

Implementation of Learning Organization among Human Resource in Universities

¹K. Norliah, ²S. Safiah, ³A.H. Mahadi, ⁴M. Shahrulanuar and
⁵A. Muhamad Afzamiman

^{1,2,3,4,5}Innovative Software System and Service Research Group, C-ACT,
^{1,2,3,4}Centre for Languages and Human Development,

^{2,5}Institute of Technology Management and Technopreneurship,
Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka, Hang Tuah Jaya 76100 Durian Tunggal, Melaka, Malaysia
norliah@utem.edu.my¹, safiahsidek@utem.edu.my², mahadi@utem.edu.my³,
shahrulanuar@utem.edu.my⁴, afzamiman@utem.edu.my⁵

Abstract

The borderless and dynamic environment of globalization has resulted in universities to operate in a more complex and competitive landscape of higher education. In this regard, it is crucial for universities to function as learning organizations so that they can survive and achieve sustainable growth. This study was carried out to investigate the implementation of learning organizational practices at a public university in Malaysia. This study employed a single case study at a public university in Malaysia. Data were collected by conducting interviews at particular university. The interviews were conducted on eight respondents. The sample of each source represents three categories of human resource: the executives, management staff and academic staff. Data from interviews were analyzed qualitatively. The findings showed that university has operated all the three sub-systems of learning organization, namely the leadership, system and work structure and staff performance and development at different levels. Among the three sub-systems, the system and work structure was identified as the highest level, followed by leadership and finally staff performance and development. Seven practices of learning organization that were found to be common practices at the university were the flow of information, climate of the organization, individual and group development, individual and group practices, vision and mission, work processes and staff's achievement and feedback. On the other hand, five practices which were yet to become common practices of learning organization were the executive practices, system and work organization, training and education, management practices and reward and recognition. Universities that function as learning organizations position learning as the catalyst for the development of progressive human resource. Hence, the university is able to survive and sustain its dynamism within the competitive environment of higher education.

Key Words: Sustainable growth, learning organization, human resource, work practices.

1. Introduction

The flow of global change has given a clear signal to an organization to be ready and adapt to the change of the flow to continue to compete and achieve excellence. Generally, today's organizational competition is determined by its ability to meet customers and stakeholders demands. These claims involve high quality products, services and services, beliefs, technological changes, economics, politics and social. This goes beyond the expectations of customers by predicting their wishes in the future. In fact, universities are faced with issues of changes that also affect its approaches in managed and organized (Bui and Baruch, 2010).

The country's need for higher education has been expressed through the formulation of general and specific policies that are updated from time to time. Claims for the change in the university's development take place with the supervision of the Ministry of Higher Education (KPT) (Morshidi & Kaur, 2010). In fact, the formulation of the National Higher Education Strategic Plan (PSPTN) is also a paradigm shift towards enhancing the development of universities nationally and internationally. This strategic plan has been formulated to enhance the quality, competitiveness, creativity and innovation of higher education to meet current market demands in the face of global challenges. The ability to exploit all available resources such as finance, time, technology and human resources is necessary to ensure that the university is able to issue good service and quality products (Mok, 2010b). If all the activities and manpower of this human resource are well-organized and systematic, then a university can grow dynamically and excellently. Through learning, human resources within the organization continue to learn to overcome various pressures in competition. Therefore learning and continuing learning is a responsive and imperative act of an organization today (O'Brien, 1994). Organizations can also adopt adaptive mechanisms (acceptances) and bring changes to a more productive work culture within an organization (Mok, 2010b).

Learning organizations emphasize human resources that constantly develop their capacities to produce the desired results, where new and thoughtful patterns are nurtured, aspirational ideas are created and human beings are always learning together (Senge, 1990b). University plays an important role in empowering the culture of knowledge through the development of its human resources (human capital) in a holistic way. In the context of the university, the combination of its scientific community includes academics, administrators and support staff to understand university visions and ideals from a superior perspective. In fact, the ability of the university to have high-skilled human resources is always more willing to explore new challenges, innovation and have a sustainable mind driven towards achieving high performance learning organizations (Jones, 2012). Learning organization is also a new paradigm that requires continuous adaptation to an ever-evolving environment to achieve

performance more effectively (Klein and Lishchincky, 2016). The implementation of this learning organization is also aimed at helping human resources change with the benefits of the organization through value creation and work norms, adaptation to technology development and change.

Studies on the implementation of learning organizations have been widely undertaken and mostly implemented in profit-oriented organizations (Lawler and Sillitoe, 2013). However, the study of organizational learning is still lacking. Hence, this study will examine and see how far human resources a university carries out learning organizations. Additionally, each university has different human resource features, such as universities that focus on technical thrust, as a whole the human resources are dominated by men. To date, there is no specific study that looks at gender differences in the implementation of learning organizations. In general, this study aims to analyze the perceptions of human resources (executive, management and academic staff) and the implementation of organizational learning in a university. In the context of ever-changing globalization, the implementation of learning organizations can generate change and provide strength to preserve university excellence towards innovation. Due to its importance toward university and staff itself, it is timely to analyze the implementation of learning organization among human resources (executive, management and academic staff) in university.

The paper is structured according to the following sections. Following the introduction section, the second section focuses on the synthesis of the literature. The next two sections present the method and the discussion sections. This paper ends with a conclusion section.

2. Literature Review

Researchers and organizational management experts emphasize organizational needs to transform into learning organizations to cope with the change and sustainability of their respective organizations. The most valuable resource for the organization is human resources that learn and apply what is learned in the organization meaningfully (Bui and Baruch, 2010; Hussein et al, 2014). Therefore, the implementation of learning organization in an organization emphasizes on the learning output of its human resources to ensure that the learning organization is successful.

According to Lawler and Sillitoe (2013) only organizations that have managed to defend their advantage will be able to overcome their future competitors. The advantages of this learning organization will be to empower an organization to overcome its competitors. Continuous improvement through learning becomes a catalyst towards generating change that can lead to the excellence of an organization. Various issues that are the agenda in preserving learning organizations are the focus of a discussion. Among these issues are issues of learning, organizational culture issues, leadership issues, organizational issues and organizational structures, development issues and performance as well as

constraints or constraints. Therefore things should be given attention in creating a learning organization is to provide a leadership team of caliber and high skill. Leadership is the most important aspect of successful learning (Caldwell, 2012). The ambiance and climate of the environment within the organization also play a role in creating learning organizations.

Lawler and Sillitoe (2013) has states that the sources of information should be productive and wealthy in terms of content as it determines the level of quality and quantity of the employees of an organization's learning. This opinion is supported by Rennie and Morrison (2012) which states that learning can help an individual enrich his knowledge of something. Through the provision of resources, knowledge can be shared and delivered to members of the organization. Organizations with advanced technology are used to improve the efficiency of their information flow (O'Brien, 1994). In the learning organization, the working structure is evolving, having a working round, in the form of self-direction and cross-functional team work is often done. This is aimed at reducing bureaucratic red tape and complicated regulations. The burdensome bureaucratic and regulatory burden will indirectly deplete the staffing relationships with customers to slow down the process of acting on any complaints submitted.

In learning organizations, individuals are encouraged to explore and deal with things through the learning process. Implementation of performance levels can be used by management to improve accountability, efficiency and effectiveness of its organization. The system is also important when it comes to changing which it is necessary to provide a framework for setting goals, guidance to staff and work processes as well as efforts to achieve the desired goals. In learning organization, training and education are a platform that will support the principles of learning organization. Training can be done in formal and informal form. The main focus of formal training and education is to help staff learn from the experiences of others, to be a good and creative problem solver to improve their on-the-job performance. Training should focus on performance issues within the organization. Through training as well as learning aspects to science and getting new experiences can be applied. Jones (2012) argues that training and learning are important to staff because in staff learning organizations can use what they learn to improve their abilities.

Although the concept of learning organization is easy to accomplish, it is not easy for an organization to become a learning organization. This statement is supported by Schumacher (2015) which states that it is not easy for an organization to acknowledge or call itself a learning organization. Various problems or constraints can be a barrier to the implementation of this concept and will directly reduce the effectiveness of the learning process within the organization. The system, structure and management aspects of the management are also a barrier to the existence of learning organizations. This situation leads to an organization's environment that does not encourage learning activities to

be both in terms of knowledge and views.

University acts as a learning organization in view of the vibrancy of the world of higher education that is constantly changing and improving (Singer and Smith, 2013). Organizations including HEIs are also aware that manpower is a human resource is a generator, linker, driver and coordinator of another asset in the organization. Studies related to learning organizations have been carried out both outside and within the country. The study was conducted covering discussions on learning organization concept and model (Bui & Baruch, 2010; Viacava & Pedrozo, 2010). These studies have different emphases, namely, perceptions about the implementation of learning organizations, human resources and learning organizations, learning styles, knowledge management, vision and learning organizations, organizational climate, leadership and learning organizations, the effect of organizational learning.

The role of university as an educational institution can encourage members to improve their skills so that they are able to learn and develop. Staffs are more flexible when they gain knowledge and are more capable of moving within the organization. Inter-unit boundaries are reduced when staff shares experiences, knowledge and skills. Creativity can flourish if the staff continues to be encouraged to take risks and try something new. Even the traditional communication boundaries also diminish as communication between the units and between the staff stages. The rigid hierarchy does not exist anymore and no longer restricts to change.

3. Methodology

This chapter explains the method of conducting study and practice of learning organization at a public university in Malaysia. In this regard, this chapter discusses the methodological aspects that have been used to obtain the data for this study. The aspects of the methodology discussed include the scope of the study, the context of study, sample of the study, procedures and data collection and data analysis procedures.

Scope of Study

The conceptual framework of learning organization practice in this study is the result of the adaptation of Model Learning Organization Practices Profile (LOPP) O'Brien (1994). According to O'Brien (1994) there are twelve aspects that are the basic factors supporting the implementation of organizational learning practices in universities. These twelve aspects are strategy and vision, executive practices, management practices, organizational climate, working structure, information flow, individual and group practices, work processes, achievement and feedback goals, training and education, rewards and recognition, individual and group development. Twelve aspects of LOPP O'Brien's instruments have been broken down into three components namely leadership, system and work structure as well as employee development and performance. These three components have been studied by researchers to see

their role in the implementation of organizational learning practices at a university. Review has categorized the twelve aspects that O'Brien has outlined in three categories namely leadership, system and working structure as well as staff development and performance. All these aspects were studied through the interviews. The findings of this study can help the university or any other IPTA and IPTS in the effort to create and succeed a learning organization.

This descriptive study has five common features. First, the sample is a human resource of university staff of the case; Second, the sampling of this study was using purposive sampling method because the researcher needed data from the respondents who had experience working from university case from 1 to 5 years; thirdly, the data focuses on the measurement of the perception of the practice of organizational learning of university staff in the case of three working groups for example executives, management and academic staff; Fourth, the data collection of this study consists of qualitative data so that the data can further confirm the validity of the findings.

Context of Study

This study was conducted at one of the network universities known as the Malaysian Technical Network University (MTUN). MTUN is a network of four public universities in Malaysia that focus on certain technical areas. The concept of establishing a case study includes different and unique curriculum and learning, identified as a high-tech university and is a Problem Centered and Action Learning and creativity, emphasis on Experimental Learning and practice and practice with the Teaching Factory facility with application and practice. The respondents of this study consist of both academic and non-academic sources in the case university in Malaysia.

Sample of Study

The respondents involved in the interview were eight people, two from executive group, three from management group and three from academic group. The respondents' choice for interviews is limited to respondents who have worked in university cases for at least more than five years. They have had experience and knowledge working in the case of the university and are divided into three separate sub-groups as shown below.

Table 1: Subgroup Samples of Interview

Sub-groups sample	Explanation
Executives	senior university cases consisting of academic staff
Manager	officers involved in management and administration consisting of academic and non-academic staff
Academics	lecturers who are directly involved in teaching and learning

Based on subgroups in the learning organization population, the number of respondents required in each group is calculated using the sampling stratified method.

Procedures and Data Collection

This study applies the method of interview. The data collection for this study lasted for a year from May 2009 to April 2010. A set of interview questions has been enacted before the interview session with the selected respondent. Interview questions are built on three main components in the implementation of learning organization namely leadership, system and structure of work and development and staff performance. The estimated time taken for each interview session is between 45 minutes to 1 hour 30 minutes. Digital voice recorders have been used to record every interview session with survey respondents and the digital recordings have been stored in the document 'folder'. The researcher took two months to transact the recording of the interview to the form of writing. The eight transcriptions of the interview have been labeled using the label as in Table 12 for the purpose of identifying the qualitative data sources and preventing the bias in the study.

Table 2: Interview Data Source Label

Staff groups	Label
Executive	E1
	E2
Management	P1
	P2
	P3
Academic	A1
	A2
	A3

Data Analysis Procedures

For the purpose of analyzing and interpreting data, the 'thematic analysis' method has been used. In detail, the process of analyzing qualitative data encompasses three stages, first, understanding the data as experienced by the respondent, both data classification to certain codes and themes (themes) that arise from the data and the three narratives based on specific themes and which arising from the data. During active reading, researchers will memoing by recording, questioning and relevance of interview data with other data sources, rephrasing respondents' statements based on the understanding of the researcher and identifying meaningful statements to be presented in the story in chapter five. The second level involves the process of classifying and encoding data. The codes are based on twelve aspects of organizational implementation practices suggested by O'Brien (1994). Additionally, new themes that arise during data analysis are also considered.

Table 3: Matrik Kod dan Sub-kod interview finding

Kod	Sub-kod
Leadership	Vision and strategy Executive practices Management practices Organization climate
System and structure	Information channel Individual and group practice Working process Systems and working organization
Development and staff performance	Performance mission and respond Training and Education Rewards and Recognition Individual and Group Development
Support factor	University direction Higher education transformation Higher education area Technological advancement and globalization k-workers
Limitation factor	Executive practice Work systems and organizations Training and education Reward and recognition Management practice
Learning in working	Individuals and groups Organization Environment Spiritual development
Organization role in implementation of learning organization	Problem solving and innovative work Awards and rewards Leadership Change and learning

At this stage, the data has been subdivided into certain themes and there are instances where the same data is in different code. After the data is broken down into certain themes, the third one is running. The third stage is story level. At this stage, the data is categorized on each theme read several times to produce a story about how the university conducts the practice of learning organization. Apart from using this storytelling interview data is also generated based on data from document analysis and surveys.

4. Result and Discussion

This chapter aims to answer the fourth question of the question of how the practice of learning organization is carried out by executive, management and academic working groups in the case university. Implementation of organizational learning practices at the case university is based on human resource reflection and feedback on the implementation of the three key components of learning organization enacted by O'Brien (1994), namely leadership, system and structure of work and staff development and performance. Implementation of the learning organization is also taken into consideration to see the transformation process of the case university towards the implementation of the learning organization's practice. The external factors

that led the university to function as a learning organization have also been identified through the analysis of university documents and the Ministry of Higher Education (KPT). As a result of qualitative data analysis, researchers found four themes. The four themes are: i) the need for organizational learning implementation in case management; ii) staff development and performance in the implementation of learning organizations in case universities; iii) leadership towards the implementation of learning organizations in case universities; and iv) system and structure of work in the implementation of learning organization in case university.

Theme 1: Learning Organization Needs at University of Case

The current globalization and technological developments have been identified as one of the factors that drive the practice of organizational learning practices in case universities. The flow of globalization and technological development has demanded a change in the global landscape of higher learning. The need for a university to function as a learning organization supported by E2 states that "learning is a free variable that serves as an agent of change that is very important to survival of the university's case to face future challenges". This scenario has led to the awareness of the importance of learning within the organization towards strengthening their human resources. As a result of the change in globalization, at the national level, KPT as a regulator of public universities in Malaysia has acted on implementing a transformation of higher education through the National Higher Education Strategic Plan (PSPTN) (KPT, 2007) also encouraged the implementation of learning organizations in case studies. As a public university, the case university has accountability on the country's agenda and the implementation of PSPTN. Furthermore, the agenda contained in the PSPTN has been taken into account in the process of formulating and achieving a strategic plan of the university which requires human resources to practice learning organization practices.

In terms of achievement, the 2009-2010 Strategic Plan has a much shorter period of the previous university's Strategic Plan (2004-2015), where the achievement of the 2009-2010 Strategic Plan is for two years while the 2004-2015 Strategic Plan is for 12 years old. The 12-year and 2-year periods show that the need for improvement of the university's objective in meeting the relevance of evolving environmental claims and globalization as supported by E1 respondents.

Theme 2: Staff Performance and Development

The various issues raised by the respondents are related to the recognition of staff work performance ie the justice done by the Head of Department as in SKT scores, openness of mind, dialogue, flexibility and sincerity in employment at the case university. Apart from the training and education provided by the university, respondents stated that it is important to share the experience of working in informal learning. According to E1, "staff attains competence when work experience at work was previously adapted to the

context of working in the current place. This is supported by training received at work ". A1 states that "learning starts with inner intentions" and he "learns much from experience and shares, shares and cares, including through reading because learning is a continuous process". E2 explains the emphasis on spiritual development is seen to be solving the problem of focusing too much on achieving CPD marks and relying on rewards for work done.

Theme 3: Leadership

Leadership is one of three major components in the implementation of learning organization. The focus of this leadership component is to focus on the fifth objective of the university's Strategic Plan which is to empower effective leadership and administration. The importance of leadership in preserving university excellence was clearly stated in the 2009-2010 University Strategic Plan. Hence, the case university needs to empower its leadership and governance. Communication between managers and human resources at the case university should also be enhanced to address conflict within the organization and raise the spirit of collaboration as well as the practice of continuous learning can be implemented according to E2. Organizational climate is an atmosphere and environment that exists within the organization as a whole. It is the result of actions and practices that occur routinely in the organization and are determined by members of the organization based on their perception of the organization. Among the features of the organizational climate that encourage learning is a conducive, employee-friendly environment, encouraged by the superior for staff development and infrastructure facilities provided for staff welfare. An interview from the executive team found that the organizational climate gave a comfortable environment to human resources. Respondents point out that human resources are not afraid to share their thoughts, to be happy and happy to work. Interviews from management work groups and administrators have different opinions. Climate and environment have a huge role in determining the success of a university organization. This is because all entities that exist in university organizations are interdependent, share goals, move around, build self-reinforcement, share experiences and have high motivation.

Theme 4: System and Work Structure

Work systems and organizations include work systems and structures, information flow and information, individual practices in groups and work processes. The findings of this interview also found that practical practice through systems and organizations, information and information flows, individual and group practices and work processes constitute a complementary system of networks for excellence. University organizations need to 'enrich and empower' their structure and work system to enhance the element of equilibrium and perfection in every activity performed. Information and information delivery is not just based on the strength of information technology but is more dominated by meetings and face-to-face meetings (-face). The approach is a catalyst in the understanding of matters, questions and discussion of discussions

or dialogues that are the strengths to build trust directly to the human resources of the university according to A2. The findings of the interview by interview find that the process of enhancing the individual or group takes place in an 'open mind', there is a dialogue of cross-cutting and cross-cutting expertise between the fields either individually or in a checklist or a checklist or practice checklist to enable the task and responsibility to be successfully implemented in the case university. In fact, the process of responding to a problem is expedited and has become an individual or team's practice to prevent any occurrence in the university organization according to P2. The work process at university case depends largely on the International Organization For Standardization (ISO) procedure where annual monitoring is conducted by internal audit and audit external SIRIM. ISO quality management system practice is aimed at achieving zero errors by emphasizing the quality assurance in all products produced for optimum customer satisfaction has been practiced in case universities such as' online document access, desk files, teaching and learning according to A1. The challenge of implementing learning organizations at the university is also due to lack of rewards and recognition of human resources that cannot provide job satisfaction among human resources. The study found that respondents acknowledged the importance of rewards and recognition to promote increased human resource performance according to P2. The challenge of implementing learning organizations at the university is also due to lack of rewards and recognition of human resources that cannot provide job satisfaction among human resources. The study found that respondents acknowledged the importance of rewards and recognition to promote increased human resource performance according to P2. This problem is also closely related to the APC where some respondents stated the need for the administrator to pay reasonable attention. The findings show that human resources give priority to seven practice learning organizations implemented in case universities as shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1: The Practices of the Implementation of Learning Organization

The findings show that these seven practices have a mean value higher than the overall mean. Such practices are: a) vision and mission; b) organizational climate; c) information flow; d) work processes; e) individual and group development; f) individual and group practice; and g) goal of achievement and feedback. These practices are very influential and interact with each other and have succeeded in implementing the learning organization at this university. In fact, these practices can also produce quality staff who are always ready to face changes from within or outside the university. Making changes in an organization, especially educational organizations like case universities towards learning organization and high performing organization is not an easy matter. It requires strategic planning, comprehensive implementation, committed and competent leadership and staff, as well as the support and readiness of university staff at all levels to change. This challenge also requires the openness and seriousness of all university students in the case of improvements, improving the level of professionalism and having the courage to make a paradigm shift.

5. Conclusion

As a result of qualitative data analysis, the study found that there were three environmental factors that led the university to implement learning organizations. The three environmental factors are changes in the landscape of higher learning due to the ever-changing flow of technology and the development of technology, achievement of strategic plan of higher education towards the transformation of higher education in Malaysia and changes to human capital development that emphasize lifelong learning.

The implementation of learning organization at the case university was also detailed using qualitative data finding through interviews with eight respondents. The description of the implementation focuses on three key components of the development and performance of staff, systems and organizational structures and leadership. There are few practical issues related to staff performance such as for staff development, the university has organized various face-to-face formal trainings at universities and departments. Staffs also have the opportunity to attend a formal training program organized by outside parties. The training program covers the aspects of spirituality, identity and professionalism. The emphasis of staff development in parallel with the implementation of learning organizations where the emphasis is emphasized on staff development is learning skills, creative problem solving and continuous learning.

Rewards received at the university level are very limited, with only certain staff receiving the Excellent Service Award (APC) based on their SKT performance score. The issue raised by the respondents in relation to the recognition of staff performance is about the justice of the Head of Department in the granting of SKT scores, openness of mind, dialogue, flexibility and sincerity in employment at the case university. Leadership and identified issues related to

leadership are vision and strategy are formulated and updated with global flows of change and guided by the Strategic Transformation of Higher Education Malaysia (2007). However, collaboration between departments in the formulation of departmental strategies is limited due to time constraints and commitments. Various information channels such as the Annual Vice-Chancellor's Mandate, Author's Desk and Bulletin have been used to ensure staff understand and work together to achieve the objectives and vision of the case university. The management practices hierarchical and management in accordance with the Key Performance Index (KPI) and the Balance Scorecard (BSC) to determine the achievement of objectives in strategic planning,

Among the research constraints identified there are some practices that need to be taken into account by the university of which the management practice is difficult to admit of the mistakes made and the intolerable working environment of the mistakes during work. Researchers are of the opinion that the practice of organizational learning is capable of enhancing the capability and strengthening of education and training programs in order to drive the absence of university cases. The review also has suggested that the university strive to align the organizational system that is characterized by learning organization. As a large organization, the case university needs to adopt an organizational culture that focuses on continuous improvement.

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