



PAPER ID: 10A12Q



AN EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS MODEL DEVELOPMENT BASED ON HUMAN RESOURCE STRATEGIES BY GROUNDED THEORY IN DISTRICT 7 OF IRANIAN GAS TRANSMISSION COMPANY

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 20 May 2019
Received in revised form 03
June 2019
Accepted 26 July 2019
Available online 07 August
2019

Keywords:

HRM; HR strategies;
Continuous education;
Educational
effectiveness; Practical
training; Teaching
methods; Grounded
theory.

ABSTRACT

This study developed an educational effectiveness model based on human resource strategies by grounded theory in District 7 of the Iranian Gas Transmission Company. In the qualitative section, 13 experts in District 7 were interviewed to collect data. The statistical population included 221 employees and managers of District 7 of the Iranian Gas Transmission Company. The results showed a positive and significant relationship between organizational communication, practical training, teaching methods, and continuous education and educational effectiveness. There was a positive and significant relationship between HR strategies and organizational communication. There was a positive and significant relationship between HR strategies and practical training. There was no significant relationship between HR strategies and teaching methods. There was a positive and significant relationship between HR strategies and continuous education.

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1. INTRODUCTION

One of the most important organizational components which can be effective in adapting, surviving and developing organizations to achieve strategic goals is the training and improvement of knowledge capital or human resources to provide an acceptable level of cognitive knowledge (knowledge of what), advanced skills (knowledge of how) and systemic understanding (knowledge of why) in human resources of the organization to address the problems limiting strategic goals (Navehebrahim & Eidi, 2006). Training and improvement is a set of programmed efforts of an organization to facilitate the learning of employees about their job competences in line with strategic

goals (Noe, 2002). In order to estimate the educational needs and formulate the curriculum, the questioning approach and an examination of what training people and departments need can be transformed into the approach to address the problems of people and departments, and this is due to the fact that people and departments should exactly estimate and suggest teachings based on the problem. Thus, when need assessment begins with a strategic approach, educational effectiveness can be determined in solving the problems which are based on training content and course (Bamberger et al., 2014). Currently, organizations emphasize the provision of learning opportunities for employees at different organizational levels; with increasing attention to education, expectations and demands have also been promoted simultaneously. If previously training courses and employee attendance appeared to be persuasive, currently training is expected to facilitate organizational goals. In addition to training, therefore, educational system of organizations should consider the effectiveness of these courses (Snell et al., 2015). In this regard, a curriculum can only explain its worth when it provides credible and valid evidence of the effect of training in improving the performance of participants. This refers to an important aspect of education, often referred to as educational effectiveness (Ghahremani, 2003). In other words, value of education is measured as other organizational activities through determining it to achieve organizational goals.

Currently, effectiveness is particularly important in administrative and educational organizations, because in the current fast-paced world, organizations are able to survive which are effective enough and able to achieve their predetermined goals more than ever. Most experts consider effectiveness as the degree to which a goal is achieved; that is, in every action that is purposeful and based on predetermined goals. Whatever it is closer to the predetermined goal and has been able to achieve the goals, it will have a higher effectiveness than achieving the goals.

Unfortunately, most organizations greatly focus on and invest in educational effectiveness at the final stage of the course; the greatest attention should be paid when education is considered as a solution to the identified problem. Is teaching a solution? If the answer is yes, what requirements should be taken into consideration for the more effective education from the first step? (Abili, 2009). There are some conditions and factors which can affect the effective reduction or increase of training courses. These factors include training course duration, training course content, training course quality, learner experiences, job attitude, desire to learn new things, study skills, learner attitudes, job counseling, equipment and facilities of training courses. Given the importance and place of education and effort and desire to invest in the past and future plans, it is logical to present these training when they are effective; it is essential to consider the effective factors, both positive and negative, to promote them. It should be noted that the courses are effective when the content of these training courses is consistent with needs of the organization. Hence, this study tends to develop an educational effectiveness model based on human resources strategies in order to present and propose a suitable and comprehensive model.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Human resource strategies: HR Strategy is defined as the arrangement and activities of the planned human resources model for empowering the organization to achieve its goals.

Education: Education is an experience based on learning to make gradual and relatively stable

changes to improve the ability to do things. Typically, education can change the skills, knowledge, attitudes, and social and organizational behavior.

Grounded theory: grounded theory is the process of theorizing certain observations in the form of a more comprehensive theory; a theory that is developed in the everyday lives of human beings. Through this method, a theory of everyday experiences, interactions, documents, literature, and observations is derived by inductive method by systematic data collection and data analysis of phenomena, discovered, developed and conditionally and temporarily approved. The grounded theory involves methods and systematic analytical techniques and enables the researcher to create and develop a theory with observation, generalizability, repeatability, accuracy, solidity and confirmation (Corbin & Strauss, 2007). The grounded theory has the following components:

- **Axial category:** is the original event resulting from interactions between different conditions.
- **Causal conditions:** causal conditions are a set of events and conditions which affect the axial category. Causal conditions are events that are prior to the original phenomenon.
- **Strategies:** Strategies are targeted actions that provide solutions to the considered phenomenon and result in consequences and outcomes.
- **Context background:** background conditions are a set of conditions that provide the context of the considered phenomenon and affect behaviors and actions.
- **Mediating conditions:** are structural conditions that belong to the considered phenomenon and affect the strategies. Mediating conditions limit or facilitate strategies within a particular context.
- **Outcomes:** are the results of strategies and actions associated with the concerned phenomenon. Outcomes appear wherever an action/reaction is selected in response to a problem or to manage and maintain a position from an individual or individuals.

The categories extracted from raw data are related theoretically in the form of causal conditions (causes of the main phenomenon), strategy (action or interaction to control, manage, deal with and respond to the main phenomenon), context (effective context background in the strategy), mediating conditions (effective general conditions in strategies), and outcomes (results of strategies) through paradigmatic model (Figure 1) (Corbin & Strauss, 2007). According to Strauss and Corbin, if this model is not used, the grounded theory will lack the precision and complexity required.

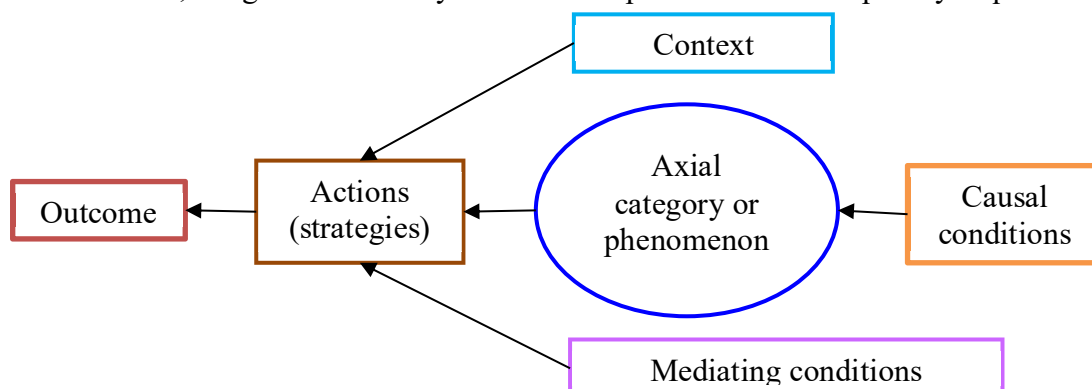


Figure 1: the grounded theory.

Noruzi et al. (2013) explored the mediating role of organizational learning and knowledge management in the relationship between transformational leadership and performance in Iranian Manufacturing organizations. The results of structural equation modeling showed that organizational

learning processes have a direct, significant effect on organizational performance and have a mediating role in the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational performance.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

In terms of objective, this study can be considered a type of applied research. In the quantitative section, the statistical population included 570 personnel and managers of the 7th district of the Iranian Gas Transportation Company. Purposive and snowball sampling were used. In the qualitative section, the statistical sample included 13 experts in District 7 of the Iran Gas Transportation Company. The Cochran formula was used to determine the sample size. According to the Cochran formula and statistical population (570 people), the sample consisted of 230 employees and managers of 7th district. A researcher-made questionnaire based on components extracted from the interviews was used to measure variables of the grounded theory. In this study, $\alpha > 0.7$ was considered as a suitable level for reliability of the instrument. Due to the application of mixed heuristic methods, qualitative and quantitative data analyses were used according to requirements of the study. In the qualitative section, data analysis involved theoretical coding (derived from grounded theory). Analysis of the data obtained in this study was carried out separately. In other words, qualitative data were analyzed using open, axial and selective coding and requirements for each of these steps. The questionnaire was developed and used as a study tool distributing to collect quantitative data. To analyze quantitative data, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to determine validity; path analysis and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) were used to test the model. In the quantitative section, data was analyzed by CFA and path analysis using LISREL software as shown in Chehrehpak et al. (2018). All three types of coding, including open coding based on the extracted categories, axial coding and selective coding were used. The coding steps used included open coding based on the categories extracted from the preliminary review of literature, axial coding, and selective coding.

According to the conceptual model, the hypotheses included:

H1: there is a relationship between educational need assessment and HR strategies.

H2: there is a relationship between learner characteristics and HR strategies.

H3: there is a relationship between planning and HR strategies.

H4: there is a relationship between educational fit and HR strategies.

H5: there is a relationship between talent management and HR strategies.

H6: there is a relationship between job development and HR strategies.

H7: there is a relationship between employee motivation and HR strategies.

H8: there is a relationship between assessment, organizational communication, practical training, teaching methods and continuous education.

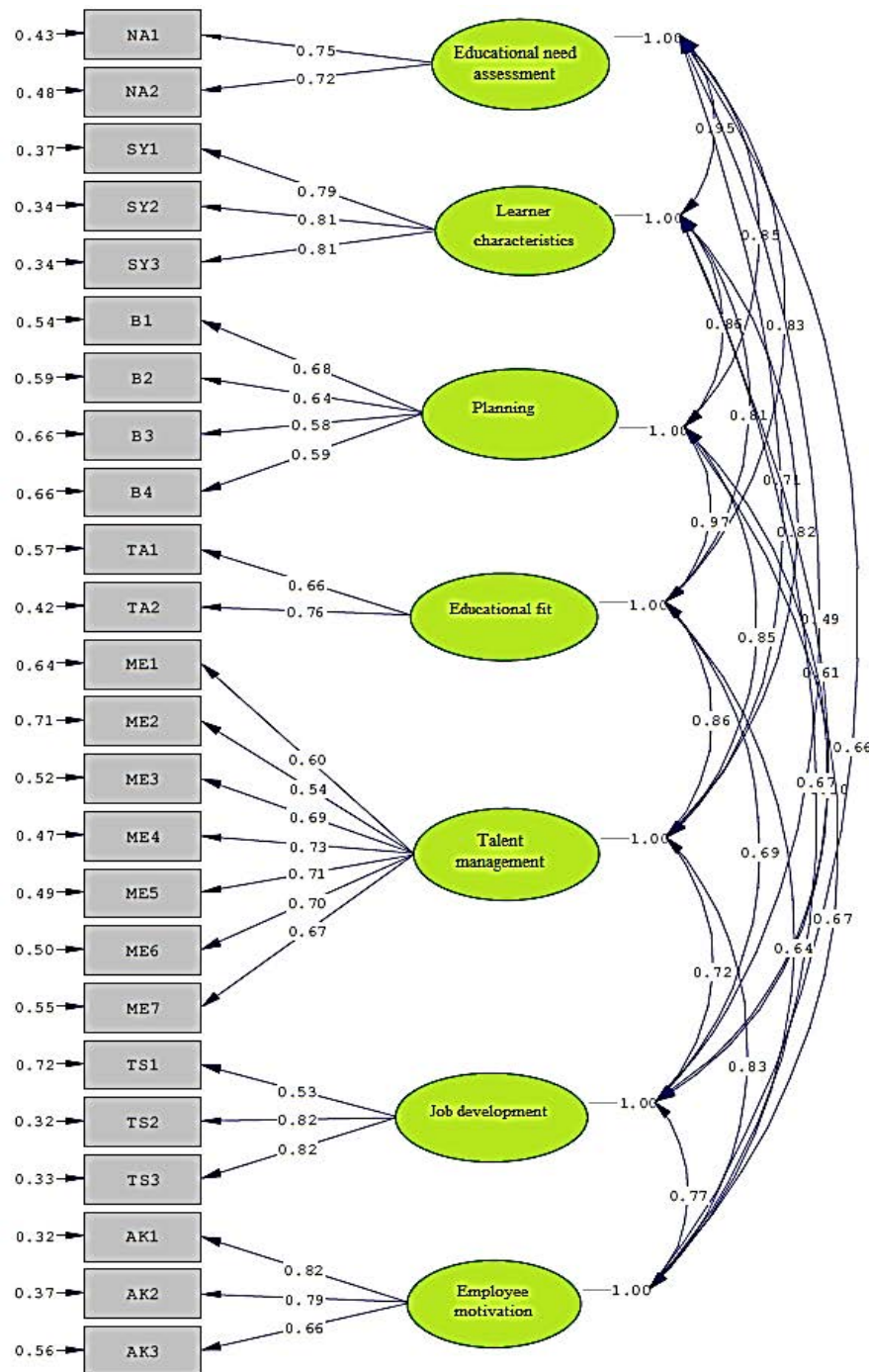
H9: there is a relationship between employee participation and organizational communication, practical training, teaching methods and continuous education.

H10: there is a relationship between organizational climate and organizational communication, practical training, teaching methods and continuous education.

H11: there is a relationship between education support and organizational communication, practical training, teaching methods and continuous education.

H12: there is a relationship between benchmarking and organizational communication, practical training, teaching methods and continuous education.

- H13: there is a relationship between lack of management support and organizational communication, practical training, teaching methods and continuous education.
- H14: there is a relationship between HR strategies and organizational communication, practical training, teaching methods and continuous education.
- H15: there is a relationship between organizational communication and educational effectiveness.
- H16: there is a relationship between practical training and educational effectiveness.
- H17: there is a relationship between teaching methods and educational effectiveness.
- H18: there is a relationship between continuous education and educational effectiveness.



Chi-Square=429.26, df=231, P-value=0.00000, RMSEA=0.062

Figure 2: LISREL output for variables of causal conditions

[Educational need assessment (NA); Learner characteristic (SY); Planning (B); Educational fit (TA); Talent management (ME); Job development (TS); Employee motivation (AK)].

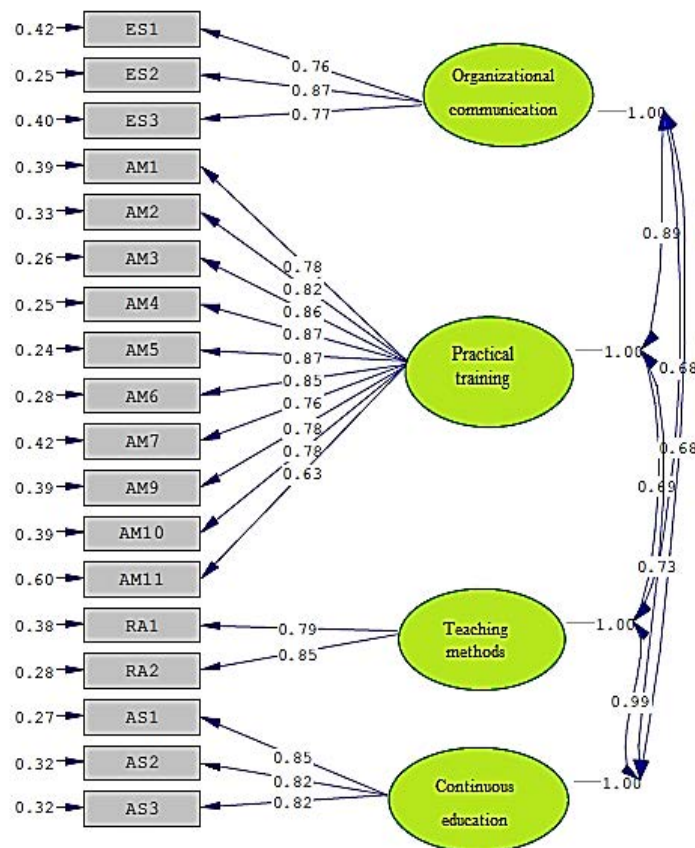
4. RESULTS

4.1 CFA FOR VARIABLES OF CAUSAL CONDITIONS

CFA was used to validate the variables of causal conditions. Figure 2 reports factor loading. The numbers on the paths are factor loads; all factor loads are greater than 0.3 with p -value <0.01 . According to LISREL output, the calculated $\chi^2/df=1.86$; $\chi^2/df<3$ indicates fit of the model. Moreover, root mean square error approximation (RMSEA) should be less than 0.08; in the presented model, RMSEA=0.062. GFI, AGFI, CFI, and NFI should be more than 0.9, which are higher than 0.9 in the model. Therefore, data is well fitted to factor structure of this scale, suggesting consistency of the questions with variables of causal conditions.

4.2 CFA OF STRATEGIES

CFA was used to validate strategies. All factor loadings (Organizational communication; Practical training; Teaching methods; Continuous education) was greater than 0.3 with p -value <0.01 (Figure 3). According to LISREL output, the calculated $\chi^2/df=1.72$; $\chi^2/df<3$ indicates fit of the model. Moreover, RMSEA should be less than 0.08; in the presented model, RMSEA=0.057. GFI, AGFI, CFI, and NFI should be more than 0.9, which are higher than 0.9 in the model. Therefore, data is well fitted to factor structure of this scale, suggesting consistency of the questions with strategies.



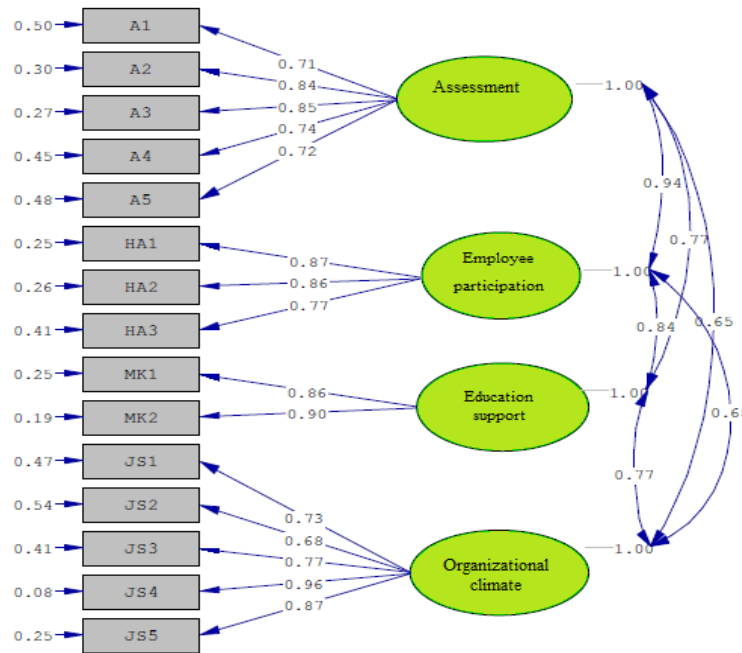
Chi-Square=221.49, df=129, P-value=0.00000, RMSEA=0.057

Figure 3: LISREL output for strategies

[Organizational communication (ES); Practical teaching (AM); Teaching methods (RA); Continuous education (AS)].

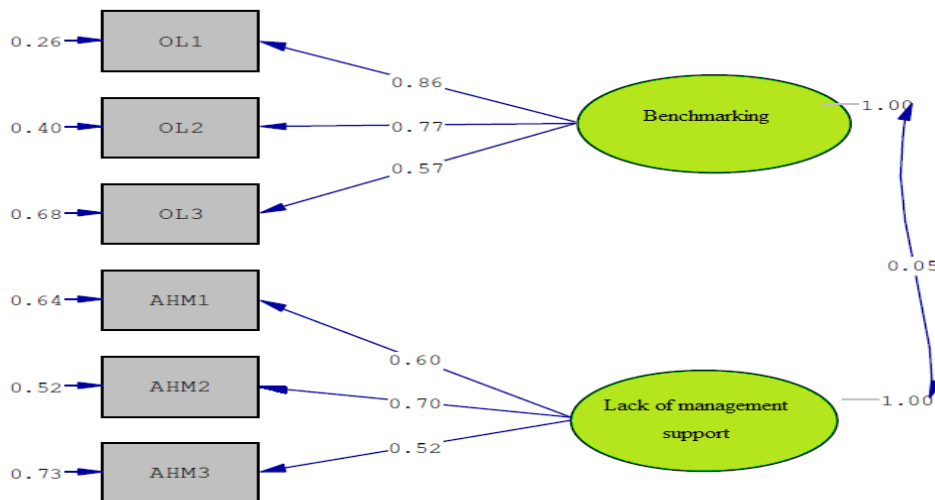
4.3 CFA OF VARIABLES OF CONTEXT

CFA was used to validate strategies. All factor loads (Assessment; Employee participation; Education support; Organizational climate) was greater than 0.3 with p -value <0.01 (Figure 4). Fit indices also were valid. According to LISREL output, the calculated $\chi^2/df=1.79$; $\chi^2/df<3$ indicates fit of the model. Moreover, RMSEA should be less than 0.08; in the presented model, RMSEA=0.060. GFI, AGFI, CFI, and NFI should be more than 0.9, which are higher than 0.9 in the model. Therefore, data is well fitted to factor structure of this scale, suggesting consistency of the questions with variables of context.



Chi-Square=150.53, df=84, P-value=0.00000, RMSEA=0.060

Figure 4: LISREL output for variables of context [Assessment (A); Employee participation (HA); Educational Support (MK); Organizational Climate (JS)].



Chi-Square=12.79, df=8, P-value=0.00007, RMSEA=0.052

Figure 5: LISREL output for mediating factors [Benchmarking (OL); Lack of management support (AHM)].

4.4 CFA OF MEDIATING FACTORS

CFA was used to validate mediating factors. All factor loads (Benchmarking and Lack of management support) are greater than 0.3 with p -value <0.01 (Figure 5). Findings related to fit indices of mediating factors indicate that CFI=1, GFI=0.96, NFI=0.99 and RMSEA=0.052 are acceptable. These indices show that the data is well fitted to factor structure of this scale, suggesting consistency of the questions with mediating factors.

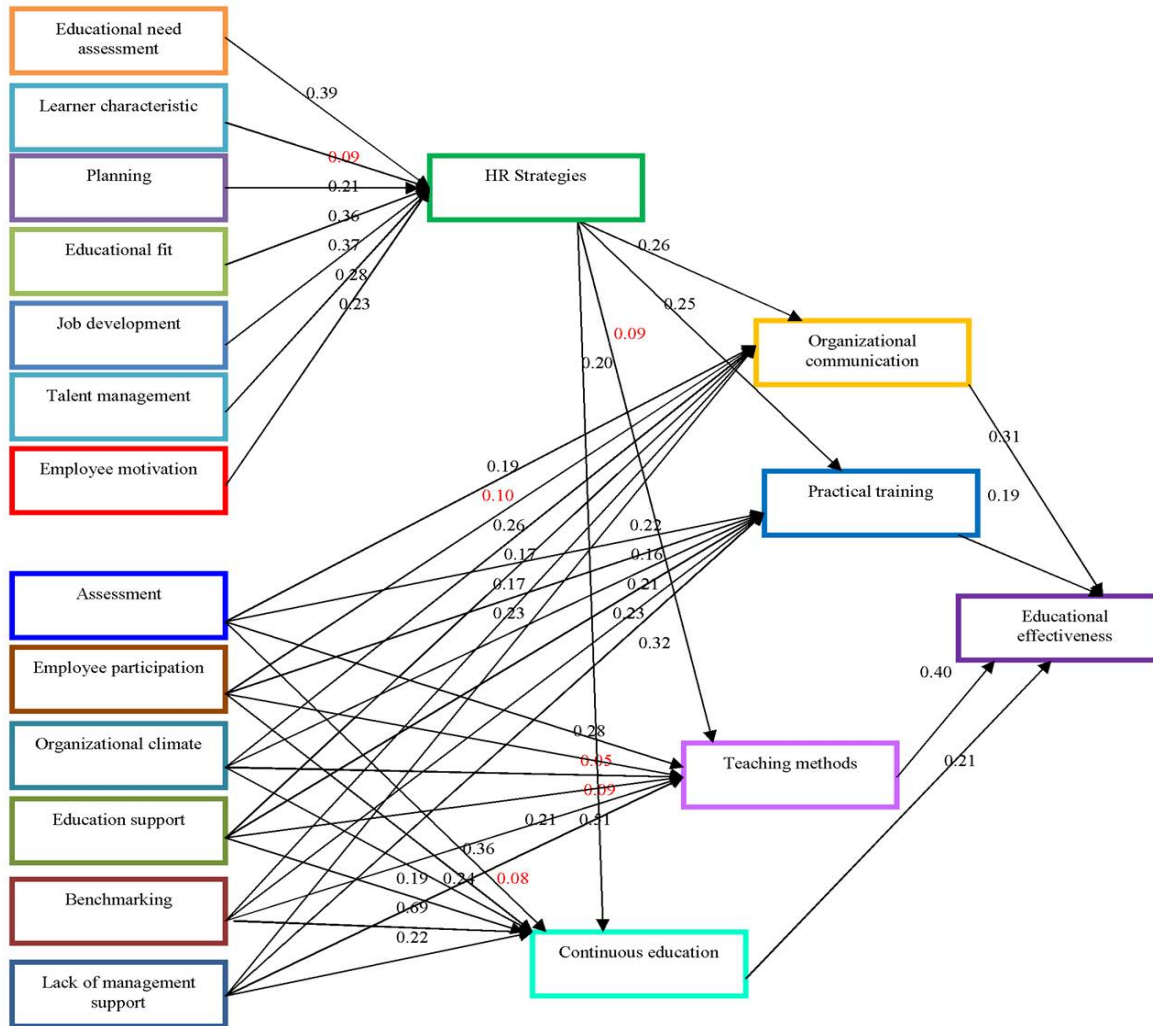


Figure 6: Standardized coefficients of the tested model (* $p<0.05$; ** $p<0.01$).

4.5 FINAL MODEL

By validating the measurement instruments to identify the relationship between variables, the next step is path analysis. Pearson correlation coefficient was used to identify the relationship between variables in the model. Findings related to the correlation coefficient between the variables indicate a positive and significant correlation between the variables. Figure 6 shows the tested model with standardized values on each of the paths. Red numbers indicate insignificance of the paths. The remaining coefficients are positive and significant.

Table 1 shows path coefficients and variance explained of the variables. As shown in Table 1, the effect of organizational communication, practical training, teaching methods and continuous education is positive and significant on educational effectiveness. The effect of educational needs assessment, planning, educational fit, talent management, job development and employee motivation

is positive and significant on HR strategies. However, the effect of learner characteristics is not significant on HR strategies. The effect of HR strategies, assessment, organizational climate and education support is positive and significant on organizational communication.

Table 1: Results of path coefficients and variance explained (* p<0.05; ** p<0.01).

Path	Hypothesis	Direct effect	P-value	Results	Variance explained
On HR strategies vie:					
Educational need assessment	H1	0.37**	0.003	Accepted	51%
Learner characteristics	H2	0.09	0.087	Rejected	
Planning	H3	0.21**	0.002	Accepted	
Educational fit	H4	0.18*	0.034	Accepted	
Talent management	H5	0.37**	0.000	Accepted	
Job development	H6	0.38**	0.002	Accepted	
Employee motivation	H7	0.23**	0.003	Accepted	
On organizational communications vie:					
Assessment	H8	0.26**	0.002	Accepted	29%
Employee participation	H8	0.19*	0.044	Accepted	
Organizational climate	H10	0.26**	0.005	Accepted	
Education support	H11	0.26**	0.004	Accepted	
Benchmarking	H12	0.15*	0.001	Accepted	
Lack of management support	H13	-0.15*	0.039	Accepted	
HR strategies	H14	-0.23**	0.004	Accepted	
On educational effectiveness vie:					
Organizational communication	H15	0.31**	0.001	Accepted	33%
Practical training	H16	0.19*	0.026	Accepted	
Teaching methods	H17	0.40**	0.001	Accepted	
Continuous education	H18	0.21**	0.003	Accepted	

Table 2: Fit indexes of the fitted model

Index	Estimate	Standard
χ^2/df	1.91	<3
RMSEA	0.064	<0.08
GFI	0.93	>0.9
AGFI	0.91	>0.9
CFI	0.97	>0.9
NFI	0.95	>0.9

The effect of benchmarking and lack of management support is negative and significant on organizational communication. However, the effect of employee participation was not significant on organizational communication. The effect of HR strategies, assessment, employee participation, organizational climate and education support is positive and significant on practical training. The effect of benchmarking is negative and significant in practical training. However, the effect of lack of management support was not significant in practical training. The effect of assessment and education support is positive and significant in teaching methods. The effect of HR strategies, employee participation and organizational climate is not significant on teaching methods. The effect of benchmarking and lack of management support is negative and significant in organizational communication. The effect of HR strategies, assessment, organizational climate and education support is positive and significant on continuous education. The effect of employee participation is not significant in continuous education. The effect of benchmarking and lack of management support is negative and significant on continuous education. As shown in Table 1, the model explains 33% of variance in educational effectiveness, 51% of variance in HR strategies, 29% of variance in

organizational communications, 36% of variance in practical training, 42% of variance in teaching methods, and 56% of variance in continuing education. Fit indices show that RMSEA=0.064, CFI=0.97, GFI=0.93, NFI=0.95 and AGFI=0.91 are acceptable and these goodness of fit indices show that the data is well fit the model (Table 2).

5. HYPOTHESES RESULTS

Hypothesis 1: The results showed a positive and significant relationship between educational needs assessment and HR strategies ($p\text{-value}<0.01$). Therefore, training needs assessment leads to the improvement of HR strategies.

Hypothesis 2: The results showed no relationship between recognizing learner characteristics and HR strategies ($p\text{-value}>0.05$). Therefore, recognizing learner characteristics does not lead to improved HR strategies.

Hypothesis 3: The results showed a positive and significant relationship between planning and HR strategies ($p\text{-value}<0.01$). Therefore, planning leads to improved HR strategies. This finding indicates that educational planning, career path planning, scheduling of training implementation, and human resource planning lead to improved HR strategies.

Hypothesis 4: The results showed a positive and significant relationship between educational fit and HR strategies ($p\text{-value}<0.05$). Therefore, educational fit leads to improved HR strategies.

Hypothesis 5: The results showed a positive and significant relationship between talent management and HR strategies ($p\text{-value}<0.01$). Therefore, talent management leads to improved HR strategies.

Hypothesis 6: The results showed a positive and significant relationship between job development and HR strategies ($p\text{-value}<0.01$). Thus, job development results in improved HR strategies.

Hypothesis 7: The results showed a positive and significant relationship between employee motivation and HR strategies ($p\text{-value}<0.01$). Employee motivation, therefore, leads to improved HR strategies.

Hypothesis 8: The results showed a positive and significant relationship between assessment and organizational communication, practical training, teaching methods and continuing education ($p\text{-value}<0.01$). Therefore, evaluation leads to improved organizational communication, practical education, teaching methods and continuing education.

Hypothesis 9: The results showed a positive and significant relationship between employee participation and practical education ($p\text{-value}<0.01$) but there was no significant relationship between employee participation and organizational communication, practical education and continuing education. Therefore, employee participation leads to improved practical education.

Hypothesis 10: The results showed a positive and significant relationship between organizational climate and organizational communication, practical education and continuing education ($p\text{-value}<0.01$). Therefore, organizational climate leads to improved organizational communication, practical education, and continuing education.

Hypothesis 11: The results showed a positive and significant relationship between support for education and organizational communication, practical education and continuing education ($p\text{-value}<0.05$). Therefore, support for education leads to improved organizational communication,

practical education, and continuing education.

Hypothesis 12: The results showed a negative and significant relationship between benchmarking and organizational communication, practical education and continuing education ($p\text{-value}<0.01$). Therefore, benchmarking leads to reduced organizational communication, practical education, and continuing education.

Hypothesis 13: The results showed a negative and significant relationship between the lack of management support and organizational communication and continuing education ($p\text{-value}<0.01$). Therefore, lack of management support leads to reduced organizational communication and continuing education.

Hypothesis 14: The results showed a positive and significant relationship between HR strategies and organizational communication, practical education and continuing education ($p\text{-value}<0.01$). Therefore, HR strategies lead to improved organizational communication, practical education, and continuing education.

Hypothesis 15: The results showed a positive and significant relationship between organizational communication and educational effectiveness ($p\text{-value}<0.01$). Therefore, organizational communication leads to increased educational effectiveness.

Hypothesis 16: The results showed a positive and significant relationship between practical training and educational effectiveness ($p\text{-value}<0.05$). Therefore, practical education leads to increased educational effectiveness.

Hypothesis 17: The results showed a positive and significant relationship between teaching methods and educational effectiveness ($p\text{-value}<0.01$). Therefore, teaching methods leads to increased educational effectiveness.

Hypothesis 18: The results showed a positive and significant relationship between continuous education and educational effectiveness ($p\text{-value}<0.01$). Therefore, continuous education leads to increased educational effectiveness.

6. DISCUSSION

The most important activity of improvement and development of human resources is through employee training. Therefore, the present study tended to present an educational effectiveness model based on HR strategies by grounded theory in District 7 of the Iranian Gas Transportation Company. To achieve this objective, the mixed method was used which consists of two qualitative and quantitative parts. In the qualitative section, data was collected using interviews with experts; then, data were analyzed using the grounded theory. The conceptual model was developed by Corbin and Strauss (2007) approach. This model consists of focal phenomenon, causal conditions, context, mediating factors, strategies, and outcomes. In response to causal conditions, educational need assessment, learner characteristics, planning, educational fit, talent management, job development, and employee motivation were extracted. In response to categories of assessment, employee participation, organizational climate, and education support were extracted. In response to mediating factors, benchmarking and lack of management support were extracted. In response to strategies, organizational communication, practical training, continuous education, and teaching methods were

extracted. In response to outcomes, educational effectiveness was extracted. Then, the hypotheses were developed based on the model.

In the quantitative section, SEM was used to test and validate the hypotheses and the model by LISREL software. The model showed that the effect of organizational communication, practical training, teaching methods, and continuous education is positive and significant on educational effectiveness. The effect of educational needs assessment, planning, educational fit, talent management, job development, and employee motivation is positive and significant on HR strategies. However, the effect of learner characteristics is not significant in HR strategies. The effect of HR strategies, assessment, organizational climate and education support is positive and significant on organizational communication. The effect of benchmarking and lack of management support is negative and significant in organizational communication. However, the effect of employee participation is not significant in organizational communication. The effect of HR strategies, assessment, employee participation, organizational climate and education support is positive and significant on practical training. The effect of benchmarking is negative and significant in practical training. However, the effect of lack of management support was not significant in practical training. The effect of assessment and education support is positive and significant in teaching methods. The effect of HR strategies, employee participation and organizational climate is not significant on teaching methods. The effect of benchmarking and lack of management support is negative and significant in organizational communication. The effect of HR strategies, assessment, organizational climate and education support is positive and significant on continuous education. The effect of employee participation is not significant in continuous education. The effect of benchmarking and lack of management support is negative and significant on continuous education. Comparison of the results with previous studies shows that these findings are consistent with Nassiri et al (2013), Hojjati et al (2013), Ahanchian and Zohourparandeh (2010), Aragon, James and Walle (2014), Cho, Song, Yun, and Lee (2013) and Winfred et al (2003).

Finally, the fit indices obtained for evaluating the tested model showed that $RMSEA=0.056$, $CFI=0.97$, $GFI=0.93$, $NFI=0.95$ and $AGFI=0.91$ are acceptable and these goodness of fit indices show that the data well fit the model and the educational effectiveness model based on HR strategies can be applied in the District 7 of the Iranian Gas Transportation Company.

Results showed that educational need assessment had a positive and significant effect on HR strategies. Therefore, officials and managers of District 7 of the Iranian Gas Transmission Company are suggested to identify the weaknesses in the areas in need of training and examine the training needs of employees. Moreover, planning has a positive and significant effect on HR strategies. Therefore, officials and managers are suggested to plan for education, career path, training time and human resources.

7. CONCLUSION

From this study, it finds that there is a positive and significant relationship between organizational communication, practical training, teaching methods and continuous education and educational effectiveness. There is a positive and significant relationship between HR strategies and organizational communication. There is a positive and significant relationship between HR strategies

and practical training. There is no significant relationship between HR strategies and teaching methods. There is a positive and significant relationship between HR strategies and continuous education.

8. AVAILABILITY OF DATA AND MATERIAL

Relevant information is available by contacting the corresponding author.

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