mastery ( $\bar{X} = 3.10$ ;  $ss = 0.71$ ).

### Findings about Organizational Commitment

Elementary school teachers strongly agreed on internalization ( $\bar{X} = 3.52$ ) sub-dimension of organizational commitment and they strongly disagreed on compliance ( $\bar{X} = 2.05$ ) sub-dimension. While teachers "strongly" agreed on internalization sub-dimension ( $\bar{X} = 3.52$ ;  $ss = 0.84$ ), they "somewhat" agreed on identification sub-dimension ( $\bar{X} = 2.97$ ;  $ss = 0.99$ ) and they "slightly" agreed on compliance sub-dimension ( $\bar{X} = 2.05$ ;  $ss = 0.73$ ).

### Findings about Learning Organization Perceptions Predict Organizational Commitment

It was seen that there is a significant relationship between sub-dimensions "shared vision" and "team learning" of learning organization and compliance dimension ( $F_{(2,426)} = 46.834$   $p < .005$ ). The other variables, personal mastery, mental models and system thinking are not included in the model, as they did not significantly contribute to the model. First shared vision and then team learning are included in the model. When we evaluated shared vision and team learning together, they explain  $R_d^2 = 17.6\%$  of the model. It means that the shared vision and team learning values explain 17.6% of compliance dimension. Adjusted  $R_d^2$  value was examined here because whether relevant or irrelevant any variables, which are added in the model increase  $R^2$  value. Adjusted  $R^2$  value increases according to added variables' relevance to the model. When t-test results were examined ( $t_{(2,426)} = -2,904$   $p < .005$ ), it was seen that there is a significant relationship between shared vision, team learning and compliance dimension. When the relationship between variables and compliance dimension were examined (shared vision partial  $r = .405$ ; team learning partial  $r = .364$ ) a negative low relationship was found. The constant value in the model is 29.294. When coefficient (B) values were examined, one-unit increase in shared vision causes a decrease of 0.20 in compliance and one-unit increase in team learning leads to a decrease of 0.16 in compliance. When Durbin-Watson test (1.82) was examined, it was seen that there is not autocorrelation in our model.

There is a significant relationship between identification dimension and learning organization's sub-dimensions, shared vision, team learning and personal mastery ( $F_{(3,425)} = 82,545$   $p < .001$ ). Other variables, mental models and system thinking could not be added to the model, as they did not significantly contribute to the model. When shared vision and team learning were evaluated, they explained  $R_d^2 = 36.4\%$

of the model. When t-test in the model was examined, there is a significant relationship between identification dimension and sub-dimensions, shared vision, team learning and personal mastery respectively. When partial correlations between identification and the variables were examined (shared vision  $r=,564$ ; team learning  $r=,503$ ; personal mastery  $r=,513$ ), a moderate positive relationship could be seen. The constant value in the model is  $-1,10$ . When coefficient (B) values were examined, one-unit increase in shared vision can lead to an increase of  $0,24$  in identification, one-unit increase in team learning can cause an increase of  $0,22$  in identification. Besides, one-unit increase in personal mastery can result in an increase of  $0,37$  in identification. As it could be seen, personal mastery affects identification more than the other variables.

It was seen that there is a significant relationship between internalization and shared vision and team learning as the sub-dimensions of learning organization ( $F_{(2,426)}=15,724$   $p<,001$ ). Other variables, personal mastery, mental models and system thinking could not be added to the model, as they did not contribute to the model significantly. When we evaluated the two variables (shared vision and team learning) together, they explained  $R_d^2=25\%$ . It means that team learning and shared vision explain 25% of the model. When t-test in the model was examined ( $t_{(2,426)}=3,965$   $p<,001$ ), it can be seen that there is a significant relationship between internalization and both team learning and shared vision in separately. Constant value in the model is  $10,802$ . When coefficient (B) values were examined, one-unit increase can cause an increase of  $0,39$  in internalization; one-unit increase in shared vision can lead to an increase of  $0,20$  in internalization. When partial correlations between the variables and internalization were examined (team learning partial  $r=,480$ ; shared vision partial  $r=,443$ ), it can be seen there is an almost moderate positive relationship. When Durbin Watson test was examined ( $1,92$ ), it can be seen there is no autocorrelation in the model.

### Conclusion and the Discussion

In personal mastery dimension, elementary school teachers remarked that the individuals who want improve themselves are usually valued in their schools; however, they stated that written materials necessary for the improvement of the teachers are sometimes provided. In mental models dimension, they stated that they usually feel comfortable to share their opinions with the people around them in their schools and declared that sometimes im-

provements are made with a purpose of development. In shared vision dimension, teachers stated that the objectives of their organization are usually established clearly and accurately; sometimes implementations/applications in their schools are put into practice after their opinions are asked and sometimes plans in their schools are taken into consideration before problems arise not after problems occurred. In team learning dimension, teachers stated that they are usually eager to take responsibility in a team and would be pleased to take part in the duty; and they stated that activities in their schools sometimes are carried out through teamwork. Similar results were found in the studies, which were done by Güçlü and Türkoğlu (2003), Banoğlu (2009) and Kılıç (2009).

While the teachers stated that team learning and mental models are usually included in their schools, they said that personal mastery of the teachers is sometimes improved and sometimes it was acted according to system thinking. This finding coincides with the results of the study done by Güçlü and Türkoğlu (2003). However, it is not consistent with the results of the studies done by Bal (2011), Subaş (2010), Banoğlu (2009), Kılıç (2009), Alp (2007) and Güleş (2007).

In the compliance dimension of organizational commitment, elementary school teachers did not agree that their attempts for student achievement are only within the course hours and they feel uncomfortable about the efforts of the management to attach them to the school. In identification dimension, while the teachers strongly agreed that they are proud of becoming a member of their schools, they somewhat agreed that their schools provide opportunities to follow changes and latest developments about their professions. In internalization dimension, while the teachers strongly agreed that they consider their schools' future and they will make every kind of sacrifices for their schools' benefit, they somewhat agreed that they perceive their schools' priorities as their priorities and they spend their time with the activities about their schools.

According to the results of the study, it was seen that organizational commitment levels of teachers are the highest in internalization dimension and identification and compliance dimensions follow this in order. Similarly, Balay (2000a), Sezer (2005), Erdem (2008) and Uygur and Yıldırım (2011) found out that teachers are highly committed in internalization dimension and they are slightly committed in compliance dimension. These findings coincide with the findings of Sezgin (2010), Sarıkaya (2011) and Tüzel (2010)

who studied teachers' commitment and concluded that the levels of emotional commitment, which is similar to internalization commitment is higher compared to continuity commitment and normative commitment. However, they are not consistent with Uğurlu's (2009) results in which teachers are the most committed in continuity dimension and slightly committed in normative commitment. The same inconsistency occurs in İmamoğlu's (2011), study in which the results showed that teachers are the most committed in compliance dimension and the least committed in identification commitment. On the other hand, Çakır (2007) reached a conclusion in his/her study that teachers are uncommitted in emotional, continuity and normative sub-dimensions of organizational commitment.

In the study, internalization commitment is found higher than others are. Internalization commitment can be seen positive in one angle but can be seen negative from another angle. The positive side is that it shows that there is compliance between the individual and organizational values. However, at the same time, it can show the individual's commitment to the school in the level of a workaholic. Workaholism is not perceived positively in working life because workaholism affect the balance between personal life and working life in a negative way (Akin & Oğuz, 2010; Bardakçı & Baloğlu, 2012).

When regression analysis was examined, it was seen there is a negative low relationship between the dimensions of learning organization perception and compliance dimension of organizational commitment. Shared vision and team learning explained 18% of compliance dimension. In the identification dimension of organizational commitment, three variables were added to the regression model. These are shared vision, team learning and personal mastery variables. That the inclusion of internalization, shared vision, team learning and personal mastery variables affected in a higher level (this explained 36% of the model) compared to other variables is an expected finding. In internalization dimension, first team learning and then shared vision variables were added to the model. A positive but low relationship was found between these variables and internalization. The finding show parallelism with the results of the studies done by other researchers (Erdem, 2008; İmamoğlu, 2011; Şama & Kolamaz, 2011; Uygur & Yıldırım, 2011).

In this study, maximum three variables were added to the model. The variables added to the model were shared vision, team learning and personal mastery. Mental models and system thinking were never

added to the model. These variables mostly predict the identification dimension and they predict compliance dimension the least. While a negative low relationship was seen between compliance dimension and the dimensions of learning organization, positive but a low relationship was seen between identification, internalization and other variables.

It is seen that remarkable research results were obtained about teachers' organizational commitment and related issues in the body of the literature (Çakır, 2007; Kılıçoğlu, 2010; Korkmaz, 2011; Sarıkaya, 2011; Sezgin, 2010; Uğurlu, 2009; Tüzel, 2010). The fact that the schools conduct supportive activities and establish an appropriate organizational structure for this is effective in determining teachers' organizational commitment. Morgan (1998) stated that realizing a problem is usually the first step that leads to the solution. In this context, identifying and eliminating the obstacles that prevent organizational learning and organizational commitment from developing will be an important step to provide productivity/efficiency of these schools. When the results of the study were taken into consideration, it is necessary to share the school's vision, to do the teamwork and to provide teachers' personal development to increase the organizational commitment in schools in terms of learning organization. To be able to create a shared school vision, it is necessary to discuss the vision with the teachers and to organize workshops so the vision needs to be introduced. Developing teamwork in schools will increase both the commitment that the teachers have for each other and for the school. Therefore, teachers need to acquire teamwork culture and applied seminars about teamwork and anything related to this issue need to be given first to the managers then to the teachers. However, providing teachers' personal development, create environments to reveal their talents, organize seminars, giving in-service training; guiding them to new fields in accordance with their talents will increase their organizational commitment. All these activities will increase teachers' identification and internalization commitments not their reluctant attachments to the schools.



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