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Organizational learning in context of part-time employment

A case study of an Estonian media company

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Abstract

Purpose – Combining trends in employment flexibility, organizational learning, need for improved leadership and entrepreneurship is important in managing today's organizations. This study aims to explore these relationships within a single media firm in one of the Baltic States.

Design/methodology/approach – The subject for this exploratory case study is a small Estonian media company having a total of 43 members/employees. Data for the study were collected using two questionnaires (organizational leadership capability and dimensions of learning organizations) and by in-depth interviews. Assessment and analysis of the data included: measurement of organizational leadership (OL) and learning organization; measurement of entrepreneurial behavior; and analysis of the results gained from studying the issues pertaining to OL, learning organization and entrepreneurial behavior.

Findings – The results of this study reveal that part-time versus full-time employees have more positive attitudes toward the organization's decentralized leadership and of six of seven learning characteristics. It appears that the entrepreneurial orientation of the part-time employees (PTEs) helps explain the differences observed.

Practical implications – The implications for practice based on this study is that firms should consider their PTEs as a valuable asset not only because of the flexibility they offer to the workforce but also because of the special skills and outlooks they bring to the organization.

Originality/value – This paper explores the relationships among organizational learning, OL and entrepreneurship in context of part-time employment.

Keywords Estonia, Entrepreneurship, Leadership, Organizational learning, Organizational leadership, Part-time employment

Paper type Case study

Introduction

Organizational learning is an important phenomenon that insures the organization's adaptability and survival in a modern turbulent economic environment. During times of change, organizational learning is a process that captures the knowledge held by organizational members because they move in and out of the organization. Having a

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consistent and developing knowledge base is becoming increasingly important in today's organizations (Bercovitz and Feldman, 2008). Organizational performance, innovation (Morales *et al.*, 2008) and dynamic capability (Zollo and Winter, 2002) are the main outcomes of learning. Nowhere is this more critical than in professional services firms (e.g. advertising, engineering, legal, medical, etc.) that are beginning to dominate today's modern economies (Segal-Horn, 2003). The primary assets of these firms are dependent on the knowledge and expertise of their employees.

The rapidly changing environment has created a need for organizational flexibility in terms of both networked structural arrangements and novel job arrangement, including part-time employment. Furthermore, these flexible organizational forms (Volberda, 1996) and networked structural arrangements (Tsai, 2001) are believed to benefit the effectiveness of the organizational learning process. In recent years, the media, as well as scholarly articles, have noted the increase in part-time employment in the west, as well as in Asia. The reasons for this are varied and differ by region. In the USA, the recent rise in part-time employment has been traced to the recession of 2007-2009 and the persistent structural unemployment that continues to exist in that labor market (Cowen, 2013). Part-time employment in Europe in 2013 made up 19.5 per cent of total employment having grown 11.8 per cent since 2008. However, the growth in part-time employment has been greater in some of the transition economies in Europe. For example in Estonia, part time employees (PTEs) grew 26 per cent between 2008-2013 to 8.2 per cent of total employment (Eurostat, 2015). Clearly, part-time employment is of growing importance in Europe and especially within its emerging economies. In addition, part-time employment arrangements vary by industry. For example, part-time work is especially prevalent in service industries. One study (Kauhanen, 2008) found that Finnish firms used such employment arrangements strategically to control costs and to adjust labor based on seasonality of demand. These trends taken together suggest that a studying the relationship between job status and organizational learning would be fruitful among professional service organizations in an emerging European economy.

Firms should consider their PTEs as a valuable asset because of the special skills and experiences they bring to the organization, in addition to the flexibility they provide for their work force. This is especially true in professional service organizations that depend on the skills and expertise of their employees more than on capital to produce value. Thus, understanding the processes for organizational learning in part-time contract conditions is vital for successfully managing organizations in a modern economy. In one of the only studies to investigate this topic, Nokelainen and Ruohotie (2009) observed that PTEs having the least secure contracts also exhibited higher motivation for personal growth (defined as a continuous learning process), as well as a greater commitment to their work and to their organization in comparison to their full-time colleagues. Ng *et al.* (2006) also examined job status and opportunities for individual rather than organizational learning. Moreover, Carmeli *et al.* (2009) found a positive relationship between psychological safety and learning behavior. These attitudinal and behavioral differences might be influenced by individual characteristics such as personality traits and entrepreneurial behavior and by organizational characteristics such as management and leadership behavior. No study that we are aware of has yet examined the relationship between job status and organizational learning processes at both the organizational and individual level of analysis.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the relations between job status and employee affects for their organization of employment in the professional service sector. Specifically, we examine the relationship between professional employees having different job status (full vs part-time) and their attitudes regarding their organization's learning capability. We posit that the reasons for possible differences between these two groups of employees may be because of their differing attitudes of the organization's leadership and to the employee's own entrepreneurial orientation. These are two factors that can contribute to an organization's learning capability.

Job status: part versus full-time employment

Do organizational members with part-time employment exhibit differing attitudes toward organizational learning compared with full-time employees (FTEs)? This is an important question because of the increased use of part-time employment in uncertain times (Stehrer *et al.*, 2012; Van Gyes and Szeker, 2013) and to enhance the strategic flexibility of firms (Tregaskis and Brewster, 2006). Certain behaviors appear to vary by employment status (i.e. part versus full-time employment); Martin and Hafer (1995) found that FTEs with high involvement and commitment had lower turnover than PTEs. However, PTEs with high commitment also had low turnover. More recently, Conway and Briner (2002) found that PTEs were less likely to perform organizational citizenship behaviors compared to FTEs. These same authors found that differences in job satisfaction but not commitment could be explained by the extent to which each group felt that their psychological contract with the firm was fulfilled or not. Other studies have found no difference between these two groups of employees with regards to job satisfaction, commitment, perceptions of organization climate and intention to leave (Thorsteinson, 2003; McGinnis and Morrow, 1990). Additional studies have attempted to shed some light on the lack of clear differences between FTEs and PTEs. For example, Lee and Johnson (1991) found that PTEs commitment and job satisfaction was affected more by whether they had a preferred work schedule. However, FTEs attitudes were not as influenced by work schedule.

Personality characteristics are individual level factors that may explain behavioral differences between PTEs and FTEs. Otto and Dalbert (2012) noted that personality factors such as tolerance for uncertainty, extraversion and change-related self-efficacy tend to influence FTEs' willingness to accept change. In addition, personality traits such as conscientiousness, self-esteem, neuroticism and equity sensitivity have an impact on certain types of psychological contracts. The psychological contract itself is divided into two different types – transactional and relational. Millward and Hopkins (1998) found that FTEs have a more relational contract orientation compared to PTEs. More, recently, Gakovic and Tetrick (2003) found that FTE's had higher relational obligations with their firms, whereas PTEs had stronger economic exchanges with their firm; these factors appear to indicate PTEs' short-term attitude toward their employment. However, the relationship between perceived organizational support and social exchange behaviors did not differ by job status. These relationships were positive for both FTEs and PTEs. Much of the research is still unequivocal, but what does seem to emerge is that differences in attitudes and perceptions because of work status can best be explained when considering other aspects of the nature of the work being performed such as involvement, work schedules and perceived psychological contracts.

Other important circumstances that differentiate PTEs and FTEs are their attitudes toward the type/quality of management styles/behaviors that each type of employee experiences. Prior studies suggest that PTEs are more strongly affected by the type of management style/behavior they experience than are FTEs. FTEs job satisfaction was positively related to satisfaction with supervision and management's concern for employees (Thorsteinson, 2003). Furthermore, Gakovic and Tetrick (2003) found the relationship between job satisfaction and perceived organizational support was stronger for PTEs. Yet Alexanrov *et al.* (2007) found no differences in the effect of management's concern for customers on job satisfaction between PTEs and FTEs. Organizational leadership (OL) considers these similar issues and extends it by focusing on leadership at the organization level rather than at the individual level. Attitudes toward OLs have been found to vary by the type of position or job held by organizational members. For example, Kivipõld and Ahonen (2013) found distinct differences in attitudes toward leadership between those holding administrative/sales positions versus those members holding technical positions. Furthermore, the authors noted that the differences in attitudes may also be because of differences in job satisfaction observed between these two groups of job holders.

Organizational learning and job status: some influencing factors

Organizational learning is a process that transfers knowledge and skills of individuals' to create knowledge for organizations. Takeuchi and Nonaka (2002) describe how a continued knowledge conversion process of "tacit-explicit-tacit" creates new knowledge. What is important here is that organizational arrangements and processes aid in converting the knowledge of individuals' into embedded organizational assets (Davenport *et al.*, 1998). In the same vein, Crossan *et al.* (1999) describe a multi-level phenomenon of the learning process that transfers individual level outcomes into the organization level and vice versa. Also, this internal, multi-level process is connected with the external environment (Marsick and Watkins, 2003) in way that creates organizational capabilities by combining internal and external learning in an organization (Kogut and Zander, 1992). Organizational learning is, then, a combination of internal-external learning at the individual and the organizational level and possesses three main characteristics:

- (1) continuous learning and information sharing opportunities (Tannenbaum, 1997);
- (2) entrepreneurial behavior by its members to seek out new data/information (Wang and Raftery, 2009); and
- (3) an architecture or design of a network of relationships among its members (Knight and Pye, 2005).

Individuals are the key agents of learning via entrepreneurial behavior in social and organizational contexts (Wang and Raftery, 2009). However, the relationship between entrepreneurship and organizational learning has received little attention. Most prior studies that have used an entrepreneurial perspective have either taken a strategic point of view (Ghorbani *et al.*, 2012; Newey and Zahra, 2009; Ireland *et al.*, 2001) or an ontological approach (Dutta and Grossan, 2005; Dess *et al.*, 2003). Some studies have even focused on entrepreneurship in the field of academics (Prodan and Drnovsek, 2010; Bercovitz and Feldman, 2008). Despite the attention placed on entrepreneurship within

organizational settings (corporate entrepreneurship), the role of PTEs as a source for external learning has been totally ignored by these studies.

Organizational context is other important aspect for the process of organizational learning. The context refers to a variety of organizational arrangements and is often referred to as the “learning organization”. Learning organization covers different aspects of organizational arrangements (e.g. design and architecture of an organization, employment contracts, culture, leadership, etc) that are all designed to organizational outcomes such as increasing the organizational capabilities of collective discovery (Pedler *et al.*, 1991) and sustainability of internal innovation (Mills and Friesen, 1992) by giving adaptability to organizations (Senge, 2002) in a changing external environment. In accordance with our position, learning organizations depend on the entrepreneurial behavior of their members to develop new information, traits, attitudes and skills associated with entrepreneurial activity (Baron and Markman, 2000; Douglas and Fitzsimmons, 2013); consequently, the employees’ *entrepreneurial orientation* may also affect learning perceptions, traits and attitudes such as self-efficacy, attitudes toward risk, innovative attitudes, etc. We believe that this is especially important in the context of employment status of skilled/professional employees. Skilled employees who are able to hold two or more part-time jobs so that they can remain in their field of expertise appear to exhibit considerable entrepreneurial behaviors. For example, they must be resourceful in seeking these positions and creative in scheduling and maintaining two or more positions in their field with two or more different organizations. Skills and knowledge are the main internal resources that allow persons to be active in two or more professional positions. Iyigun and Owen (1999) demonstrate that work experience is an important source of entrepreneurial skill. Additionally, persons with rich work experiences have specific tacit knowledge at the team, firm and even industry level (Kor *et al.*, 2007). Thus, if we consider the entrepreneurial nature of the individuals having differing work status, we might be able to explain the differences in organizational learning between FTEs and PTEs.

Management and leadership activities are the primary organizational means for implementing learning processes in organizations; as Senge (2002) noted, “[...] leaders in learning organizations are responsible for building organizations where people are expanding their capabilities to shape their future – that is, leaders are responsible for learning”. Van Wijk *et al.* (2011) argue that leadership style facilitates the ability and motivation to transfer knowledge. However, organizational learning requires leadership not only from the executive level but also from all levels across an organization (Plaskoff, 2011). In addition, Antonakis and Autio (2007, p. 201) have noted the importance of considering leadership as a multilevel phenomenon. Thus, this study focuses on leadership across an organization referred to as OL. OL is the collective ability of the organization’s members to detect and cope with change in the external environment (Kivipõld and Vadi, 2010). As such, it is embedded in the structure/architecture of the organization across all levels. OL is, therefore, based on the relationships among the members of the organization. It possesses two primary dimensions. First, OL orients organizational members through visions, goals and plans articulated by management. Second, it enables the organization to adapt to changes in its external environment. Much of this adaptation is brought about by the processing of information among members of the organization. OL is based on shared information, whereas organizational learning involves the collection and organization of information.

This then enables organization members to capture and share the information needed to practice or implement OL.

To summarize, effective organizational learning requires both the entrepreneurial behavior of organizational members and good leadership across the organization, for together they help generate and harvest new knowledge within organizations (Ghorbani *et al.*, 2012; Dess *et al.*, 2003). Furthermore, the learning process appears to differ by the job status of employees (Nokelainen and Ruohotie, 2009; Carmeli *et al.*, 2009). Thus, we propose that organizational learning differs to the extent that employees holding different job status vary in their attitudes regarding OL and in their entrepreneurial orientation. This is modeled in Figure 1. Our model positions this study at the nexus of the organizational learning and job status within the context of OL and entrepreneurial orientation.

In general, our model indicates that organizational learning as a process is the product of behavior at both the organization and individual level. Organizational learning takes place where behaviors at both levels coincide; see overlapping circles in Figure 1. For reasons cited earlier, we have selected to focus on leadership at the organization level and entrepreneurial orientation at the individual level as contributing to organizational learning, and they are depicted by the two dashed arrows. Organizational learning of employees is based on their reaction to and working with the organization's leadership, as well as on their own level of entrepreneurial orientation. The relationships we examine in this study are depicted by the solid arrows. Namely, whether FTEs and PTEs differ in their attitudes toward organizational learning; this is indicated by the arrow labelled *RQ1*. Then we seek to explore if the possible perceptual differences between the two groups of employees is the result of their perceptual differences of OL as indicated by the arrow labelled *RQ2a* or to differences in their entrepreneurial orientation as indicated by the arrow labelled *RQ2b*. Our specific research questions are as follows:

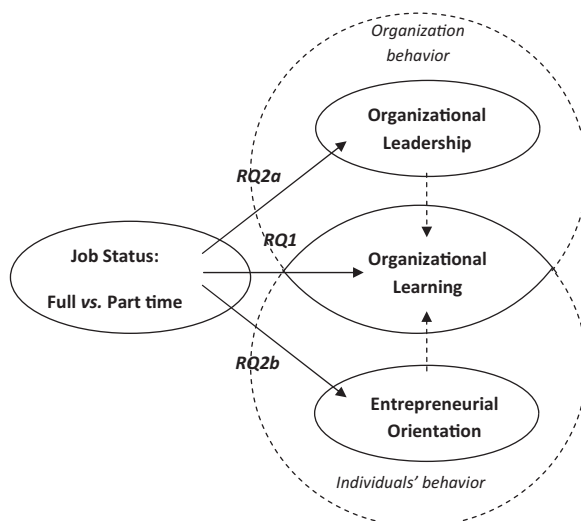


Figure 1.
Model for research of
organizational
learning differences
caused by job status

- RQ1.* Do employee attitudes of their learning processes differ by job status, i.e. full versus part time?
- RQ2.* Can any observed attitudinal differences between FTEs and PTEs be explained by differences in their: a.) attitudes regarding their organization's leadership; and/or b.) entrepreneurial orientation?

Research method

The aim of this study is to find linkages between behavioral phenomena of an organization such as job status, learning organization, OL capability and entrepreneurial behavior of employees. This is the first study to examine attitudes toward organizational learning by employees having different job status. Moreover, we explore the relationships between learning attitudes and entrepreneurial orientation and perceptions of OL. Because this is an initial study of these relationships, it is considered exploratory research (Brown, 2006; Singh, 2007). Given the exploratory nature of this study, we investigate these issues among members of a single organization for the following three reasons. First, case studies are deemed suitable for exploratory purposes (Yin, 1994); case studies can be used to highlight/isolate exemplary examples of the phenomena being studied (Sigglekow, 2007); and finally, a single firm setting enables one to gain some understanding of the causal relations of the phenomena being investigated (Eisenhardt, 1989).

Case study firm

The subject for the case study was chosen from the Estonian media (e.g. primarily newspaper businesses) sector which consists mostly of smaller companies. Part-time employment within the Estonian print media sector grew from 15.63 per cent in 2009 to 18.18 per cent in 2013 according to industry experts. Thus, PTE is of growing importance in this sector. The media sector was selected for two additional reasons. First, professional services are increasingly important to both developed and developing economies that are shifting more toward services (Segal-Horn, 2003). Second, media business in news and information is one such professional service that benefits from both economies of scope and scale (Segal-Horn, 2003). In the media business, the scope economies are developed by combining the diverse selection of skills and knowledge of the individuals such as specific technical skills which depends on their profession, social skills for communicating with different groups of external stakeholders and finally conceptual skills that allows to putting single events into a broader societal context. Scale economies are derived from managerial knowledge and experience to leverage the set of integrated skills and knowledge of employees.

The Estonian print media (newspaper) sector includes about 21 companies that range in size from 25 or fewer employees (67 per cent), up to 50 employees (14 per cent), to those with around 100 employees (19 per cent). Most firms (60 per cent) focus on a single media or line of business and have a local or regional market. The company selected for this case study, Media Company (MC, name disguised) is typical of firms in this sector as it is a medium, regional company with 43 employees. Moreover, MC's business portfolio consists of two different types of products/services activities (broadcast and print media), which is unusual for organizations competing in this sector in Estonia. However, in the future multimedia firms are expected to grow in Estonia.

Data collection, measures and analysis

The study was conducted over a two-year period. Data on the organizational learning and OL were collected using separate questionnaires and data on entrepreneurial orientation were collected using in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Assessment and analysis of the data included:

- measurement of OL and learning organization;
- estimation of entrepreneurial behavior; and
- the analysis of the results gained from studying the issues pertaining to the learning organization, OL and entrepreneurial behavior[1].

In the first step, the *Dimensions of Learning Organizations Questionnaire* (Marsick and Watkins, 2003) uses closed-ended statements with a six-point scale (almost never to almost always) to assess seven learning factors. The *OL Capability Questionnaire* developed by Kivipõld and Vadi (2010) uses closed-ended statements with a seven-point scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree) to assess the three main factors and two sub-factors of OL (Table I). All 43 employees (18 females and 25 males, with average of 4.45 years, SD = 2.97 employment at the company) were asked to complete questionnaires.

The reliability of each scale construct for both questionnaires was assessed using Cronbach's alpha test. The results are displayed in Table I and conform with suggested benchmarks of Cronbach's alpha ≥ 0.7 (Nunnally, 1978, p. 245) and a value ≥ 0.6 considered acceptable for exploratory research (Hair *et al.*, 1995).

For the analyses of *RQ1 and RQ2a*, data were divided according to the business divisions and employment status of 20 FTEs or permanent employees in the print division; 14 FTEs in the broadcast division (includes 4 managers, who are active in both divisions), and 9 PTEs (working as contract persons for a fraction of the normal

Scales ^b	Dimensions of learning organizations		Organizational leadership capability	
	Cronbach's alpha ^a	Scales ^c	Cronbach's alpha ^a	
Create continuous learning opportunities	0.85	Alignment and cohesion	0.94	
Promote inquiry and dialogue	0.82	Control and feedback system	0.87	
Encourage collaboration and team learning	0.90	Architecture of internal network	0.75	
Create systems to capture and share learning	0.86	Architecture of the internal network sub-scales		
Empower people toward a collective vision	0.86	Extent of centralization	0.85	
Connect the organization to its environment	0.89	Informal communication	0.62	
Provide strategic leadership for learning	0.90			

Table I.
Reliability of dimensions of learning organization and organizational leadership capability scales

Notes: ^aUse SPSS PASW Statistics 17.0; ^ball scales are six items except "create continuous learning opportunities" which is seven items; ^call scales are four items

work week) in the broadcast division. To examine the differences between these three groups, the questionnaires were analyzed using non-parametric Mann–Whitney *U*-tests[2]. Non-parametric tests are recommended for a small sample size such as ours (less than 100 respondents) because small samples usually do not fulfill conditions of normal distributions required by parametric tests. First, we examined the attitudinal differences of FTEs across both the print and broadcast divisions, then we examined the differences in attitudes between FTEs) and PTEs within the organization.

The second step in data collection involved the development of interview questions to assess *entrepreneurial orientation* of a subsample of the employees. Interviewing is suggested as the method that provides access to the context of a person's behavior and provides an understanding of the meaning of that behavior (Seidman, 2006, p. 10). Entrepreneurial orientation was operationalized by using both broad personal characteristics and specific personality traits associated with entrepreneurs. Questions of broad personal characteristics were divided into two groups:

- (1) entrepreneurial intention (Bird and Jelinek, 1988) or motivation (Locke and Baum, 2007) which we describe as *work attitudes* (reasons for having an additional occupation in the field of radio broadcast activity, main occupation and activities in business and community, as well as future plans); and
- (2) skills and knowledge of the entrepreneur (Markman, 2007) described here as *human capital characteristics* (education, practical skills, social skills and conceptual skills).

Three entrepreneurial personality traits were assessed based on the work of Rauch and Frese (2007) who argue that these are primary traits affecting entrepreneurial behavior. The entrepreneurial traits are as follows:

- *risk-taking* and *autonomy*;
- *self-efficacy* (capacity to have an impact on outcomes through goal setting and flexibility); and
- *innovative behavior* (technical, process and administrative aspects in an organization).

Data on entrepreneurial orientation were collected using semi-structured, in-depth (approximately 1.5 h each) interviews with 9 PTEs and 4 full-time managers (managing director, finance manager, editor-in-chief and marketing manager). The interviews took place in the interviewees' regular business setting. The procedure for coding the interview responses (Yin, 1994) in terms of degree of emphasis expressed by the interviewees are described in Appendix 1.

Finally, the results of the two questionnaires and interviews were examined and compared.

Case study findings

Organizational learning and OL were measured separately within two groups of FTEs: print division employees ($n = 20$) and broadcast division ($n = 14$). All *U*-test values ($p \geq 0.05$) reveal that there is no difference between the two divisions' employees, Appendix 2. However, the standard deviations reveal that members of MC's print division's FTEs are less homogeneous in their attitudes about leadership compared to the full time

members of the broadcast division. This might be explained by the fact that the print media employees have joined the company more recently (four years ago) than those of the broadcast division (11 years). Thus, there was no need to control for divisional differences in the subsequent analyses:

RQ1. Do employee attitudes of their learning processes differ by job status, i.e. full versus part time?

The attitudes toward the factors of learning organizations questionnaire were examined by the work status (i.e. full versus part-time employment) of MC's members. The staff was divided into two groups: those who held full time jobs with MC ($n = 34$) and those who held only part time positions ($n = 9$) in the organization.

The differences in attitudes between the two groups of members was significant regarding MC's characteristics as a learning organization (Table II). PTEs held stronger attitudes about MC as a learning organization than did FTEs. This was true for six out of the seven characteristics of a learning organization. Despite this, both types of members believed that MC provided strategic leadership for learning. Thus, our first research question regarding perceptual differences of OL based on job status can be answered in the affirmative regarding organizational learning. It, therefore, appears that flexible job arrangements in the form of part-time employment need not be counterproductive to developing organizational learning processes and may indeed be beneficial:

RQ2a. Can any observed attitudinal differences between *full and part-time employees* be explained by differences in their attitudes regarding their organization's leadership?

The results in Table III reveal that there were no differences based on employment status of members regarding their attitudes of two of the three dimensions of leadership capability – alignment and cohesion and control and feedback. However, organizational members who held only PTE had significantly stronger attitudes regarding the architecture of the firm's network; they expressed stronger agreement with the characteristics of the firm's network. Specifically, an examination of the two sub-dimensions of this leadership factor revealed that part-time members perceived institutional leadership to be more decentralized than those who held FTEs. In other words, members holding only part-time positions felt more empowered than those

Learning organization factors	Full-time (Permanent) employment (SD)	Part-time (Contractual) employment (SD)	<i>U</i> -test (<i>p</i> value) ^a
Create continuous learning opportunities	3.60 (1.30)	4.78 (1.03)	0.00*
Promote inquiry and dialogue	3.86 (1.23)	4.67 (0.75)	0.01*
Encourage collaboration and team learning	3.89 (1.27)	4.61 (0.89)	0.04*
Create systems to capture and share learning	3.67 (1.33)	4.50 (0.74)	0.01*
Empower people toward a collective vision	3.54 (1.31)	4.35 (0.84)	0.02*
Connect the organization to its environment	3.92 (1.32)	4.81 (0.67)	0.01*
Provide strategic leadership for learning	4.25 (1.33)	4.44 (0.66)	0.41

Table II.
Learning
organization factor
values between full
and part-time
employees

Notes: ^aUse SPSS PASW Statistics 17.0; * $p < 0.05$ is taken as a significant

holding full-time positions. In general, however, differences in attitudes regarding the organizational learning based on job status appear to be only weakly related to differences in employee attitudes about their OL with one exception:

RQ2b. Can any observed attitudinal differences between full and part-time employees be explained by differences in their entrepreneurial orientation?

If organizational level factors do not explain perceptual differences in attitudes toward OL, then perhaps individual level factors such as the employee's entrepreneurial orientation may account for some of the differences observed. PTEs may be more entrepreneurial by virtue of having to piece together more than one source of employment to make a living. If such individuals are successful at holding down multiple sources of employment, they may possess more of the characteristics of an entrepreneur such as risk taking and creativity, and, as a result, they develop a broader perspective from which to assess any of their employing firm's learning and leadership capability. To further explore the impact of entrepreneurial orientation between FTEs and PTEs' attitudes, interviews were conducted with all nine PTEs and four FTEs to assess their differences in entrepreneurial orientation. The interview findings for both PTEs and FTEs regarding their personal demographic and attitudinal characteristics that are often found among entrepreneurs (Bird and Jelinek, 1988; Locke and Baum, 2007), such as work attitudes and human capital characteristics are reported first. This is followed by the comparative findings by job status pertaining to traits that help to define entrepreneurial traits (Rauch and Frese, 2007), such as risk taking and autonomy, self-efficacy and innovative behavior.

Personal characteristics

Work attitudes. Information on the "other" occupations/positions held by the nine part-time MC employees interviewed is displayed in Table IV. Two-thirds or six of nine are active entrepreneurs, self-employed in their own business, two others hold full time positions in another organization and one does volunteer work in the community in addition to their part-time position at MC. The PTEs show a wide range of employment and volunteer activity. All six active entrepreneurs are planning to continue with own their business, and three who are not entrepreneurs (self-employed) at the moment are planning to become so in the future.

Table III.
Organizational
leadership capability
factor values
between full and
part-time employees

Organizational leadership capability factors	Full-time (Permanent) employment (SD)	Part-time (Contractual) Employment (SD)	U-test (p value) ^a
Alignment and cohesion	4.23 (1.97)	4.69 (1.08)	0.85
Control-feedback	4.19 (1.70)	4.58 (1.01)	0.70
Architecture of the internal network	4.24 (1.49)	5.14 (0.95)	0.03*
Architecture of the internal network sub-factors			
Informal communication	4.60 (1.59)	5.08 (1.04)	0.18
Extent of centralization	4.74 (1.64)	5.78 (0.89)	0.01*

Notes: ^aUse SPSS PASW Statistics 17.0; **p* < 0.05 is taken as a significant

The most important reasons for holding multiple positions was to be visible to the public and to share their talents with others according to the PTEs interviewed. Eight of the nine also mentioned self-actualization and self-development as reasons for holding various part time positions. Financial motivation was the most important reason for holding multiple part-time positions for only one of the respondents, for the others it was usually last in priority. These findings suggest work attitudes consistent with entrepreneurship. Data on work attitudes was not collected for the FTEs.

Quality of human capital. Two out of nine (22 per cent) PTEs possessed a college degree – one had bachelor's degree, whereas the other had a master's degree. A higher percentage of FTEs possessed a college degree, 100 per cent for managers and 47 per cent for other FTEs. This is consistent with others who have found that entrepreneurs' education level to be significantly less than that of managers who work for others (Brockhous and Horwitz, 1986).

The PTEs interviewed did not possess any education related to the media (journalism or broadcasting), and only two of them had acquired a specialization in their main occupation. Entrepreneurs' success depends on their skills (Markman, 2007). In spite of lower educational level, the PTEs' activities in different occupational fields (Table V) indicate that they are multi-skilled.

Possessing *social skills* were emphasized very positively by all nine PTEs – they use relationships as a source of information, knowledge and skills. Moreover, three part timers have good relationships with full-time staff members outside of work. FTEs held similar opinions regarding the value of relationships, so there were no differences between the two employee groups on this characteristic.

Managerial skills in contributing to strategic issues were identified with a question regarding how willing employees were to contribute to the organizational development of MC. Only three (of nine) PTEs were willing to contribute to this effort, and one showed an interest in idea generation in this process. These results reveal that PTEs are not confident in dealing with future strategic issues of their part time employer. On the other hand, FTEs placed a strong emphasis in this area. This difference between the two groups may reflect not only a greater commitment on the part of the latter to their sole employer but also the fact that the FTEs were managers who are expected to contribute to the development of the firm.

PTE person in MC	Own business	Additional person job activities			Voluntary work	Total job position held by person
		Full-time job	Part-time job	Elected to municipality		
I	+	–	–	–	–	2
II	+	–	–	–	–	2
III	+	–	–	–	–	2
IV	+	–	–	+	–	3
V	+	–	+	+	–	4
VI	+	–	+	–	–	3
VII	–	+	+	–	–	3
VIII	–	+	–	–	–	2
IX	–	–	–	–	+	2

Table IV.
Occupational data of
MC's part-time
employees
interviewed

Thus, regarding human capital quality, PTEs versus FTEs have less formal education, appear to have a greater variety of practical skills, have similar social skills and are less willing to contribute to the strategic issues of the firm. Summary data regarding personal attitudinal and demographic characteristics related to entrepreneurial orientation that reflects the degree to which they were emphasized in the interviews are displayed in Table V. Overall, these data reveal that PTEs and FTEs differ in human capital characteristics.

Entrepreneurial traits

Attitudes toward risk. When the PTEs were asked why they took on an additional job at MC, eight (out of nine) indicated that it provided them with stable additional income that helped to decrease their financial risk. The interviews also revealed certain stress factors were associated with entrepreneurship and posed additional risks for the respondents. Four PT respondents spoke negatively about added job responsibilities and another described the long working hours, such as being on call “24 hours – 7 days per week” to be stressful.

On the other hand, four PTEs (44 per cent) were ready to take on more risk in the form of additional responsibility for decision-making; another five (56 per cent) PTEs prefer to share the decision-making responsibility. By contrast, 75 per cent of the FTEs were ready to take on more risk in the form of added decision-making responsibility. Because the PTEs appear to be more risk averse in this case (Table VI), they appear to act more like intrapreneurs because, according to recent research (Martiarena, 2013; Douglas and Fitzsimmons, 2013), having a lower aversion to risk distinguishes intrapreneurs from entrepreneurs.

Autonomy was assessed by asking respondents how much freedom they had in making decisions in their work and their preferences for making independent decisions. All PTEs believed they have the independence they need to make decisions. Only one of the PTEs mentioned his preference for collective decision making. While 75 per cent (three of four) of the FTEs wanted to have greater independence in the decision-making process. PTEs may indeed have greater independence in decision-making because they frequently work during hours when supervisors are not on duty, whereas the opposite is

Personal characteristics	Part-time employed employees (degree of emphasis)	Managers (degree of emphasis)
<i>Work attitudes</i>		
Activity in business and in community	Strong	Not measured
Plans about the entrepreneurship	Strong	
Financial motivation for additional occupation	Low	
<i>Human capital quality</i>		
Education (college degree)	Low*	Strong
Social skills	Strong	Strong
Conceptual skills	Low	Strong

Note: *Multiskilled persons

Table V.
Entrepreneurial orientation – personal characteristics of MC employees by job status: a summary

Entrepreneurial traits	Part-time employed employees (degree of emphasis)	Managers (degree of emphasis)
<i>Attitudes to risk</i>		
Risk avoidance (aversion)	Strong	Strong
Responsibility taking	Low	Strong
<i>Autonomy</i>		
Satisfaction with the rights in decision-making process	Strong	Low or modest
<i>Self-efficacy</i>		
Manage whit multiple tasks	Strong	Strong
Flexibility	Strong	Strong
Personal goals settings	Low	Low or modest
<i>Innovative behavior attitudes</i>		
Technical	Strong	Low or modest
Work process	Strong	Low or modest
Administrative changes	Strong	Low or modest

Table VI.
Entrepreneurial
orientation –
entrepreneurial traits
of MC employees by
job status: a
summary

true for FTEs. The PTEs perceptions of autonomy are in keeping with entrepreneurial preferences (Table VI).

Self-efficacy refers to the capacity to have an impact on one's outcomes. This was assessed by asking respondents about goal setting, planning and being flexible in arranging their work. Setting personal goals was mentioned only by three PTEs (33 per cent), whereas half of the FTE managers regularly set goals. Eight (out of nine – 89 per cent) PTEs use long-term, as well as short-term, planning in their work. One PTE uses only long-term planning. Five PTEs described their ability to manage the various jobs they held, two others focused on their ability to plan tasks at work and one respondent discussed his ability to manage work and non-work activities. Various types of planning appear to be routine for PTEs because they perform different activities simultaneously. Moreover, PTEs did not perceive this multitasking to be stressful. All nine PTEs mentioned the necessity of being flexible with their plans. FTEs had similar responses regarding planning. Thus, there were few differences between PTEs and FTEs on the applied behaviors related to self-efficacy (Table VI).

Innovative behavior attitudes. This was assessed with questions concerning the use and or the need for new methods and technologies at MC. Generally, all nine PTEs expressed a positive attitude about making changes at work and in broadcasting processes; four PTEs have taken the initiative for making changes already. In contrast, the majority of the FT managers (three of four) were uncertain about the need for changes and their implementation. When it comes to actually making changes, eight PTEs (89 per cent) have actively used or adopted new technical equipment and methods in performing their tasks. One of the respondents mildly criticized the existing technical equipment as being outdated. Another PTE tried to convince management to invest in new equipment. Only half of the FTEs felt that all technical solutions were current, whereas one felt that some technical solutions should be updated immediately. In addition, the PTEs did not see any problems with making administrative (non-technical) changes, but half of the FTEs

were more cautious about making administrative changes. The other half of the FTEs could see some advantages to making such changes.

Thus, when compared to FTEs, PTEs were clearly more oriented toward trying new things at work both in terms of their attitudes toward change, as well as taking actions to request or effect change at MC. This innovative attitude and behavior is indicative of an entrepreneurial orientation.

Again summary data based on the degree to which entrepreneurial traits were emphasized in the interviews are displayed in [Table VI](#). From the table, we can see that PTEs exhibit stronger entrepreneurial traits of autonomy and innovation while both groups were fairly similar on risk and self-efficacy.

Taken as a whole, these results ([Tables V and VI](#)) indicate that PTEs appear to have a somewhat stronger entrepreneurial orientation than FTEs at MC which may help explain the differences in organizational learning observed between the two groups of employees.

Summary and discussion

This is the first study to explore the attitudes of employees holding different job status regarding organizational learning within one firm. Two primary questions guided our study. Do employee attitudes regarding their organization's learning processes differ by job status, i.e. full versus part time? The results revealed an affirmative answer to this question. Compared with FTEs, PTEs held stronger positive attitudes regarding six out of seven characteristics of the firm's capabilities for learning.

But why do PTEs hold more favorable views of MC's learning capabilities? Our second research question explored two possible reasons for these differing views of organizational learning, one at the organizational level – leadership capability and the other at the individual level – entrepreneurial orientation. PTEs did not differ in their attitudes from FTEs regarding two out of three main factors defining leadership capabilities (alignment-cohesion and control-feedback). However, PTEs did perceive one of three leadership capabilities more favorably than did FTEs, the capability concerning the decentralized nature of the firm's network. This result is consistent with their more favorable view of organizational learning because, of the three leadership capabilities examined, the one concerning the firm's network is most critical to learning capabilities ([Knight and Pye, 2005](#)). Thus, while there were few differences in attitudes regarding leadership capabilities based on job status, the one noted difference helps partially explain the varying attitudes of organizational learning between these two groups of employees.

At the individual level, the observed perceptual differences on learning processes between FTEs and PTEs might be better explained by differences in their entrepreneurial orientation. The entrepreneurial characteristics, skills and attitudes that PTEs seem to possess to a greater degree than FTEs included more actual entrepreneurial experience, less formal education, positive work attitudes, greater autonomy and positive innovative attitudes and behaviors toward change. The two groups were similar on social skills, risk avoidance and self-efficacy. FTEs were more willing to take on added responsibilities in their firm.

At times, PTEs behaved more like intrapreneurs rather than entrepreneurs. The PTEs at MC were more risk averse and their level of self-efficacy (control over outcomes) was similar to the FTEs. At least on these two aspects of entrepreneurial orientation, the

PTEs at MC behaved more like intrapreneurs according to the work of Douglas and Fitzsimmons (2013). However, with regards to their attitudes toward autonomy and innovation, PTEs behaved more like entrepreneurs. There are two possible explanations for this outcome. First, having jobs in addition to the one that they held at MC provided PTEs with more autonomy and opportunities to innovate. Second, other researchers (Douglas and Fitzsimmons, 2013) have noted that intrapreneurs and entrepreneurs do not really differ much on these types of attitudes.

Thus, it appears that differences in attitudes about organizational learning processes based on job status are due in part to the greater entrepreneurial orientation of PTEs. PTEs may be more entrepreneurial by virtue of having to piece together more than one source of employment to make a living. If such individuals are successful at holding down multiple sources of employment, they may possess more of the characteristics of an entrepreneur such as risk taking and creativity (e.g. Rauch and Frese, 2007), and, as a result, they develop a broader perspective from which to assess any of their employing firms' learning and leadership capabilities. In this case, we know that two-thirds of the PTEs already were entrepreneurs in their own right and that the remaining PTEs interviewed expected to become entrepreneurs in the future. These facts clearly point to the entrepreneurial intentions (Bird and Jelinek, 1988) of the PTEs at MC.

It is also worth noting that some of our results concerning the entrepreneurial orientation of the PTEs interviewed are consistent with prior research. For example, concerning the "quality of human capital", those members with an entrepreneurial orientation had significantly less formal education than managers supporting similar findings by Brockhous and Horwitz (1986). Moreover, our entrepreneurial respondents were also less likely than FTEs to want to contribute to the strategy of their part-time employer. This is also consistent with the lower managerial orientation that has been observed in other studies of entrepreneurs (Busenitz and Arthurs, 2007). Despite these findings, other research has noted that the business performance of entrepreneurs does not suffer because of the lack of such education or formal skills (Lerner *et al.*, 1997). Furthermore, the finding that our entrepreneurial PTEs had strong social skills is consistent with other studies noting the importance of relational skills to entrepreneurship (Baron and Markman, 2000; Hirich *et al.*, 2007; Markman, 2007). Regarding attitudes toward risk, the respondents having an entrepreneurial orientation were more likely to indicate that their part time employment with MC helped reduced their financial risk. This seems to support findings that PTEs tend to emphasize the economic relationships with their firm more than FTEs (Gakovic and Tetric, 2003).

Thus, the entrepreneurial attitudes and behaviors exhibited by the PTEs in this study are consistent with those found in larger studies of entrepreneurship. Consequently, we feel more confident in concluding that the differences in attitudes between PTEs and FTEs at MC may be because of the greater entrepreneurial orientation observed among the PTEs interviewed. This finding is consistent with studies (Alexanrov *et al.*, 2007; Gakovic and Tetric, 2003) that observed job status differences may be contingent on some third factor such as differences in work schedules, psychological contract, involvement, and, to this, we add differences in the entrepreneurial orientation. Thus, another important contribution of this study is that the entrepreneurial orientation of employees may account for their perceptual differences in their firm's learning processes.

Finally, the results of our study shed light on the organizational learning process. On one hand, organizational learning depends on the capacities and attitudes of individuals – their so called entrepreneurial behavior discussed previously. On the other hand, organizational learning depends on the organizational capability such as leadership embedded within the behavioral structure of an organization – also described as multiple-leadership across all organizational levels. In our study, PTEs' intrapreneurial traits such as risk aversion and self-efficacy level indicated the necessity to increase the learning capacity within the organization. According to connectionist theory, organizational learning takes place within social networks (Foti *et al.*, 2008), and the configuration of networks (responses to extent of centralization subscale) may be either formally determined by management or informally influenced by managers (Carroll and Burton, 2000). The PTEs attitudes regarding *organizational learning processes* and the *leadership capability* – architecture of internal network – were more positive compared with the attitudes of FTEs in our study firm. Part of this internal network includes the process by which institutional resources are distributed in an organization. The results here reveal that PTEs' have been given greater access to resources because they are trusted more by management. Having access to such resources helps create a favorable attitude not only to leadership but also to learning and entrepreneurial behavior among organizational members (Sundbo, 1996). Thus, while it may appear that having a flexible workforce may make it difficult to exercise strategic leadership and cultivate processes for organizational learning, our results suggest that a certain type of PTE may actually help reinforce these processes as firm capabilities. Specifically, employees having some autonomy and an entrepreneurial orientation may, in fact, enhance learning in organizations by virtue of the knowledge and experience; such employees bring in from other organizations in which they participate. PTEs appear to have attitudes similar to FTEs regarding the leadership capability at their firm of part-time employment. Being a PTE did not appear to place them at a disadvantage as far as understanding the firm's leadership, and, in certain areas (i.e. architecture of the internal network), they had more favorable perceptions of leadership capability. Thus, PTEs appear to be quite a valuable addition to their firm's workforce.

Limitations and implications

The exploratory findings of this study are limited because it is based on a small sample of professional service employees in a single firm. Despite this limitation, we were able to obtain systematic findings based on statistical analyses that appear to be consistent with findings from other related studies.

Our results regarding employee attitudes about the organizational learning and leadership are based on instruments having sufficient reliability. Our overall findings regarding the differences between employees with different job status may be counter intuitive. However, similar to other studies, we have found that these differences may in fact be because of a contingent variable, the differences in selected leadership capabilities and in entrepreneurial orientation between the two groups of employees in this case.

The implications for practice based on this study are that professional service firms should consider their PTEs as a valuable asset not only because of the flexibility they offer the workforce but also because of the special skills and outlooks they bring to the organization. By virtue of their part time status, such employees are exposed to other

organizations; this may provide them with a broader perspective with which to view the management processes of their part time employer. Such employees are a valuable asset when seeking new information and effecting changes in the organization. This may be especially true if the PTEs are entrepreneurs in their own right. Thus, firms might consider more carefully entrepreneurial experience and intentions when recruiting part time professional employees. Moreover, the value of entrepreneurship in general to firms in transition economies has been established (Smallbone and Welter, 2001) which makes these findings all the more relevant to firms in such contexts and perhaps also in emerging markets.

The implications for research are fairly straight forward. This exploratory study has highlighted some essential relationships among job status, organizational learning and entrepreneurial orientation which will permit undertaking deeper investigations in the future (Yin, 1994). For example, one might conduct a study using a larger sample of professional service firms. Such a study would involve multiple firms in several industries who have FTEs and PTEs. Characteristics of all employees such as their entrepreneurial orientation, as well as their attitudes concerning leadership should be systematically assessed to examine if these do indeed help explain the perceptual differences of organizational learning processes between these two groups of employees. It would also be interesting to see if the businesses of those PTEs who are entrepreneurs benefit from the knowledge their owners gain by working in another firm while simultaneously working in their own enterprise. Studies such as these might provide us with a better insight into the value of using PTEs not only in providing a flexible work force but also as an important source for developing the learning organization.

Notes

1. Given the small sample, it would be difficult to control for individual factors such as age, gender and job type of our respondents. However, prior research on FTE versus PTE attitudes and behaviors has shown that there is no difference regarding gender and job type (Ng *et al.*, 2006; Thorsteinson, 2003) and age has a small positive effect across both groups (Gakovic and Tetrick, 2003) effectively eliminating the need for such controls.
2. The Mann–Whitney *U* is the non-parametric equivalence to analysis of variance that is used with parametric data. SPSS programs were used for all statistical analyses.

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Appendix 1

Protocol for coding interview data

For data interpretation, the entrepreneurial intention defined in the theory were coded by meaning and transcribed interviews were analyzed by making the relevant meaning in the text. The qualitative data was independently analyzed by two experts (one of authors of the paper and other expert from company management staff). When both experts found the meaning in the text representing entrepreneurial intention or not intention the finding was marked as *significant*. The results were categorized as *strong emphasis* when the phenomenon was found equal or more than 77 per cent (7-9 from 9 interviewees), *modest emphasis* when it was in interval 55-76 per cent (5-6 from 9 interviewees) and low emphasis when it was less than 55 per cent. The results from managers was categorized as emphasized strong when the phenomenon was found equal or more than 75 per cent (3-4 from 4 interviewees) and emphasized modest and low when it was less than that.

Experts coded interviews indicators identically except three of them: conceptual skills of PTEs; risk avoidance of PTEs; and personal goals settings of managers. These three indicators were analyzed and discussed among experts once more in order to reach mutual understanding. [Table AI](#) below summarize these results.

Table AI.
Additional expert
analysis for three
critical indicators

Indicator	Expert A	Expert B	Additional discussion and analysis	Final result
Conceptual skills of PTEs	Three persons	Four persons	This difference does not change the final result	Emphasized low
Risk avoidance (aversion) of PTEs	Four persons; only high priority	Eight persons; high and low priority	Considered to take both high and lower priority together	Emphasized strong
Personal goals settings of managers	Two or three persons	two persons	Considered to take two persons who emphasis personal goals	Emphasized low or modest

Appendix 2

Factor	Print division (SD)	Broadcast division (SD)	<i>U</i> -test (<i>p</i> value) ^a
<i>A. Learning organization factors</i>			
Create continuous learning opportunities	3.61 (1.35)	3.58 (1.23)	0.81
Promote inquiry and dialogue	3.87 (1.32)	3.86 (1.08)	0.70
Encourage collaboration and team learning	3.76 (1.32)	4.08 (1.18)	0.45
Create systems to capture and share learning	3.72 (1.31)	3.60 (1.35)	0.63
Empower people toward a collective vision	3.52 (1.43)	3.58 (1.10)	0.99
Connect the organization to its environment	3.78 (1.39)	4.11 (1.19)	0.38
Provide strategic leadership for learning	4.18 (1.36)	4.35 (1.29)	1.00
<i>B. Organizational leadership capability factors</i>			
Alignment and cohesion	4.46 (2.12)	3.89 (1.65)	0.25
Control-feedback	4.16 (1.87)	4.23 (1.41)	0.73
Architecture of the internal network	4.38 (1.58)	4.04 (1.31)	0.13
Architecture of the internal network sub-factor			
Informal communication	4.45 (1.57)	4.80 (1.57)	0.42
Extent of centralization	4.64 (1.69)	4.89 (1.54)	0.57
Note: ^a Use SPSS PASW Statistics 17.0			

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