The Impact of Leadership Styles on Organizational Learning (An Empirical Study on the Education Sector in Damascus City)

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the Impact of Leadership styles on organizational learning in the public and private universities in Damascus. The sample consisted of 154 workers at the universities' administrative and Academic system and two scales were used in this study; (Bass & Avolio, 2004) scale to measure the Leadership Styles and (Jerez-Gomez et al, 2005) scale to measure the organizational learning. The study found significant impact of contingent reward, as a transactional leadership dimension on organizational learning, and a significant impact of Individualized Consideration as a transformational leadership dimension on organizational learning. The study also found no significant differences in leadership styles and organizational learning between both universities.

Keywords: Transformational leadership, Transactional leadership, Higher education, Damascus, Organizational learning

1. Introduction

In the present changing world, learning is considered as the only sustainable competitive advantage (DeGeus 1988), and the organizations that learn better than other competitors are more successful. Therefore, organizational learning and learning organization have recently been taken into serious consideration as new organizational paradigms. The challenges faced by higher educational institutes in the recent decades such as reduction of employment rate of university graduates, decrease of political and social supports of education (Alibeigi 2005)

increase in student enrollments, demand for more effective role of universities (Patterson 1999), globalization followed by increasing competition and market-orientation activities (Bowden and Matron 1998; Sporn 2003) have caused decision makers and professors to adopt changes in the methods and tools employed in educational institutes.

Organizational learning is a dynamic process which enables organizations to quickly adapt to changing. This process results in the production of behavior and new skills and it is the main way of working knowledge and improving the efficiency of the organization. Therefore, a successful organization must be dynamic in learning (Zhang, Tian, & Qi, 2006). The term of organizational learning apparently refers to the individual learning. While, this concept actually refers to learning at the group level because individual learning is gained through reading, interview, knowledge, experience, practice and develop effective mental models. But, organizational learning occurs when the group is trying to learn, interact and to share his knowledge to other members so that combined capacity of the group has increased, and members gain the ability of understanding and effective action (Jerez-Gomez et al., 2005). In today's competitive era, classic organizations should have appropriate flexibility to have a favorable response to the continuous changes (Jerez-Gomez, Céspedes-Lorente, & Valle-Cabrera, 2005). Researchers have advocated organizational learning for university survival and growth (Rowley, 1998; Reece, 2004; Nakpodia, 2009). Universities are integrating learning into the whole university processes (Rowley, 1998). Hence, organizational learning needs to be concrete and institutionalized (Nakpodia, 2009).

Leadership has the key role to enable organizational learning (Senge, 1990; Schein, 1993; Argyris and Schon, 1996; Davenport and Prusak, 1998; Edmondson, 1999; Popper and Lipshitz, 2000; Lipshitz et al., 2002; Sun and Anderson, 2011). Popper and Lipshitz (2000) contended that leadership is the factor to affect organizational learning by creating organizational structure and shaping up the organizational culture. In this vein, researchers advocated transactional leadership and transformational leadership which are consistent with higher education reform (Cameron, 1981; Senge, 1990; Leithwood, 1992; Bass and Avolio, 1994; Smart et al., 1997; Bass, 1998; Ramsden, 1998; Leithwood et al., 1999; Pounder, 1999; Avolio et al., 1999; Silins et al., 2002; Albulushi and Hussain, 2008; Basham, 2010).

University leaders around the globe are increasingly facing unstable times and less certain environments when competing for resources. In Damascus, at both levels of research and implication, little attention has been given to the area of university leadership. This is mainly because the Damascus Government plays the major role in the leadership, supervision, and control of the higher education system. This is achieved through the Ministry of Higher Education and the Higher Education Council. The Council of Higher Education has the ultimate power of deciding, implementing, and evaluating higher education policy. In general, the higher education system is highly centralized in most of its issues: appointing university presidents and academics, developing curricula, determining the number of students which to be admitted to the higher education system each year and their distribution, and financing higher education institutions. The Government also plays a key role in regulating and structuring private universities (Khalifa & Ayoubi, 2014). Due to such standardized culture of institutional leadership in the country, the studies of leadership styles in the higher education sector are rarely done in Damascus. Furthermore, no indicative studies have been conducted to compare the aspects of leaderships at both public and private universities in the country.

Given the above higher education facts in Damascus, this study aims at answering the following questions:
 (1) Is there an impact of leadership style (transactional, transformational) on organizational learning at Damascus public and private universities?
(2) Is there any difference in leadership style between public and private universities in Damascus?
(3) Is there a difference in the extent of organizational learning between public and private universities in Damascus?

1.1 The Concepts of the study
1.1.1   Transformational Leadership Factors
Transformational leadership is concerned with improving the performance of followers and developing followers to their fullest potential (Bass & Avolio, 1999). People who exhibit transformational leadership often have a strong set of internal values and ideals, and they are effective at motivating followers to act in ways that support the greater good rather than their own self-interests (Kuhnert, 1994).

• Idealized Influence.
Factor 1 is called charisma or idealized influence. It is the emotional component of leadership (Antonakis, 2012). Idealized influence describes leaders who act as strong role models for followers; followers identify with these leaders and want very much to emulate them. These leaders usually have very high standards of moral and ethical conduct and can be counted on to do the right thing. They are deeply respected by followers, who usually place a great deal of trust in them. They provide followers with a vision and a sense of mission. In essence, the charisma factor describes people who are special and who make others want to follow the vision they put forward (Northouse, 2013).

• Inspirational Motivation.
Factor 2 is called inspiration or inspirational motivation. This factor is descriptive of leaders who communicate high expectations to followers, inspiring them through motivation to become committed to and a part of the shared vision in the organization (Northouse, 2013). In practice, leaders use symbols and emotional appeals to focus group members' efforts to achieve more than they would in their own self-interest, so Team spirit is enhanced by this type of leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1999).

• Intellectual Stimulation.
Factor 3 is intellectual stimulation. It includes leadership that stimulates followers to be creative and innovative and to challenge their own beliefs and values as well as those of the leader and the organization (Northouse, 2013). This type of leadership supports followers as they try new approaches and develop innovative ways of dealing with organizational issues. It encourages followers to think things out on their own and engage in careful problem solving (Bass & Avolio, 1999).

• Individualized Consideration.
Factor 4 of transformational leadership is called individualized consideration. This factor is representative of leaders who provide a supportive climate in which they listen carefully to the individual needs of followers (Northouse, 2013). Leaders act as coaches and advisers

while trying to assist followers in becoming fully actualized. These leaders may use delegation to help followers grow through personal challenges (Bass & Avolio, 1999).

1.1.2 Transactional Leadership Factors
Transactional leadership differs from transformational leadership in that the transactional leader does not individualize the needs of subordinates or focus on their personal development (Northouse, 2013). Transactional leaders exchange things of value with subordinates to advance their own and their subordinates' agendas (Kuhnert, 1994). Transactional leaders are influential because it is in the best interest of subordinates for them to do the leader wants (Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987).

• **Contingent Reward.**
Factor 5, contingent reward, is the first of two transactional leadership factors. It is an exchange process between leaders and followers in which effort by followers is exchanged for specified rewards. With this kind of leadership, the leader tries to obtain agreement from followers on what must be done and what the payoffs will be for the people doing it (Northouse, 2013).

• **Management-by-Exception.**
Factor 6 is called management-by-exception. It is leadership that involves corrective criticism, negative feedback, and negative reinforcement. Management-by-exception takes two forms: active and passive. A leader using the active form of management-by-exception watches followers closely for mistakes or rule violations and then takes corrective action (Northouse, 2013).

1.1.3 Organizational Learning Factors:
Miller (1996) defined OL as acquisition of new knowledge by employees who are able and willing to apply that knowledge in making decisions or influencing others in the organization. Sanchez (2005) defined that organization learning can be said to occur when there is a change in the content, conditionality, or degree of the belief shared by individuals who jointly act on those beliefs within an organization. Jerez-Gómez et al. (2005) defined OL as the activities which organizations do in transformation of learning capability including individuals and competitors. It is considered to be of four dimensions management commitment, system perspective, openness and experimentation and knowledge transfer and integration. Facing the current uncertain environment, business must keep learning to maintain its competitiveness. According to Garratt (1990), the organizational learning is the application of organizational development and learning, therefore, it is necessary for the organization to develop it's personal and group learning abilities. Moreover, OL is considered as a dynamic process based on knowledge, implying moving along the different levels of action, from the individual to the group levels, and then to the organizational level and back again (Huber, 1991).

Prior studies (Goh and Richards, 1997; Hult and Ferrell, 1997, Jerez-Go´mez et al., 2005) proposed differences dimensions to measure organization learning capability in the firm. Organization learning capability can be measured in terms of top management towards learning, a shared vision, open-mindedness towards change and intra-organizational sharing of knowledge (Sinkula et al., 1997). Hult and Ferrell (1997) suggested four variables to

measure organizational learning capability including: team orientation, systems orientation, learning orientation, and memory orientation. More recently, Jerez-Gomez et al. (2005) established a measurement scale of organizational learning namely managerial commitment, systems perspective, openness and experimentation, and knowledge transfer and integration that supported by the results of validation study covering a sample of 111 Spanish firms from chemical industry. Chiva et al. (2010) develops a five dimensional model for measuring organizational learning capability including: experiment, ability to take risk, interaction with environment, dialogue and participatory decision making. This paper uses Jerez-Gomez et al.'s measurement scale as dimensions to measure organization learning capability in Damascus Universities. The Jerez Gomez et al.'s measurement scale was tested and adopted in subsequent studies and found to be valid and reliable (Panayides, 2007, Liao and Wu, 2009). Jerez-Gomez et al.'s measurement scale aims to determine the organizational propensity to learn or determine the organizational learning capability. This model is based on four dimensions of organizational learning as follows;

• **Management Commitment.**

First dimension is managerial commitment that refers to the production of knowledge and organizational culture as an underlying activity, Because of the key to gain long-term outcomes in organization is organizational learning. Management should ensure that the concept is understood by staff and providing the basis for removal beliefs that are destructive to provide organizational learning (García-Morales, Lloréns-Montes, & Verdú-Jover, 2007). So Management Commitment is to recognize the relevance of learning and to develop a culture that promotes the acquisition, creation and transfer of knowledge as fundamental values (Emden et al., 2005).

• **System Perspective.**

Second dimension refers to have a clear system perspective for all staff toward organizational objectives which are expressed as the key to the development of organizational goals. The organization should be considered as a system composed of different sectors to work collaboratively together. Organizational attitude as a system implicitly caused to identify the communication in organization that leads to development of a shared mental model, Because of organizational learning uses knowledge, understanding and common principles (García-Morales et al., 2007). Usually, new ideas in intra-organizational and extra- organizational are given in the open environment. This dimension is necessary aspect for creative learning. So System Perspective entails bringing the organization's members together around a common identity (Emden et al., 2005).

• **Openness and Experimentation.**

The ability of creativity, learning from the mistakes of others and support of controlled risks are enhanced by creating experimenting culture that refers to the importance of third dimension of organizational learning that is openness and experimentation (Nikbakht, Siadat, Hoveida, & Moghadam, 2010). Openness and Experimentation is a climate that welcomes the arrival of new ideas and point of view, both internal and external, allowing individual knowledge to be constantly renewed, widened and improved (Emden et al., 2005).

• **Knowledge Transfer and Integration.**

Fourth and the last and most important aspect are the knowledge transfer and integration. Knowledge management is the process of creating, recording, refining, distribution and use of knowledge. These five factors of knowledge management in an organization provide the basis for training, re-training and feedback (Nasr Esfehani, 2007). Knowledge Transfer and Integration refers to two closely linked processes, which occur simultaneously, rather than successively internal transfer and integration of knowledge (Emden et al., 2005).

2. Literature Review

One of the potentials of Transformational Leadership (TL) is being a strong tool for the development of Organizational Learning (OL) in the organizations and companies (Slater and Narver, 1995). There have been previous studies which claim a relationship between leadership style (LS) & OL (Bass, 2000; Amitay et al. 2005; Kurland et al. 2010) and TL & OL (Sung, 2012; Lam, 2002; Choupani et al. 2013). TL constructs teams and groups and also brings to them a path to follow, force, and support for the processes of change and Organizational Learning (McDonough, 2000). Once applied, the profit or non-profit organizations would be able to learn by means of communicating & mutual talks, exploring, and experimenting (Tushman and Nadler, 1986; Menguc et al. 2007). To be more specific, TL boosts OL by increasing intellectual arousal and improving inspirational motivation and self-confidence in and among the members of the organization (Coad and Berry, 1998). Thus the manager who practices TL would take the roles of a catalyst, a consultant, a facilitator and also a trainer in the process of OL (García-Morales et al. 2012). A review of leadership literature and organizational learning literature indicates that there is a key role for leadership in enabling organizational learning. Most of the earlier work has been made on the conceptual level (Senge, 1990; Schein, 1993; Argyris and Schon, 1996; Davenport and Prusak, 1998; Edmondson, 1999; Popper and Lipshitz, 2000; Lipshitz et al., 2002). The discussion was mainly related to the role of leadership in creating an atmosphere of openness and psychological safety, which is regarded as a crucial factor for effective organizational learning to occur (Schein, 1993; Argyris and Schon, 1996; Edmondson, 1999). Some of these claims are recently supported empirically.

Several studies proved the relationship between transactional leadership, transformational leadership and organizational learning. Most of the studies proved the vital role of transformational leadership in supporting organizational learning (Coad and Berry, 1998; Brown and Posner, 2001; Lam and Pang, 2003; Lam, 2004; Amitay et al., 2005; Chang and Lee, 2007; Jansen et al., 2009; Kurland et al., 2010; Nafei et al., 2012; Saekoo and Yasamorn, 2013; Theodore, 2013). Patnaik et al. (2013) indicated that developing and using transformational leadership in higher education institutes is essential for generating long-term commitment toward organizational learning. With regard to transactional leadership, some studies showed a positive relationship between transactional leadership and organizational learning (Coad and Berry, 1998; Vera and Crossan, 2004; Oluremi, 2008; Jansen et al., 2009; Nafei et al., 2012). Jansen et al. (2009) demonstrated that transactional leadership behaviors facilitate improving and extending existing knowledge. Other studies, in contrast, showed a negative relationship between transactional leadership and organizational learning (Amitay et al., 2005). This was explained by psychometric grounds, which suggest that contingent reward is closer to individualized consideration, namely, to transformational leadership factors.

Based on the literature, although the association of leadership and organizational learning has been discussed by leading scholars (e.g. Senge, 1990; Schein, 1993), it has remained largely a theoretical argument. Few studies which are tested empirically, however, show contradiction in findings. In addition, there is a scarcity of research on this issue in the Arab world including Damascus. Besides, the association of leadership and organizational learning has barely been investigated in the field of higher education (Nakpodia, 2009; Patnaik et al., 2013). Therefore, this study attempts to fill this research gap by investigating the role of transactional leadership and transformational leadership in enhancing organizational learning at Damascus public and private universities.

3. Research Hypothesis

Given the aforementioned conceptual arguments and empirical evidence, we hypothesize that leadership style (transactional, transformational) has an impact on organizational learning at public and private universities in Damascus. Thus, to sum up and integrate the arguments based on theory and research, we propose the following hypotheses as follows:

Hypothesis 1: there is an impact of leadership style (transactional, transformational) on organizational learning at public and private universities in Damascus.

Hypothesis 2: there is a difference in leadership style between public and private universities in Damascus.

Hypothesis 3: there is a difference in the extent of organizational learning between public and private universities in Damascus.
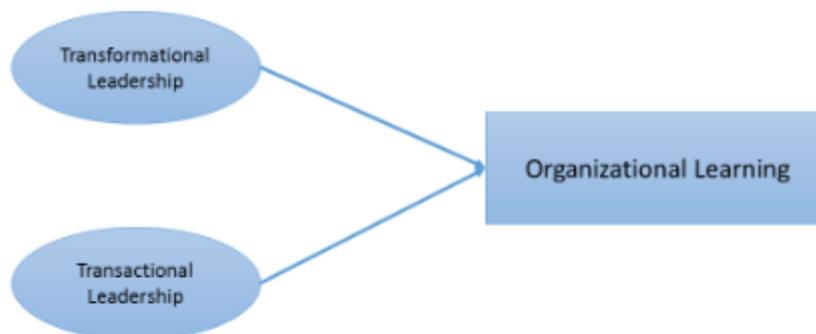
4. Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 Hypothesized model of the Effect of Independent Variables on Dependent Variable.

5. Research Method

5.1 Sample

Data for the study of the impact of leadership styles on organizational learning ratings were collected from 154 employees in public and private universities in Damascus city. The response rate was 90.5%. Of the respondents, 45.5% were Female and 54.5% were Male. In addition, 26% of the respondents were younger than 30 years, 40.3% were between 30 and

45 years, 33.8% were older than 45 years. Also, 20.1% had worked in the universities for less than 5 years, 25.3% between 5 and 10 years of Experience, 18.8% had worked in the universities between 10 and 15 years of Experience and 35.7% had worked More than 15 years. The demographic data of the sample used in analysis is shown in Table 1.

5.2 Measures

The main aim of the study is to investigate the impact of transactional, transformational leadership on organizational learning at Damascus public and private universities. Therefore, the study adopts the quantitative research paradigm which has the power to predict causal relationships (Mack et al., 2005), and to statistically generalize findings to the whole population

(Sarantakos, 2004).

In order to collect data, a questionnaire survey method was employed (Stangor, 2011). To identify the leadership style at public and private universities in Damascus, which is the independent variable, the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (Form 5x-Short) (MLQ-5X), which is developed earlier by Avolio and Bass (2004), was used. Respondents were asked to assess their leader's action in terms of the frequency occurrence founded on the 18 items for both leadership styles (6 items representing transactional leadership, and 12 representing transformational leadership). The scale of the frequency of occurrence ranges from 1= not at all, to 5 = frequently. On the other hand, the dependent variable in this study is organizational learning. This variable was measured using a scale developed by Jerez-Gomez et al. (2005) containing 16 items in four dimensions: managerial commitment (5 questions), system perspective (3 questions), openness and experimentation (4 questions), knowledge transfer and integration (4 questions). The scale of the frequency of occurrence ranges from 1= not at all, to 5= frequently.

Table 1. Demographic data

Demographics		n		%	
		Public Universities	Private Universities	Public Universities	Private Universities
Gender					
Male		45	39	62.5%	47.6%
Female		27	43	37.5%	52.4%
Age					
30 and less		3	37	4.2%	45.1%
31-45		29	33	40.3%	40.2%
45 and more		40	12	55.6%	14.6%
Education					
Secondary and less		3	13	4.2%	15.9%
Bachelor		3	38	4.2%	46.3%
Master degree		14	15	19.4%	18.3%
Ph.D. degree		52	16	72.2%	19.5%
Years of working					
5 and less		0	31	0%	37.8%
6-10		15	24	20.8%	29.3%
11-15		16	13	22.2%	15.9%
16 and more		41	14	56.9%	17.1%
Nature of work					
Academic		45	12	62.5%	14.6%
Administrative		3	51	4.2%	62.2%
Academic & Administrative		24	19	33.3%	23.2%

The questionnaire was translated into Arabic, and then peer reviewed by four Damascus academics to test whether the item statements were understandable and not ambiguous. To verify reliability, the questionnaire was pre-tested (Creswell, 2012) on 21 members of different managerial staff at public and private universities on the basis of simple random sample. The data were coded and entered into SPSS 23 for the purpose of analysis. Blank answers were not included in the calculation. All of the scales' dimensions had a score of Cronbach's α that is > 0.6. Accordingly, the questionnaire was then ready for final distribution. To be able to investigate the differences between public and private sectors, stratified random sampling, which has the power to develop separate conclusions about each stratum (sector) and to study the differences between them (Sekaran, 2006; Moore and Notz, 2009), was employed in the study.

6- Study Results

Responding to the study question number 1, which investigates the impact of transactional and transformational leadership on organizational learning, two multiple regression analyses were conducted. The study model results are shown in Figure 2.
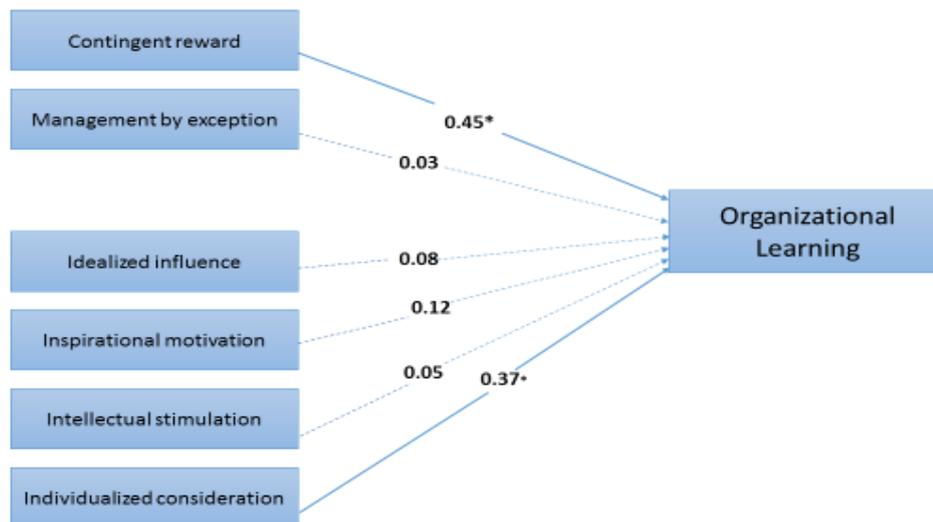

Figure 2 The study model results

For the transactional leadership part, the results showed a significant impact of contingent reward on organizational learning (p-value = 0.00 < 0.05), with a β weight of 0.45. However, no significant impact was found for management by exception on organizational learning (p-value = 0.60 > 0.05). For the transformational leadership part, the results showed a significant impact of Individualized consideration on organizational learning (P-value = 0.00 < 0.05), with a lower value of β weight than it of contingent reward (β =0.37). However, no significant impact was found for idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, or Inspirational motivation (p-value =0.75, 0.58, and 0.17 > 0.05, respectively) on organizational learning (see Table 2), so Hypothesis 1 is partially supported.

Table 2
The impact of transactional leadership, transformational leadership on organizational learning

Leadership style	Dimension	Probability	β
Transactional leadership	Contingent reward	0.00*	0.45*
	Management by exception	0.60	0.03
Transformational leadership	Idealized influence	0.75	0.08
	Inspirational motivation	0.17	0.12
	Intellectual stimulation	0.58	0.05
	Individualized consideration	0.00*	0.37*
Note: *Significant at 0.05			

Responding to the study question number 2, whether any difference in leadership style between public and private universities in Damascus is identified, two independent samples t-test were conducted to compare the two sectors in terms of transactional leadership and transformational leadership. For the transactional leadership part, the results showed that

the mean of transactional leadership of the private sector was greater than its counterpart in the public sector. The difference between the two means was not statistically significant as assessed by the independent samples t-test (p-value =0.48 > 0.05). Hence, there is no significant difference in transactional leadership practice between public and private universities in Damascus. For the transformational leadership part, the results also showed that the mean of transformational leadership of the private sector was a bit greater than its counterpart in the public sector. The difference between the two means was also not statistically significant as assessed by the independent samples t- test (p-value =0.31 > 0.05). Hence, there is no significant difference in transformational leadership practice between public and private universities in Damascus, so Hypothesis 2 isn't supported. Results of both comparisons are presented in Table 3.

Table 3
Comparison of means of transactional and transformational leadership styles between public and private sector

Leadership style	Groups	n	Mean	SD	t-value	Probability
Transactional leadership	Public sector	72	3.03	0.82	-6.57	0.48
	Private sector	82	3.95	0.91		
Transformational leadership	Public sector	72	3.56	0.97	-0.56	0.31
	Private sector	82	3.63	0.85		
Note: Significance level is 0.05 (two-tailed)						

The last study question identifies whether there is a difference in the extent of organizational learning between public and private universities in Damascus. An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the two sectors in terms of organizational learning. The mean of organizational learning of private sector was greater than its counterpart in public sector. However, the difference between the two means was not statistically significant as assessed by the independent samples t-test (p-value= 0.39 > 0.05). Hence, there is no significant difference in organizational learning between public and private universities in Damascus, so Hypothesis 3 isn't supported. Results of comparison are shown in Table 4.

Table 4
Comparison of means of organizational learning between public and private sector

Groups	n	Mean	SD	t-value	Probability
Public sector	72	2.78	0.71	-6.05	0.39
Private sector	82	3.48	0.74		
Note: Significance level is 0.05 (two-tailed)					

7. Discussions / Conclusions

The above results reveal that there is a significant impact of contingent reward on organizational learning. This result is in concurrence with the general pattern found in previous studies (e.g. Coad and Berry, 1998; Bhat et al., 2013), which demonstrated a positive

relationship between contingent reward and organizational learning. However, no significant impact was found for corrective behaviors of transactional leadership, management by exception on the process of organizational learning. In regard to transformational leadership, the study found a significant impact for only one of transformational leadership dimensions, Individualized consideration, on organizational learning. However, no significant impact was found for the other dimensions: idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, and Inspirational motivation. This result is partially consistent with previous studies that proved the role of all transformational leadership dimensions on organizational learning (Coad and Berry, 1998). In contrast, (Khalifa and Ayoubi, 2014) found that there is a significant impact for only one of transformational leadership dimensions, Inspirational motivation, on organizational learning. This could be due to the Weak of morale among workers in addition to the presence of job insecurity especially in the recent Damascus environment, which elevates the need for employees to leadership behaviors that focus on providing a supportive climate in which the leaders listen carefully to the individual needs of followers and to assist them in becoming fully actualized by using delegation methods to help them grow through personal challenges, which are involved in Individualized consideration. Though, contingent reward showed a greater impact on organizational learning compared with Individualized consideration. This may be due to the hard economic reflections of the recent situation.

The study also reveals that there are no significant differences in leadership styles between public and private universities in Damascus. This result Consistent with (Khalifa and Ayoubi, 2014) and contrasts with previous studies that showed significant differences in leadership styles between public and private sectors (Arvonen, 2001; Andersen, 2010). This may be because of several possible reasons. First, Gill (2009) and Rosenau and Linder (2003) claimed that the convergence of circumstances at both sectors results in convergence in leaders' behaviors. In addition to this reason, the majority of leaders at the Damascus private sector are those who previously worked at the public sector; thus, the same leadership style was probably introduced to the private sector. This can also be justified by the nature of higher education governance in the country, where the presidents of universities at both sectors are appointed from the top leadership of the country based mainly on their commitment. This result highlights a need for considering the process of selecting university leaders in Damascus in order to provide more diversification for university leadership.

Finally, the study reveals that there is no significant difference in the extent of organizational learning between public and private universities in Damascus. This result Consistent with (Khalifa and Ayoubi, 2014) and is in contrast to a study conducted by Patnaik et al. (2013), which found a higher extent of organizational learning in private higher education institutions compared to the public ones. The result may be due to a kind of social desirability (Cook and Campbell, 1979; Lee and Sargeant, 2011), which is the inclination of respondents to answer the same normative expected answers. It could also be explained by the previous result, which shows no significant differences in leadership styles between public and private universities. Hence, leaders engage learning in their universities to a convergent extent. Finally, both sectors have the same external environment, which is one of the forces that affect organizational learning (Lam and Pang, 2003; Jansen et al., 2009).

The contributions of the study could be of high importance. On one hand, although the association of leadership and organizational learning has been discussed by leading scholars, it is still largely a theoretical argument. Empirical studies that have investigated the association show contradiction in findings and barely exist in the Arab world. In this vein, this study can advance the existing body of knowledge about the association. On the other hand,

research on organizational learning is directed mainly toward business and industrial organizations, but not educational ones. Nonetheless, the studies focused on higher education are still very few (Patnaik et al., 2013), which gives an additional value to this study. The analysis of this study is limited to only two public universities and two private ones. Drawing on this limitation, the authors suggest directions for future research in the area of university leadership styles in Damascus. First, including more public and private universities could be very beneficial for the study. This would help establishing more powerful generalizations in this area. Second, researchers should also explore investigating contextual factors shaping the relationship between leadership styles and organizational learning, e.g. university size and university age.

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