THE INFLUENCE OF A LEARNING ORGANISATION ON SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING AMONG STAFF: A CASE OF UGANDA REVENUE AUTHORITY

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of a learning organisation on self-directed learning (SDL) among organisational staff in Uganda. It used Uganda Revenue Authority (URA) as a case of a learning organisation to establish this. This study was prompted by claims of inappropriate staff development interventions in URA and the increasing need for SDL among staff in the organisation. The study followed a cross-sectional explanatory design. The respondents were 85 comprising tactical and operational line managers, selected using proportionate stratified random sampling techniques. Questionnaires were used for data collection. The results from analysis revealed that the two sub-variables of a learning organisation (leadership & culture) jointly explain 34.1 per cent of the variance in SDL. Organizational culture was the stronger predictor of the changes in SDL, meanwhile leadership was the weaker predictor of SDL. The study concluded that a learning organization that aims at promoting SDL among staff can depend on leadership and organization culture as potential building blocks to achieve SDL. The study recommends that, since leadership influences SDL among staff, line managers (leaders) should seek new learning opportunities for the units and sections they are responsible for; line managers should also mentor their subordinates to engage in SDL; and URA should create a strong culture that promotes innovativeness, flexibility and involvement of staff members in order to augment the SDL initiatives among staff.

Key words: learning organisation; organisation leadership; organisational culture; self-directed learning; Uganda Revenue Authority

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Introduction

The concept of a learning organisation has attracted a lot of attention since 1980s and 1990s when it was first advanced as one of the necessary conditions for organisation growth and development (Senge, 1990, 2006; Garvin, 2000; Cummings & Worley, 2009; Pedler & Hsu, 2019). A learning organisation is one that is skilled at creating, acquiring, interpreting, transferring, and retaining knowledge (Garvin, 2000). Such an organisation facilitates her employees to identify and utilize opportunities to learn from the available resources and adds value to the organization by converting individual information into organizational knowledge (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Juntunen, 2009). In a learning organisation, learning is organised to facilitate teamwork, collaboration, creativity and knowledge processing to generate collective meaning and value (Confessore & Kops, 1998). Meanwhile, self-directed learning refers to a situation where "individuals take responsibility for their own learning needs, either to improve performance in their present job or to develop their potential and satisfy their career aspirations" (Armstrong & Taylor, 2016, p. 299). Today, organisations seeking to transform their operations, policies and systems including staff capabilities, among others, endeavour to operate as learning organisations. In view of the above perception, Uganda Revenue Authority (URA) has injected a lot of resources in staff development initiatives, systems, policies, technology and infrastructure development (URA, 2018). These initiatives position URA as a learning organisation. However, what needs to be clarified is whether or not a learning organisation can bolster self-directed learning (SDL) among staff. In this article we therefore analyse how URA as a learning organization is influencing SDL among tactical and operational line managers. We argue that while some scholars (e.g. Rana, Ardichvili & Polesello, 2016) emphasise SDL as a driver of a learning organisation, it is also possible for a learning organisation to foster SDL among staff. And, we advance this argument using URA as an example.

Contextual setting

URA is a statutory and semi-autonomous constitutional body that was established in 1991 under the Uganda Revenue Authority Act, 1991 with a mandate to: assess and collect specified revenue; administer and enforce the laws relating to such revenue; and provide for related matters (Government of Uganda, 1991). The organisation focuses on maximizing tax compliance through leveraging technology and professionalism as a way of generating revenue for the government. This strategy has since positioned URA as a learning organization and has also defined her staff and the type of service provided by the organization.

Since her inception, URA has undergone various transformational drives that have led to the growth of her staff, systems and processes, for instance; restructuring in 2004 – 2005; and business process re-engineering to systems improvement in 2005 – 2010 and 2010 – 2015 respectively. Indeed, as scholars indicate, URA has gradually evolved through modernization of her staff, systems and processes (Bbaale, Gaalya & Hisali, 2014). To this end, given the continued transformation of her staff, systems and processes, URA can be considered a learning organisation.

Furthermore, URA has created an enabling environment by embracing the project-based work methodology where a group of staff are given high level work assignments

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that are meant to address initiatives in her business strategy (Bbaale *et al.,* 2014). Staff who have been placed on these assignments have had to work very hard to bring these projects to completion; for example, the Customs Business Service Enhancement Programme (2010 - 2015); URA Business Plan that saw the birth of the Electronic Cargo Tracking System; the organization wide teambuilding in 2012/13; Fired Up for Excellent Leadership programme; and Get Equipped and Reinforced Programme. These projects have been supported by the strong leadership and the culture of innovation that have since been adopted by staff. Available reports, nonetheless, indicate that these achievements are a result of some few employees and not the majority as the ideal situation would be. And, in case of significant employee turnover, the remaining staff may not be in position to sustain these projects of a learning organization (URA, 2018). Probably, cultures such as adoption of SDL among staff would be instrumental in sustaining such development initiatives.

The Problem

Much as URA is considered to be a learning organization, it is however not clear whether this characteristic has influenced SDL among her staff. According to the URA Corporate Plan (2016), one of the organisation's weaknesses is the inappropriate staff development initiatives. This weakness might be compromising learning opportunities including SDL among staff. Yet, as Farhanah, Norhasni and Khairuddin (2014) argue, a learning organisation has SDL or individual learning as its foundation. Akin to this perspective is the view of Park (2008) that SDL plays a fundamental role in developing and fostering a learning organisation. What, however, is not clearly documented is the

extent to which a learning organisation can, through her initiatives of organisational leadership and culture influence SDL among organisational staff, particularly in developing countries such as Uganda.

In light of the above scenario, this study therefore sought to answer some two questions, namely:

i) To what extent does leadership influence the levels of SDL among staff in URA?

ii) What is the effect of organisational culture on the levels of SDL among staff in URA?

Theoretical review

In order to analyse the influence of a learning organisation on SDL among staff, we considered one of the adult learning theories that relate to how and why learning takes among people in a work environment. Borrowing from the psychology and philosophy of learning, *Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory* was adopted. The experiential learning theory (ELT) postulates that learning occurs through grasping and transforming experience. ELT defines learning as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience"(Kolb, 1984, p. 41). In essence, "experiential learning takes place when people learn from their experience by absorbing and reflecting on it so that it can be understood and applied. Thus, people become active agents of their own learning" (Armstrong & Taylor, 2016, p. 292). Its basic premise is that learning occurs through a combination of grasping and transforming experience.

ELT constitutes four stages of learning as identified by Kolb, Rubin and McIntyre (1974), that is: concrete experience;

abstract conceptualization that comprise the grasping component; reflective observation; and active experimentation that make up the transforming experience component. Essentially, this learning process is like a cycle in which the learner proceeds through the sequences of experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting in a repeating progression that is unique to each learning circumstance. Hence, concrete experiences (experiencing) spark observation and reflection (reflecting), which is internalized and integrated into abstract concepts (thinking) that spark new behavioural experimentation (acting) (Yeganeh & Kolb, 2009, p. 15). This learning cycle can be entered at any point, but the stages are always followed in a sequence.

The key principles of experiential learning include: learning is more efficient when the subject matter is relevant to the personal interests of the students; learning which is threatening to the self (e.g. new perspectives) are more easily assimilated and faster when external threats are at a minimum; self-initiated learning is the most lasting and pervasive; and students should have complete control over the entire learning process, its nature and direction (Lam, 2013). It has been argued that, "learning through experience in the workplace can be enhanced by encouraging learners to reflect on and make better use of what they learn through their own work and from other people" (Armstrong & Taylor, 2016, p. 296). In reflection to the theory, the URA staff have been engaged in different projects where they have presumably accumulated experience necessary to execute the duties assigned to them just like the experiential learning theory postulates. What now needed to be analysed was the extent to which this experiential learning has influenced SDL.

Literature review

A learning organisation

A learning organization is one where, "people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together" (Senge, 2006, p. 6). It can also be described as an organization that, "facilitates the learning of all its members and continually transforms itself" (Pedler, Burgoyne & Boydell, 1997, p. 3). Basically, a learning organisation is skilled at creating, acquiring, interpreting, transferring, and retaining knowledge (Garvin, 2000). It is characterised by five features, namely: structure (layers, relations, networks); information systems (gathering & processing information); human resource practices (appraisals, rewards & training); organisational culture (openness, creativity & experimentation); and leadership (openness, risk taking and reflection) (McGill, Slocum & Lei, 1993; Cummings & Worley, 2009). In this article, we analyse a learning organisation in terms of the last two features (i.e. leadership & culture) out of those five. We deemed leadership and organisational culture to be the most relevant features to the URA business.

A key representation of the learning organization is the ability of its employees to identify and utilize opportunities to learn from the available resources or situation and adding value to the organization by converting individual information into organizational knowledge (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Juntunen, 2009; Pedler & Hsu, 2019). In such an organisation, learning is organised to facilitate teamwork, collaboration, creativity and knowledge processing to generate collective meaning

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and value (Confessore & Kops, 1998). Ideally, a learning organisation empowers staff to learn as they work and technology is used to enhance both learning and performance (Marquardt, 1996). The learning organisation therefore is able to consider the efficiency of all individuals involved in the organisation and can enhance their SDL opportunities.

Self-Directed Learning

Self-directed learning (SDL) is a learning process in which the learner takes the responsibility and works independently on his own in the process of learning in order to meet his own goals or the demands in his context (Williamson, 2007; Morris, 2019a). SDL refers to learning in which learners have the fundamental responsibility for their own educational experiences. The learner takes the initiative and at times with the help of others in identifying learning needs, preparing goals, determining resources, strategies and evaluating learning outcomes (Knowles, 1975; Merriam, 2001; Ellinger, 2004; Morris, 2019b). And, as Armstrong and Taylor (2016, p. 299) explain, "self-directed or self-managed learning involves encouraging individuals to take responsibility for their own learning needs, either to improve performance in their present job or to develop their potential and satisfy their career aspirations". Such learning processes are common among adult learners and, as Noe, Clarke and Klein (2014) indicate, SDL at work can be actualised formally or informally. Moreover, Knowles (1975) argues that in andragogy learners become increasingly self-directed as they mature. Therefore, it is possible for staff such as of URA to improve their own capabilities through learning on their own new and better ways of doing things.

SDL is initiated, managed, and monitored by the individual with the resolve of achieving a defined goal. One of the goals of SDL is "the development of the learner's capacity to be self-directed" (Merriam, 2001, p.9). SDL can be seen from three dimensions that are overlapping as discussed by Park (2008) and Fisher and King (2010), namely: (i) Self-management that focuses on external activities relating with the learning process through application of learning initiatives that are social and behavioural in nature; (ii) Self-monitoring that addresses cognitive and meta-cognitive processes: monitoring the selection of learning strategies as well as an ability to think about our thinking; and (iii) Self-motivation being the process whereby the learner takes charge of the construction of personal meaning. In this article, we discuss SDL from those three dimensions.

Leadership and self-directed learning

As already indicated, leadership is one of the five features of a learning organisation (the others being structure, information systems, human resource practices, & organisational culture). Leadership is a key feature of a learning organization given that it gives the vision and direction of the organization. According to McGill, *et al.* (1993) and Cummings and Worley (2009), the success of a learning organisation depends heavily on effective leadership throughout the organisation because leaders model the openness, risk taking and reflection necessary for individual learning. However, it is not just any type of leadership but possession of some qualities that define leadership such as empathy, support and advocacy that fosters organisational success.

Leadership is a versatile process that requires working with others in personal and professional relationships to

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accomplish a goal (Strong, Wynn, Irby & Lindner, 2013). Nurturing leadership skills is important for learners who are developing professional competencies. Actually, Strong *et al*. examined the relationship between leadership style and SDL levels and found leadership to be influencing some job performance variables. For instance, task oriented leadership style was found to be correlated with students' self-directedness levels. In a way, the leadership style influenced SDL in positively.

As literature further indicates, "a self-directed learner can engage in independent projects, student-directed discussions, and discovery learning" (Merriam, 2001, p. 8). In addition, SDL being a unique learning model emphasizes non-centralized classrooms and participative learning and presents a rich context for reviewing the leadership practices of an organisation (Duby, 2006). In SDL, students can be facilitated to become more self-directed learners by providing them with resources, learning tools, and encouragement (Brockett & Hiemstra, 1991). Such assistance can transform the teacher into a counsellor, consultant and an effective leader.

Leaders seeking to influence SDL among staff of an organisation need to appreciate how adults learn. For instance, leaders may reflect on some five assumptions of andragogy that describe the adult learner as someone who: (i) has an independent self-concept and who can direct his or her own learning; (ii) has accumulated a reservoir of life experiences that is a rich resource for learning; (iii) has learning needs closely related to changing social roles; (iv) is problem-centred and interested in immediate application of knowledge; and (v) is motivated to learn by internal rather than external factors (Knowles, 1980).

Knowles suggests that the classroom climate should be one of 'adultness,' both physically and psychologically. This is probably because, as Khalil, (2017) asserts, in an adult classroom, adults feel accepted, respected and supported. It is such environments that support SDL and even allow critical thinking among learners. Just as Manee, Rujires and Prapis, (2006) and Li Ping, (2010) posit, the process of SDL involves students in critical thinking. But, this approach also reflects on the leadership in charge of learning.

Organizational culture and self-directed learning

Culture is about the beliefs, views and assumptions that a group of people in a society have (Dweck, 2007). Culture includes several elements or features that can be measured such as "artefacts, norms, values, and basic assumptions that are more or less shared by organisation members" (Cummings & Worley, 2009, p. 520). Organization culture is about the various ideologies, beliefs, principles and practices of an organization which make it unique from others (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010; Schein & Schein, 2010). The meanings attached to these elements help staff members to evaluate everyday life in an organisation, decide how to work and even relate to each other including external stakeholders (Cummings & Worley, 2009; Hofstede, *et al.,* 2010). Organisation culture influences the way staff interact with each other and behave with clients of the company (Schein & Schein, 2010). Therefore, culture can support or frustrate staff efforts and the organisation in realizing what they want to achieve.

Organizations are continuously evolving cultures that are aimed at keeping them (organisations) in business. Organizations adopt cultures over a period of time as the

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employees go through various changes, adapt to the external environment and solve problems through day to day experience and then a workplace culture evolves (Schein & Schein 2010). An organizational culture is usually defined in the organizational strategy under the core values and reinforced by the leadership behaviour. Leaders are the communicators of culture in an organization. According to Rijal (2010), there are substantial positive links between transformational cultures and desirable outcomes at both organizational and individual levels. And, in the view of Parry and Proctor (2000), a transformational culture is an organizational culture that is supportive of innovation and change. Such a culture, in some way, describes a learning organisation.

The cultural changes in a learning organisation can be effected through staff training and development. Non-traditional training and learning approaches, including SDL, are some of the organizational responses to meet the complex demands associated with the cultural change in the workplace (Park, 2008). Actually, the workplace culture may determine the success or failure in meeting learning objectives. As scholars indicate, to be able to capture, maintain and integrate new information that is useful for improving organizational performance, a system to effectively capture and share learning is required (Lipshitz, Friedman & Popper, 2007). To enhance organizational performance, strategic leadership can influence organizational culture, reward systems and boundaries (Weldy, 2009). Here, leadership uses learning strategically to enhance learning and business performance.

From the foregoing literature review, it is evident that a learning organization and SDL are related. A learning organization, as already discussed, has various attributes that define it which may include leadership and the organizational culture. And, SDL has also attributes such as self-management, self-monitoring and self-motivation. But, what we sought to analyse in this article was the influence or contribution of learning organisation on SDL among staff in URA. Arising out of the literature review, the study hypothesised that:

i)   Leadership has a significant influence on the levels of SDL among staff in URA

ii) Organizational culture has a significant influence on the levels of SDL among staff in URA

The study population and methods

The study was quantitative in approach and it used an explanatory cross-sectional survey design. It was a study of the tactical and operational line managers of URA from whom data were collected. The variables analysed were defined by the influence of a learning organisation on SDL among staff. The study population was 131 line managers. Of these, a sample of 97 respondents was drawn comprising 19 tactical managers and 78 operational managers. Sample selection was done using proportionate stratified random sampling techniques. The categories of line managers in URA were: (i) strategic line managers (Commissioners & Assistant Commissioners); (ii) tactical line managers (Managers), and (iii) operational line managers (Supervisors). The study, however, focused on tactical and operational line managers only because they are the ones who participate in training

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programmes most and also handle the daily operations of URA.

Self-administered questionnaires were used to collect data from both tactical and operational line managers. The questionnaires helped in collecting standardized data in a fast way and, apart from being cost effective, respondents easily completed them. Correlation statistics were computed to establish the relationship between learning organisation indicators (leadership & culture) and SDL among staff. Regression coefficients were generated using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences in order to establish the degree to which the selected learning organisation indicators predicted variations in SDL. Indeed, the statistics showed the influence of leadership and organizational culture on SDL among URA staff.

Regarding ethics, we obtained permission from the Research and Ethics Committee at Uganda Management Institute to carry out this study. Clearance was also obtained from the Commissioner General of URA to access the respondents. As researchers, we endeavoured to maintain the anonymity and confidentiality of the respondents by coding the data without capturing their names. We also obtained informed consent from each respondent selected to complete the questionnaire. Besides, for the literature reviewed, we acknowledged all sources cited.

Analysis and interpretation of results

The results were from 85 respondents who completed and returned the questionnaires out of the targeted 97 respondents. Of

these, 46 were male while 39 were female. A total of 66 were operational line managers while 19 were tactical managers. And, 80 respondents had served in URA for more than six years and only five had worked in URA for less than six years.

The results were from the line and operational managers who completed the questionnaires. From the descriptive statistics, it was established that SDL had some strong points on account of the mean scores. For instance, respondents were motivated to improve their capabilities in relation to the job (mean = 2.01, SD = 0.91); and respondents had the drive and passion to achieve personal development plan within the set timelines (mean = 2.05, SD = 1.01). These data show that the majority of URA tactical and operational line managers were engaged in SDL given the fact that they scored positively on all the items measured. However, there was still need to explain the influence of a learning organisation on SDL among staff at URA.

Leadership and self-directed learning at URA

As indicated in the background and literature review, leadership is one of the two sub-variables of a learning organisation analysed. Leadership in URA was being offered by strategic line managers (Assistant Commissioners & Commissioners). These were the immediate supervisors of the respondents.

The study analysed the relationship between leadership and self-directed learning. A correlation analysis was performed. The results in Table 1 summarize the findings on this analysis.

Table 1: Correlation between leadership and self-directed learning

Correlations		Leadership	Self-directed learning
Leadership	Pearson Correlation	1	.422[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	85	85
Self-directed learning	Pearson Correlation	.422[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	85	85
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Source: Primary Data

From Table 1, the results indicate that there is a positive, significant and strong relationship between leadership and self-directed learning in URA (r=0 .422[**], p<0.01). This means that positive changes in leadership will lead to positive changes in self-directed learning. Thus, as URA improves on its leadership, improved self-directed learning is likely to be attained.

Furthermore, the study analysed the influence of leadership on the level of SDL among staff in URA. A regression analysis was performed. The analysis aimed at showing the extent to which leadership can predict the variations in SDL among staff at URA. The results that were obtained are indicated in Table 2.

Table 2: Regression between leadership and self-directed learning

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.422[a]	.178	.168	.56019
a. Predictors: (Constant), leadership				

ANOVA[a]						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	5.651	1	5.651	18.006	.000[b]
	Residual	26.046	83	.314		
	Total	31.697	84			
a. Dependent Variable: SDL						

b. Predictors: (Constant), Leadership					
Coefficients[a]					
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.340	.208		6.448	.000
	leadership	.371	.088	.422	4.243	.000
a. Dependent Variable: SDL					

(n = 85)

The results from regression analysis in Table 2 indicate that leadership is a predictor of SDL among staff in URA (F= 18.006, P<0.01). This means that some changes that occur in SDL among staff in URA are associated with leadership, that is leadership style and maturity. The analysis also reveals that the adjusted R Square =.168, p<0.01, implies that 16.8 per cent of the variance in SDL among staff is due or attributable to leadership style in URA as a learning organisation.

Furthermore, the table provides the regression results with standardised [positive] beta coefficient, B= 0.422 that is statistically significant since the resulting level of significance (P=0.000) is less than the 0.01. The regression coefficient of B=+0.422 with P<0.01, means that organisational leadership has a statistically significant positive influence on SDL among staff. The result (B=+0.422, P<0.01) implies that a unit (like 1%) change/reform [increase] in leadership leads to an improvement in SDL among staff of URA by 0.422 units or per cent.

Based on these results, the first study hypothesis which stated that; *Leadership has a significant influence on the level of SDL among staff in URA,* was accepted. This is because causation was revealed between the two variables in which leadership was noted to have a significant positive influence on SDL (B=0.422[**]). Indeed, this score suggests that once leadership is improved and streamlined, SDL among staff will improve in the learning organisation, URA.

Organization culture and SDL among staff at URA

The study also analysed the influence of organisation culture on SDL at URA. Some literature reviewed in this article suggests that there is a relationship between organisation culture and SDL among staff. In this subsection, we therefore analysed if indeed the culture of URA can be linked to SDL among staff. Table 3 presents the correlation results.

Table 3: Correlation between organizational culture and self-directed learning at URA

Correlations		Self-directed learning	Organizational culture
Self-directed learning	Pearson Correlation	1	.427**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	85	85
Organizational culture	Pearson Correlation	.427**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	85	85
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

From Table 3, results indicate that there is a positive, significant and moderate relationship between organizational culture and SDL among staff at URA (r=.427**, p<0.01). This means that as positive changes occur in organizational culture, positive changes are expected in SDL among staff. Therefore, positive changes in organizational culture in URA are likely to cause positive changes in SDL in URA.

The second hypothesis of this study focused on the influence of organization culture on SDL among staff in URA. We ran a regression analysis in order to establish the extent to which changes in SDL can be attributable to organizational culture. The results from the analysis are presented in Table 4 below

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Table 4: Regression between organizational culture and SDL among staff at URA

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.427[a]	.183	.173	.55870
a. Predictors: (Constant), organizational culture				

ANOVAa						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	5.789	1	5.789	18.547	.000[b]
	Residual	25.908	83	.312		
	Total	31.697	84			

a. Dependent Variable: SDL					
b. Predictors: (Constant), Organizational culture					
Coefficients[a]					
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.176	.242		4.869	.000
	Organizational culture	.441	.102	.427	4.307	.000
a. Dependent Variable: SDL					

(n = 85)

The results of regression analysis in Table 4 show that organizational culture is a predictor of SDL in URA (F= 18.547, P<0.01). The Adjusted R Square =.173, p<0.0, shows that culture explains 17.3 per cent of the variance in SDL in URA. This implies that 17.3 per cent variation in the SDL among staff of URA is associated with the changes in organizational culture. Besides, the regression coefficient results (Beta=0.427, p<0.01) imply that the organizational culture is a significant predictor of SDL in URA.

Since these results indicated that organizational culture has a statistical significant positive influence on SDL, then the second study hypothesis which stated; *Organisational culture has a significant influence on the level of SDL among staff in URA,* was accepted. The hypothesis was accepted because causation was revealed between the two variables (.427[**]). These data further suggest that once organizational culture is well managed to create a conducive environment, SDL among staff will significantly improve to some extent.

Discussion of results

The discussion is focused on the influence of a learning organisation on SDL among staff. Analysis is put on leadership and organisational culture as potential drivers of SDL (self-motivation, self-management & self-monitoring). It was established that indeed leadership has a significant influence on the level of SDL among staff in URA.

The results revealed that leadership, as a sub-variable of a learning organisation, is a predictor of SDL among staff in URA and hence leadership can influence SDL in an organisation. This result relates to what Priefert (2014) holds that leadership provides conducive environments in which SDL thrives because leaders in learning organizations are designers, teachers and stewards. Similarly, Joo (2011) notes that leaders have a big part they play in helping individuals to appreciate their roles and seek to learn more to remain relevant in their contribution to the organization. Therefore, SDL among staff can be enhanced through leadership efforts that clarify the centrality of learning to the success of URA. And, just like what Kolb (1984) in experiential learning theory argues, learning is more efficient when the

subject matter is relevant to the personal interests of the learner.

The study further revealed that organizational culture is a predictor of SDL at URA. In general, organisational culture has a significant influence on the level of SDL among staff in URA. By implication URA culture in terms of flexibility, staff involvement in decision making, innovativeness and creativity has an influence on their SDL outcomes. Owing to organisation culture, URA staff tend to be self-motivated, self-monitored and self-managed. Actually, culture represents the social context that, according to Tan (2017) and Morris (2019b), explains how SDL happens in a social or contextual environment. The social environment, as Dweck (2007) also asserts, determines whether the employees are easily adaptable to change or not.

According to Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory, self-initiated learning is the most lasting form of learning. In the context of URA, the adoption of SDL among staff would be considered self-initiated learning. Such learning might thrive in a culture that promotes SDL. Besides, as McGill, *et al.* (1993) observe, learning organizations operate in a cultural environment that promotes creativity and experimentation among members. Organisational cultures that are dynamic tend to foster individual staff learning initiatives. In URA, SDL could be one of the individual outcomes where staff are involved in self-monitoring and self-management in their learning and work.

Conclusions and implications of the study

Learning organizations that aim at SDL can inter alia depend on their leadership and cultures as key building blocks to achieve this goal. The presence and strength of leadership and organisational culture may eventually determine the potential of an organization, such as URA, to foster SDL among staff.

The study revealed that leadership facilitates individuals to advance to SDL in terms of self-motivation, self-monitoring and self-management in competence improvement initiatives. It can be concluded that leadership style and maturity used by an organization influence the nature and level of SDL among staff.

Since leadership positively influences SDL, strategic line managers in learning organisations should refine their leadership styles or approaches in the departments they head in order to promote SDL among staff. Furthermore, the strategic line managers (leaders) should continuously develop the capabilities of their subordinates and facilitate them to learn more on their own. Learning should be continuous just like in Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle that goes through the processes of experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting on ideas. Thus, in order to ensure sustained improvement in SDL among staff, a learning organisation should focus a lot on nurturing appropriate leadership reforms or better changes in leadership issues with positive effects [benefits] on staff for positive attitude towards improvements in SDL among staff.

Like leadership, organisation culture was found to be a predictor of SDL at URA. The norms, values and beliefs of URA made staff have self-awareness, motivation and self-management. In effect, the organizational culture adopted by URA positively contributed to the levels of SDL. Therefore, the ability of managers in an organization to handle cultural-sensitive

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matters and promote room for reflecting and thinking influences the levels of SDL among staff. By implication, a learning organisation should create a strong and inclusive culture that promotes innovativeness, flexibility and involvement of all staff members. Any cultural changes therefore should be adopted in line with the demands of a learning organisation and the promotion of SDL among staff.

Limitations of the study

A learning organisation was analysed from two dimensions namely; organisational leadership and organisational culture. Other features of a learning organisation such as: structure (layers, relations, networks); information systems (gathering & processing information); and human resource practices (appraisals, rewards & training) were left out due to the need to focus the article on a few issues. Actually, the selected dimensions were also deemed to be the most relevant to URA as an organisation and therefore focused on the contextual aspects of URA as a learning organisation.

The study is essentially quantitative in nature. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analysed using quantitative techniques. Probably, the use of additional methods (such as interviews) would have brought in additional insights. Nevertheless, the quantitative results that were generated are reasonably informative in explaining the extent to which a learning organisation influences the SDL in URA.

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