Master Thesis

Relearn Organizations
for Corporate Sustainability:
The influential dimensions of Learning Organizations

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Abstract

This thesis explores the role of Learning Organizations in relation to Corporate Sustainability Transformation, addressing a notable gap in current empirical studies. The existing research presents diverse terms and concepts, yet it lacks a clear guidance on discussing and operationalizing Learning Organization dimensions for Corporate Sustainability. With this thesis, the 'Dimensions of Learning Organizations Questionnaire' (DLOQ) by Marsick and Watkins (2003) is being studied within the context of Corporate Sustainability Transformation, as this has not been explored yet.

A qualitative research design was employed, conducting semi-structured expert interviews with eight sustainability managers and experts working with and for diverse companies in the DACH-region. The interviews were analyzed following a content analysis according to Meuser and Nagel (2009). The results of this thesis introduce a Relearn Organization model that shows that learning step-by-step, a culture of trust and appreciation that encourages dialogue, collaboration with internal as well as external stakeholders as well as systems to build and share knowledge can be described as key dimensions of Learning Organizations that influence Corporate Sustainability Transformation. Further, the contextual relevance of external pressure in regard to CS Transformation can be highlighted.

The managerial implications suggest that managers and human relations (HR) experts can foster a culture of trust and collaboration, by improving communication and knowledge sharing strategies. Moreover, engaging external stakeholders and collaborating beyond corporate boundaries can address complex challenges regarding Corporate Sustainability activities of whole industries. The insights provided by this thesis offer various starting points to Relearn Organizations to transform towards true Corporate Sustainability.