

## **The Impact of Organizational Culture on Organizational Learning (An Empirical Study on the Education Sector in Damascus City)**

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### **Abstract**

With the development of science and technology and expansion of educational environments, the educational environment has become competitive and challenging. And new paradigms have emerged that have made survival difficult for many universities. In such an environment, the transformation of competitive advantages is natural. Learning is the greatest competitive advantage in the new educational paradigms. Therefore, those universities that learn sooner faster and better than their competitors are more successful. Meanwhile, organizational culture has an impact on all activities of the universities. Since the organizational culture includes a complex part of the values and beliefs of the staff, any changes will lead to the change of learning in the universities. If all the factors of organizational learning are provided but there is no appropriate culture, the organizational learning will not be successful. Hence it is necessary for universities to understand their organizational culture and use the learning as a tool to create competitive advantage. In this paper, the concepts of organizational culture, organizational learning and the effect of organizational culture on organizational learning are discussed at the public and private universities in Damascus.

**Keywords:** Organizational Culture, Organizational Learning, Higher Education, Damascus

## **1. Introduction**

With the increased environmental dynamism and complexity, organizations need changes for protection, survival and growth. In this context, the development of organizational culture will be inevitable. With the study conducted by scholars of management science, the organizational culture has been known as the one of the most influential factors in the development of countries. Organizational culture, as a set of values and beliefs of the organizations' members help them to explain their behavior and also can be used to achieve specific goals. One of the characteristics of organizational culture is shaping the people's behavior and since the change of people's behavior is called "learning", then the key values of the organizations can be more acceptable to the people (Zali, 1999). Learning is the most important way to improve the long-term performance and in the near future the only organization that can exploit the capabilities and commitments in the best way will be able to claim being the best organization. Today the developed countries believe that learning is not an act of choice on the part of managers, but is a necessity. Learning is crucial as the key to conversion (the ability to adapt to changing circumstances) and the reformation of the organization. For this reason, managers should try to develop the learning process in organizations using a dynamic and flexible organizational culture. Hence, the organizational culture must change to a learner culture which supports the learners for making changes, the trust of employees on each other by creating flexible environment (Beyk Zad, 2010). During learning has become one of the hottest topics among the 1990s, the study of organizational researchers and practitioners (Crossan & Guatto, 1996; Easterby-Smith, 1997). Successful competitive advantage by acquiring new organizational learning can lead organization to the Many researchers have examined the necessary knowledge, competences and values. and One of the learning processes. key elements or factors in realizing successful organizational culture, culture. A famous researcher in organizational essential factors is organizational culture is the pattern of basic assumptions that Schein (1984) argues that organizational can give effects to the quality of organization has developed in learning: Therefore, it learning. organizational

Thus, organizational culture can facilitate learning or be a major barrier for it depending on the values it encourages. While the importance of these issues has been widely accepted, to date the linkages between organizational culture and learning has scarcely been examined together in the literature, particularly from an empirical perspective. but only a few studies have focused on the effect of culture on learning (Chin-Loy, 2003; Leona, 2004; Lee and Chen, 2005; Chang and Lee, 2007) The lack of research on these issues is even more evident in the Syrian context, where there are only a few studies focusing on the relation between organizational culture and learning in the Spanish context (Perez et al., 2004). Furthermore, learning and organizational culture (Hofstede, 1980) are mutually dependent on social and cultural context. Thus, studying the linkages between those variables in the public and private universities in Damascus would be the contribution to the literature on how to foster learning in this context. The purpose of this paper is to fill this gap. First, it reviews the literature on the relationship between organizational culture and organizational learning.

### **1.1 The Concepts of the study**

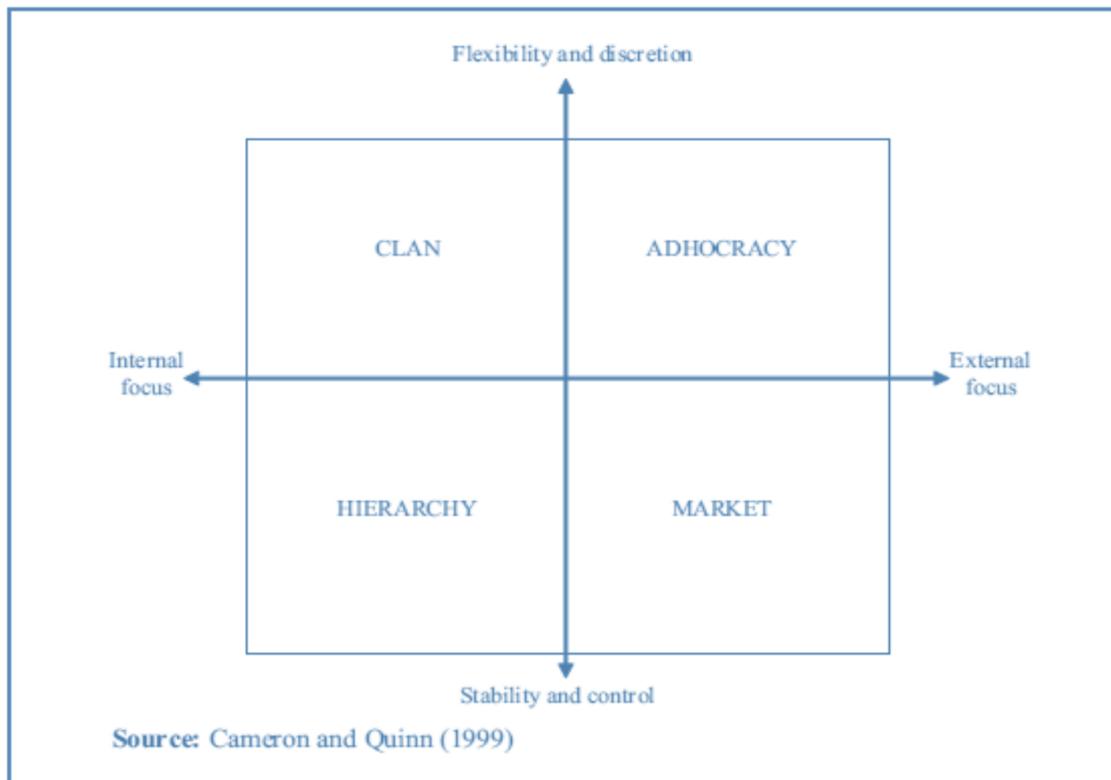
#### **1.1.1 Organizational Cultures**

There have been various definitions on organizational cultures. Galunic and Weeks (2001) considered organizational cultures being the belief and the behaviors that first impression and routines were everywhere in the organization, but not fixed. For this reason, the

environment and the situation in the organization with only one culture would not be changeable that the organization had to slowly modify a suitable culture for the organization. Daft (2001) presented that organizational cultures were the assembly of values, hypotheses, beliefs, awareness, and ideas as well as a real value for mental perception. Deal and Kennedy (1982) defines organizational culture (OC) as “the way things get done around here”. Schein (1985) perceived OC as a pattern of basic assumptions values, and norms – invented, discovered or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration. According to Cameron and Quinn (2006), culture defines the core values, assumptions, interpretations and approaches that characterize an organization. Deal and Kennedy (1982), and Peters and Waterman (1982) focused on the strategic importance of organizational culture. Barney (1991) posited that organizational culture can be a source of sustained competitive advantage. Kotter and Heskett (1992) expanded on this by exploring the importance of adaptability and the fit between an organization and its environment.

Robbins (2001) considered that organizational cultures were a meaningful system which members in the organization held in common so that the organization was different from others. Mitchell and Yate (2002), Chu (2007) further indicated that organizational cultures were the sum of organizational spirit and ideas and the common values, beliefs, behavior criterion, and moralities formed in long-term activities among members in the organization. Furthermore, Yu (2005) proposed to understand the importance of organizational cultures and the management styles and organization impressions resulted from the values which the organization possessed, so that members would put in actions to achieve the organizational objectives, once the organization had established effective cultural structures drew up visions, provided clear values, and presented continuously and periodically complete feedback information.

According to Cameron and Quinn (1999), there is no single correct framework to determine the dimensions of organizational culture. Rather, they advocate an approach that has several important advantages for an organization interested in diagnosing and changing culture, as well as for scholars who have the desire to investigate organizational culture using quantitative and qualitative methods. Their framework provides a means for an organization to understand and analyze key aspects that generate strategies to change culture and improve performance (Cameron & Quinn, 1999). This study will address the organizational culture at the universities of the study sample and examine the role of organizational culture in the organizational learning through the following four-types (see Figure 1). These types are summarized as follows:

**Figure 1** Organizational cultures typology of Cameron and Quinn (1999)

- **Market culture:**

characterized by emphasizing on the competitive advantage and market superiority where leaders drive the organization toward productivity, results and profit, an emphasis on winning holds the organization together, the prevailing concern is on competitive actions and achieving goals, targets and increasing its competitive position (Prajogo and McDermott, 2005).

- **Adhocracy Culture:**

emphasizing innovation and risk-taking where people take risks, leaders are visionary and innovative, the commitment to experimentation and innovation holds the organization together, readiness for a change and meeting new challenges are important, and the emphasis is on being at the leading edge of new knowledge, services and products. (Shepstone and Currie, 2008).

- **Hierarchy Culture:**

characterized by regulations and formal structures where formal rules and policies hold the organization together, procedures govern what people do, effective leaders are good coordinators and organizers, maintenance of a smooth running organization is important and the long-term concerns are stability, predictability and efficiency. ( Alexakis, Platt, & Tesone, 2006).

- **Clan Cultures:**

is represented by a friendly place to work where people share a lot of themselves, leaders serve as mentors, the organization is held together by loyalty and tradition, commitment is high, the emphasis is on the long-term benefit of individual development, high cohesion and morale and a premium is placed on teamwork, participation and consensus (Koutroumanis & Alexakis, 2009).

### 1.1.2 Organizational Learning Factors:

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, 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. 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 its 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).

Khandekar and Sharma (2005) found that work-based learning strategies involving people can help in developing strategic capabilities for sustainable competitive advantage. Sanchez (2005) introduced a general model of OL—the five learning cycles model- to represent how individuals, groups and the overall organization are linked in an OL process.

Prior studies (Goh and Richards, 1997; Hult and Ferrell, 1997, Jerez-Gómez et al., 2005) proposed differences dimensions to measure organization learning capability in the firm. Organization learning 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 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 Esfehiani, 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**

A number of studies have tried to identify their main determinants. Among these, the literature highlights the role of information technologies, firm strategy, organizational design and, more recently, human resources management and organizational culture (Senge, 1990; McGill et al., 1992; Harvey and Denton, 1999; Alavi and Leinder, 2001), since human beings are the main element in knowledge creation (Lang, 2001). Regarding organizational culture,

a number of studies suggest that it plays a key role in the organizational learning (De Long and Fahey, 2000; Argote et al., 2003). Organizational culture can be defined as the values, beliefs and hidden assumptions that organizational members have in common (Deshpande and Webster, 1989; Cameron and Quinn, 1999; Miron et al., 2004). These values, beliefs and assumptions influence behaviors which are central to the OL, either fostering it or acting as a barrier (Davenport and Prusak, 1998; De Long and Fahey, 2000). The importance of organizational culture (OC) in stimulating organizational learning (OL) has been well established (Cook & Yanow, 1993; Popper & Lipshitz, 1998; Schein, 1993, 1996; Yanow, 2000). OC assists the standard process of acquiring knowledge and understanding through thought, experience, and the senses, and thus, enhances the effectiveness of OL and behavior (Kululanga, Edum-Fotwe, & McCaffer, 2001). Lemon and Sahota (2004) suggest that OL plays an important part in ensuring that the knowledge is persistently updated to enable efficient responses to changes. Brian and Pattarawan (2003) found that OC is positively related to OL. Similar findings were reported by Czerniewicz and Brown (2009). Susana, Jose', and Camilo (2004) analyzed the impact of OC on OL, and argued that OC does not directly influence performance; rather it exerts its influence on learning behavior of the organization, which, in turn, improves business performance.

Schein (1996) suggested that OL failures may be caused by lack of communication among the organization's different cultures. OC could serve as a standard of cognitions or interpretations and so would affect the effectiveness of OL and behavior (Mahler 1997). According to Kululanga et al. (2001), OL acts as a catalyst for implementing an OL culture and the learning culture systematically improves OL. OC can be seen as a knowledge repository with the capabilities for storing and processing information, whereas OL plays an important part in ensuring that the knowledge repository is continually replenished and updated to enable efficient responses to changes in its competitive environment (Lemon and Sahota 2004). Brian and Pattarawan (2003) suggested that OC is positively related to OL. In addition, Czerniewicz and Brown (2009) found that OC has a positive effect on OL. According to De Long and Fahey (2000), organizational culture affects OL in four ways. First, culture shapes employees' assumptions about whether knowledge is important or not and what knowledge is worth managing. Second, culture allows individual knowledge to become organizational knowledge, i.e. it influences the OL process. Third, culture shapes the processes by which new knowledge is created, legitimated and distributed. Finally, culture creates the context for social interaction that ultimately determines how effective an organization can be at creating, sharing and applying knowledge. Consequently, different organizational cultures will have different influences on OL (Lee and Chen, 2005).

To summarize, there is an agreement in the literature about the need for a culture which emphasizes employees desire to improve and learn, openness, autonomy or self-direction, employee and empowerment, risk assumption and ambiguity tolerance, creativity, teamwork, interaction with others, open dialogue, long-term orientation, organization commitment and mutual trust. The comparison between the above-mentioned characteristics of learning-oriented culture and the types of cultures in the Cameron and Quinn (1999) model allows some conclusions to be drawn. First, hierarchy is clearly the culture with a higher negative effect on learning. This culture emphasizes the achievements of norms and formal procedures and control, which are considered as the main barriers for learning, since they inhibit autonomy, continuous change orientation, communication and dialogue, empowerment and risk-taking. These characteristics define the stability and control (versus flexibility) dimension of the model of Cameron and Quinn (1999). Taking this into

account, clan and adhocracy cultures, which foster flexibility (versus stability and control), will be those which enhance OL the most. Other values of clan culture considered enablers of OL are organizational commitment and teamwork. Adhocracy culture has other values needed for OL, such as entrepreneurship, openness, risk-taking orientation and change orientation. Finally, although market culture may facilitate the acquisition of information and knowledge from outside, its emphasis on goals accomplishment may reduce the long-term orientation associated to learning. Moreover, this culture focuses on stability and control instead of on the flexibility required to learn. A negative effect of this culture on OL can therefore be expected. There are very few studies on the link between organizational culture and learning (Chang and Lee, 2007; Chin-Loy, 2003; Lee and Chen, 2005; Leona, 2004). Despite some conflicting evidence (Lee and Chen, 2005), their results show a positive influence of organizational culture on OL. In particular, they found that adhocracy and clan culture are positively associated to OL, while hierarchy culture has a negative relation. Taking into account these results and the literature review, H1 is proposed:

H1. Organizational culture will affect organizational learning. In particular:

H1a. Adhocracy culture will have a positive effect on organizational learning.

H1b. Clan culture will have a positive effect on organizational learning.

H1c. Market culture will have a negative effect on organizational learning.

H1d. Hierarchy culture will have a negative effect on organizational learning.

### 3. Conceptual Framework

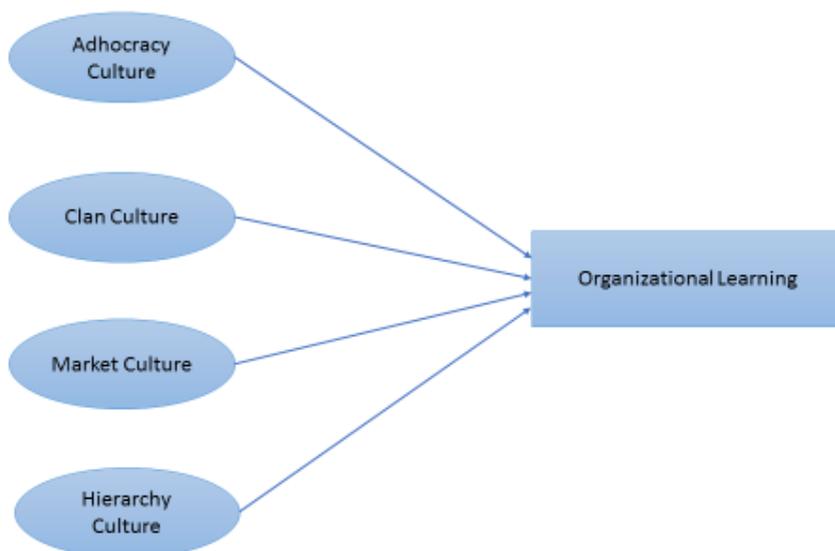


Figure 2

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

### 4. Research Method

#### 4.1 Sample

Data for the study of the impact of Organizational Culture on organizational learning ratings were collected from 383 employees in public and private universities in Damascus city. The response rate was 85%. Of the respondents, 55.1% were Female and 44.9% were Male. In addition, 29.8% of the respondents were younger than 30 years, 42.6% were between 30 and 45 years, 27.7% were older than 45 years. Also, 29.2% had worked in the universities for less than 5 years, 21.1% between 5 and 10 years of Experience, 15.1% had worked in the universities between 10 and 15 years of Experience and 34.5% had worked More than 15 years. The demographic data of the sample used in analysis is shown in Table 1.

#### *4.2 Measures*

The main aim of the study is to investigate the impact of Organizational Culture 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 type of Organizational Culture at public and private universities in Damascus, which is the independent variable, our measure of organizational culture is based on the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI) developed by Cameron and Quinn (1999). This measure has been used in previous research on organizational culture (Desphande et al., 1993; Obenchain, 2002, Obenchain and Johnson, 2004; Lau and Ngo, 2004) and some authors have validated it (Quinn and Spreitzer, 1991; Howard, 1998). Following the OCAI methodology, the questionnaire included 16 items organized into four parts (corresponding to the four dimensions used) with four descriptions in each part. The four descriptions matched the definitions of each of the four culture types (adhocracy, clan, market and hierarchy). 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.

Demographics	n		%	
	Public Universities	Private Universities	Public Universities	Private Universities
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	106	66	61.6%	38.4%
Female	141	70	66.8%	33.2%
<b>Age</b>				
30 and less	53	61	46.5%	53.5%
31-45	114	49	69.9%	30.1%
45 and more	80	24	76.9%	23.1%
<b>Education</b>				
Secondary and less	53	27	66.3%	33.8%
Bachelor	53	64	45.3%	54.7%
Master degree	63	23	73.3%	26.7%
Ph.D. degree	78	22	78%	22%
<b>Years of working</b>				
5 and less	58	54	51.8%	48.2%
6-10	49	32	60.5%	39.5%
11-15	38	20	65.5%	34.5%
16 and more	102	30	77.3%	22.7%
<b>Nature of work</b>				
Academic	101	14	87.8%	12.2%
Administrative	109	92	54.2%	45.8%
Academic & Administrative	37	30	55.2%	44.8%

Table 1.  
Demographic data

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 & academic 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  $\alpha$  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.

**5- Study Results**

Responding to the study Hypothesis number 1, which investigates the impact of knowledge management on organizational learning, multiple regression analyses were conducted. The study model results are shown in Figure 3.

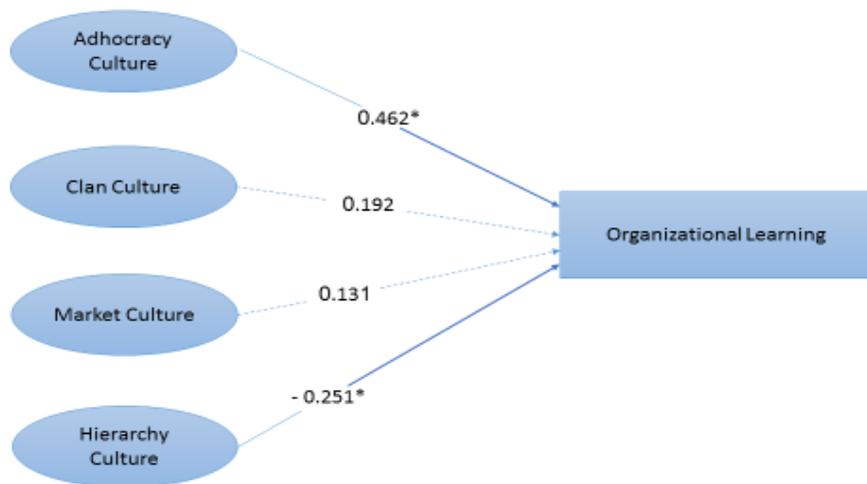


Figure 3

The study model results

The results showed a positive significant impact of Adhocracy culture on organizational learning (p-value = 0.00 < 0.05), with a  $\beta$  weight of .0462, so Hypothesis 1a is fully supported. However, the findings do not support the expected effects for neither clan culture nor market culture. Regarding clan culture, the results showed no significant impact of clan culture on organizational learning (p-value = 0.261 > 0.05), with a  $\beta$  weight of 0.192. with regards to Market Culture, the results showed no significant impact of Market culture on organizational learning (p-value = 0.106 > 0.05), with a  $\beta$  weight of 0.131, so both of Hypothesis 1b and 1c aren't supported. Finally, the results showed also a negative significant impact of Hierarchy culture on organizational learning (p-value = 0.00 < 0.05), with a  $\beta$  weight of - 0.251 (see Table 2), so Hypothesis 1d is fully supported.

Organizational Culture	Dimension	Probability	$\beta$
	Adhocracy Culture	0.00*	0.462*
	Clan Culture	0.261	0.192
	Market Culture	0.106	0.131

	Hierarchy Culture	0.00*	- 0.251*
Note: *Significant at 0.05			

Table 2.

The impact of Organizational Culture on organizational learning

The results obtained for the four types and culture suggest that culture may affect organizational learning but in order to do it, culture should foster both flexibility (versus stability and control) and an external orientation (versus an internal focus). These are the key cultural values of the adhocracy culture, the only one which was found to have a positive effect on organizational learning. The findings for hierarchy culture provide also support for this idea since this culture is found to have a negative effect on organizational learning and its key values are the opposite. That is to say, hierarchy culture has an internal focus and fosters stability and control.

### 6. Discussions / Conclusions

Generally, Organizational culture and organizational learning are the collective behavior of humans that are parts of an organization and the meanings that the people attach to their actions. Culture includes the organization values, visions, norms, working language, systems, symbols, beliefs and habits. It is also the pattern of such collective behaviors and assumptions that are taught to new organizational members as a way of perceiving, and even thinking and feeling. It has been argued that an organization possesses a culture that is a mix of different types of culture based on competing value framework (Skelavaj et al., 2007). Organizational culture (OC) is believed to be the most significant input to effective organizational learning (OL) because universities' culture determines values, beliefs, and work systems that could encourage or impede learning (Leonard 1995; Alavi and Leidner 2001; Gold, Malhotra and Segars 2001). We identified that the effect of these different types of culture is different on OL of the universities. Based on the research framework and empirical analyses, this study facilitates a better understanding of the causal relationships between OC and OL. This study thus has value as a reference for public and private universities in Damascus for their establishment of OC and implementation of OL.

The empirical results of this study show that OC in public and private universities in Damascus have a significantly impact in OL, this mean The importance of a good working environment (organizational culture) is a driver for organizational learning. This result is consistent with previous research discussed above (Brian and Pattarawan 2003; Lin et al. 2004; Susana et al. 2004; Weerawardena et al. 2006; Argote et al., 2003; Chin-Loy, 2003; De Long and Fahey, 2000) as well as for the Lee and Chen (2005) proposition that the impact of organizational culture on OL varies with the type of organizational culture. According to our results, the type of organizational culture which encourages OL is adhocracy, while hierarchy culture is negatively associated to OL. Another interesting result of this study is related to clan and market cultures. In the case of clan culture, it was expected to be have positive effect on OL due to its flexibility (versus stability and control) orientation but results were not significant for this culture. A possible explanation for this result is that although flexibility is important for OL, an external orientation is also required in order to acquire knowledge and the clan culture fosters the opposite value, an internal focus. Regarding market culture, authors suggest that due to its emphasis on control and stability (versus flexibility) it has a negative effect on OL. However, the findings do not support this hypothesis. The reason may be that its external focus may mitigate the negative effect of its control and stability orientation. In sum, our findings show that in order to foster OL, the universities' organizational culture should have both an external orientation and a flexibility orientation.

Furthermore, organizational culture can be a key enabler of OL or a major barrier, depending on the values it includes. If the universities have a hierarchy culture, it should be changed, since our findings provide evidence that it is a barrier for OL. However, our findings also show that adhocracy culture fosters OL. Some of the main values of this culture are openness, risk-taking, continuous change orientation and flexibility. Thus, in order to foster OL universities must make efforts to develop an adhocracy culture since its main goal to adapt quickly to new opportunities. In short, our findings can guide universities' manager's efforts in the development of an organizational culture, which fosters OL. Universities should open up boundaries and promote the acquisition of new knowledge, for example by stimulating universities' members to attend national and international conferences regularly and to participate in multi-agency and multi-stakeholder committees and initiatives. This could also happen through participatory research projects ant international, regional and national levels.

Universities' decision makers should enhance the knowledge distribution within the universities, for example by using formal mechanisms to guarantee the sharing of best practice among different employees and departments, making employees talk with each other, using teamwork, making individuals responsible for collecting and distributing employee's suggestions internally. To make employees talk with each other, universities should address formal and informal mechanisms that link employees. Appropriate time for general discussion, tea breaks, and lunch breaks may assist in the creation of space for informal linkages and learning. universities need to give special attention to teamwork. According to Garcia-Morales et al. (2006), without team learning, the organization cannot learn. Teams are basic learning units, more so than the individual. The role of the team is so important that team learning is one of the five disciplines that advance organizational learning. Self-led work teams encourage specialization and allow employees to interact with each other and share experiences and mental models (Nonaka 1994). To create the above mentioned conditions, the universities should begin with the development of those in charge of helping to learn, i.e., the educators themselves. They should be a good role model. Educators open to learning stimulate learning in others by helping the universities' members to discover their own mental models, to restructure their visions of reality so as to see beyond the superficial conditions, to develop systemic comprehension and to learn (Garcia-Morales et al. 2006).

Therefore, we conclude that, if the public and private universities in Damascus intend to compete successfully with other higher education institutions, meet the community and market needs, attract enthusiastic and high-achieving students and help to overcome graduate unemployment problem, they should seriously consider organizational culture and organizational learning processes. Based on these results, we can state that in any organization the organizational culture and organizational learning are important variables in each university. Also, based on previous researches, these variables are correlated with personality traits and organizational commitment and we suggested that in future researches to be considered these personality variable. Future research could be extended to other sectors like health, services, communication, manufacturing and IT organizations, in order to have greater generalizability.

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