

# BUILDING A LEARNING ORGANISATION IN INDONESIAN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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**BUILDING A LEARNING ORGANISATION IN INDONESIAN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION****Hardianto\*, Eddy Setyanto, Antonius Kiritin, Burhan & Linda Ika Mayasari**

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**DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.1134075****Keywords:** Learning Organisation, Institution of Higher Education, Transformative, Commitment.**Abstract**

Facing serious competition in present days every organisation is supposed to start transforming into a Learning Organization. Especially for those universities and colleges the main goal of that is to implement the "tri dharma" (three principles) transforming to a Learning Organization has become really inevitable. In our days institutions of higher education are required to be acknowledged world wide. By applying the Learning Organisation structure in these institutions the satisfaction of the whole community will be increased. In the process of building up a Learning Organisation the management has key role. Transformative leadership is needed that is committed to the community as a whole to realise a Learning Organisation within the institution. The barriers in realizing a learning organisation in Indonesian institutions of higher education among other factors are the management itself and the condition of the existing infrastructure of the institution.

**Introduction**

Scientific and technological development forces an organisation to always keep changing and innovating. Organisations that are not capable to innovate will find themselves in trouble by facing increasingly tight competition. The pressure caused by the constant need of innovation will force organisation to become a Learning Organisation. By becoming a Learning Organisation technological achievements can be adopted by the organization. Beside that the desire and opportunity of institutional members to keep on learning will also grow and evolve.

A learning organisation according to Wahyudi (2009) is: an organisation that continuously develops its ability of adapting and changing. Based on above statement it is obvious that every organisation in present days should become a Learning Organisation. The dynamic changes both within and outside an organization requires an organization to be capable of adjusting to changes. Those organizations that are not capable to turn themselves into a Learning Organization will be abandoned by it's customers or stakeholders.

An Institution of Higher Education as an organization is basically a learning organisation. The main task of a College or University is to implement "tri dharma" college (education, research and public service) makes it essential to become a Learning University. However currently this role seems to be not obvious yet in higher educational institutions.

In PP no. 4 Year 2014 on the Implementation of Higher Education and Management of Higher Education is a college is a unit of education that organizes higher education. Higher education is the level of education after secondary education that includes diploma programs, undergraduate programs, master programs, doctoral programs, and professional programs, as well as specialist programs, organized by universities based on the culture of the Indonesian nation.

There are several forms of higher educational institutes in Indonesia including universities, institutes, polytechnics, academics, high schools, and community colleges. All of these forms have their own anothernesses. Like community colleges conduct vocational education at diploma level one and/or two diplomas in one or several branches of science and/or technology based on local specialties or in order to meet



## INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH SCIENCE & MANAGEMENT

distinctive needs. At present time many universities in Indonesia apparently not yet capable to transform into a learning organization. Among others, the following phenomena can be observed:

1. Institutions of higher education focus more on educational activities like research activities and dedication becomes less optimal. The number of scientific publications of Indonesian universities is still low compared to other countries, such as Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand.
2. There is still a lack of learning facilities in some universities, especially in private universities.
3. Still no positive growth in academic culture in Higher Educational Institutes.
4. Many universities have difficulties to change due to strict regulations or rules and also because of the intervention of foundations in case of private universities and the government in case of State Universities.

To problems mentioned above solution obviously must be sought immediately. Colleges really need to become learning organizations that can bring a change for the society. For that the author would like to give some thoughts about building a learning organization in higher educational institutes.

The questions of this article are the followings:

1. How to build a learning organization in an institution of higher education?
2. What barriers the institution has to face during the process?

### Study of the Theory

#### 1. Concept of a Learning Organization

Several definitions of a Learning Organization have been made by experts. Klas Milanderin Wahyudi (2009) declares that a learning organization is a cooperative climate create an atmosphere conducive to human resources so that they experience collective feel commitment, integrity and responsibility toward the entire organisational performance. Also Quinnin Tjakraatmadja (2006) states that a learning organization is an intelligent organization capable to develop its dominance in a sustainable manner, by using its knowledge-based activities and by relying on its intellectual capital.

Pedler (1991) says that a learning organization is an organization that facilitates learning for all its members and continuously transforms itself. Watkins and Marsick (1998) state that a learning organizations are characterized by total employee involvement in a process of collaboratively conducted, collectively accountable change directed towards shared values or principles.

Marquardt (2002) concludes that a learning organization is a Company that learns effectively and collectively and continually transforms itself for better management and use of knowledge, empowers people within in outside of the organization to learn as they work, utilize technology to maximize learning and production.

Based on these definitions it can be concluded that the learning organization is an organization that encourages all its members to learn and transforms itself in order to reach optimal organizational performance. After understanding all above it can be stated that in this competitive world all organizations should become learning organizations. A higher educational institute as an educational organization should be a model of how to construct a learning organization like that.

Pedler defines that a learning organization is an organization that:

- 1) Has an atmosphere where individual members are encouraged to learn and develop their full potential.
- 2) Expands this learning culture to its significant customers, suppliers, and other stakeholders.
- 3) Makes human resource development a central strategy of its business policy
- 4) Is continuously transforming itself.

#### 2. Characteristics of the Learning Organization

According to Marquardt (1996) the characteristics are the followings:

- 1) Performance-based and engaged in business.
- 2) Emphasises the importance of the learning process or learning the method of learning.



## INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH SCIENCE &amp; MANAGEMENT

- 3) The ability to define learning as important as finding answers to specific questions.
- 4) Great organizational opportunities to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes.
- 5) Learning is part of the job of all members of the organization.

Next.Ra<sup>11</sup> (2014) elaborates the characteristics of a learning organization as follows:

- 1) *It focuses on team, processes and programs of the organization.*
- 2) *Creates and sustains a healthy and effective result-oriented culture.*
- 3) *Performs systemic and periodic rewards.*
- 4) *To obtains feedback to learn and improve strategy.*

Nelfie in Anggraini (2006) suggests that the elements that must exist in the learning organization are: The learning process, knowledge acquisition or generation, individual learning, teams learning and organizational knowledge. Next Watkins and Marsick (1998) posited seven dimensions that are associated with the formation of the learning organization i.e.:

- 1) Continuous learning: Opportunities for ongoing education and growth are provided; learning is designed into work so that people can learn on the job.
- 2) Inquiry and dialogue that is the organizational culture supports questioning, feedback, and experimentation; people gain productive reasoning skills to express their point of views and the capacity to listen and inquire into the opinion of others.
- 3) Team learning Work is designed to use teams to access different modes of thinking; collaboration is valued by the culture and rewarded; teams are expected to learn by working together.
- 4) Empowerment People are involved in setting and implementing a shared vision; responsibility is distributed so that people are motivated to learn what they are held accountable to do.
- 5) Embedded system Necessary systems to share learning are created, maintained, and integrated with work; employees have access to these high- and low-technology systems.
- 6) System connection The organization is linked to its communities; people understand the overall environment and use information to adjust work practices; people are helped to see the effect of their work on the entire organization.
- 7) Strategic leadership Leadership uses learning strategically for business results; leaders model, champion, and support learning.

Senge in Uhar (2016) suggests that there are five essential characteristics:

- 1) Personal mastery
- 2) Mental Model
- 3) Building shared vision
- 4) Team learning
- 5) System thinking

## Discussion

### 1. Creating learning organization in higher education institutes

As already described in the previous section an institute of higher education should always transform itself to learning organization. Being a learning organization both educators and learners will keep improving themselves; this is how the institute will always step forward and flourish. Senge (1990) and Erdemdkk (2014) defines a learning organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together.

In building learning organization in higher educational institutes needs regulation in the institute, both regarding leadership, dosen, educators and students as well. Referring to parts of the same system we can not tell that one element is more important than the other. Therefore commitment from all academic communities is necessary to build learning organizations in Institutes of Higher Education.



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In the context of leadership, to build learning organization in higher educational institute needs a leader who is transformative. Rija (2016) states that Transforming to learning organization has become important in this era, hence organizational leaders should develop transformational leadership behaviors and organizations need to change their culture to promote learning. Transformative leaders are leaders who are able to mobilize the resources of the institute in order to make changes within the institution.

Burns and Yukl (2005) explains that transformational leadership is a leadership that calls for moral values of its followers to increase their awareness about ethical problems and to mobilize their resources and energy to reform the institution.

To become a transformational leader, Yukl (2005) defined 7 guidelines that must be understood first, namely:

- 1) States a vision that is clear and compelling
- 2) Explains how this vision can be achieved
- 3) Acts behind the scenes and optimistic
- 4) Shows confidence to followers
- 5) Uses dramatic action and symbols to emphasize important values
- 6) Leads by example
- 7) Gives competence to people to achieve that vision

Transformative leaders are able to facilitate the realization of learning organization in higher educational institution. With that the performance of the institute can be maximized. Results of survey Ratnadkk (2014) mentions that organizational performance is affected by learning organization but to a very limited level. Ratna suggests that organizations need to build out good relationship with the environment and adapt to changes that may occur.

Institutes of higher education that are transforming themselves into a learning organization also must adapt to environment. As an open-system organization of course institution must pay close attention to all changes either within the organization or outside of it. The change can be a new legal regulation, technological achievements, new learning tools and technology and so on.

Pitt and Franzak (2007) gave four recommendations for leaders about building organizations, namely:

- a) The foremost implication for managers is to continue to concentrate on learning consumer preferences and needs.
- b) The best method of creating quality consumer products and services is to involve the consumer in each step methodeterbaik.
- c) Boundary spanning teams involving consumers, cross-functional internal members and external nonconsumers like suppliers and retailers, can provide valuable fresh perspectives to increase new product success.
- d) Managing the company-consumer interaction requires resources, an effective organizational structure and a well-implemented information technology infrastructure.

A leader always has to build good relation with customers. Within education we know that there are internal customers and external customers. Good relationship between all customers and the leadership and also good relationship between the whole academic community and the customers must be built. The most simple way to build out good relationship with the customers is to involve them in activities. Higher educational institutions could organise more public activities so that their reputation would grow.

Positive results of fostering communication is that the institution gets information about customers expectations. The institution must provide maximum service to its customers. The services provided should meet with customers' demands and expectations. By acquiring the appropriate Ministry hopes the value of higher education will grow in customers eyes. Services provided should meet customers' expectation. Building quality infrastructure is certainly needed. Information technology system based network must already be applied in college. In addition, Francis (2014) in his research recommends a few factors that relates to management building a learning organization, namely:





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- 1) Leaders need to build and encourage the creation of learning organization
- 2) The need for improving and training of all personnel
- 3) Management knowledge to solve problems
- 4) Maximal utilization of information technology
- 5) Providing project layout or consultant

Learning organization will enhance job satisfaction of all members of the organization. Members of the organization will feel delighted with the opportunity they get to learn and develop themselves. In the results of his study Chang and Lee (2007) in Erdemdkk (2014) mentions that learning organization can help to improve job satisfaction. Learning organization contribute to teachers job satisfaction with 36,3%. In institutions of higher education learning opportunity for dosendan teachers (continuing education or training) improves their job satisfaction.

The same is stated by PantouvakisdanMpogiatzidis (2013) by claiming th<sup>13</sup> job satisfaction is significantly influenced by internal service and learning organization. They express that The research results revealed a positive impact of interactive internal service quality characteristics and learning organization dimensions, namely, empowerment and continuous learning, on job satisfaction in hospital care services.

Those higher Educational institutes will improve and develop that are willing to and able to innovate. Becoming a learning organization will cause such innovations that make the institution keep going and providing quality service. A form of innovation can be building out a more effective w<sup>1</sup> of communication maximising strategic plans etc. Ratnadkk (2014) suggests that any organization wishing to become a learning organization needs to take care of the following mechanisms:

- a) Create and communicate a shared vision for the organization.
- b) Make information in the organization accessible to all.
- c) Help employees to manage change by anticipating change and creating the types of change desired by the organization.
- d) Empower employees to act.
- e) Acknowledge and support the need to take risks.
- f) Learn to manage the organization's knowledge by:
  - 1) Keeping information current
  - 2) Maintaining historical knowledge
  - 3) Addressing increasing volumes of information
- g) Establish and use individual and organizational learning strategies

As an organization, the higher educational institute must always learn and improve. Hussein dkk (2014) tells how important it is to ensure that allocate resources and efforts to be made for embed learning within the organisation. Educational institutes that do not want to learn from experiences and improve themselves will be left behind by other colleges/universities. This can be demonstrated with the implementation of the accreditation system of colleges/universities. In this process higher educational institutes need to learn how to make a college meet standard requirements stated by National accreditation agency for college or Independent accrediting agencies

Colleges being in the process of bu<sup>5</sup>ing a learning organization must pay attention to three dimensions expressed by Senge (1990), namely: (1) The ability to think insightfully about complex issues, (2) the ability to act in innovative and coordinated ways, (3) the ability to play different roles on different teams. If these three dimensions are applied in college, a continuous improvement will be experienced in the institute. Innovative methods can be used if all educator and other members get continuous learning opportunities.

Rija (2016) in his research concluded that learning organizations have gained importance and have been identified as the strategy for survival and growth in this global economy. By implementing learning organization higher educational institutes will be able to deal with changes that may occur. Therefore it is necessary to be build learning organization in colleges/universities.



## 2. Barriers in building Learning Organization

Although learning organization at colleges has become a necessity there are still barriers in applying it entirely. Garvin (1993) and Erdemdkk (2014) suggests that the learning organization as "skilled at creating, acquiring and transferring knowledge and at modifying its behavior to reflect new knowledge and insights". To carry out and to cultivate the learning organization mental attitude and internalization of the entire faculty and educational personnel is a must.

The first barrier is the lack of understanding - from management side - about the importance of becoming a learning organization. Non-transformative leadership will have difficulties in creating a learning organization in educational institutes. Bass and Yukl (2005) claims that transformative leadership is considered effective in any situation or any culture. A self-orientated leadership that can not see the condition of its subordinates will have trouble in motivating his subordinates to make them create a kind of work culture that is always facilitates learning.

In order to become a good leader one needs to have good characteristics and leadership skills. MasdukiDuryat (2016) claims that a good leader must have the following qualities:

- 1) Able to leads and direct a distracted organization to its intended goals and targets
- 2) Has a role like a catalizator – he encourages every member of the organization work better.
- 3) Has arole of an integrator - he is the “father”
- 4) Has a role of a teacher / educator.

The second barrier is the lack of commitment from the side of teachers, educators and other members to embrace the values of a learning organization. No matter how strong a leader is without commitment from all members of the organization it is impossible to reach optimal goals and success. Therefore the entire faculty and educational personnel must have strong commitment to wanting to continue to learn and improve themselves. This learning effort will be optimal if management gives encouragement and opportunity to carry it out. Weakness in commitment will cause difficulty in the forming five characteristics of a learning organization expressed by Senge, i.e. personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, team building, learning and systems thinking.

All personnel in a good management professors as well as educational personnel must understand the elements that create a learning organization. Ortenbald (2002) and Erdemdkk (2014) says that four perspectives must be conceived and implemented within a higher educational institute. *These perspectives are organizational learning, learning at work, learning climate, and learning structure.*

By understanding the condition of higher education will make it easier for a college to realize its vision and goal. Hussein dkk (2014) proposes that learning organization culture have direct effects on organizational performance and organizational innovativeness, potentially leading to long-term organizational success. The entire faculty and educational personnel are expected to exactly understand the condition of their own institution.

The third barrier is that there are still a lot of colleges that still do not have adequate infrastructure yet. Infrastructure shortage will cause difficulties in developing science. Procurement means absolutely necessary so that the educational institute could implement tridharma College that is already its goal into its work.

Uhar (2016) suggests that organizations pushing learners atmosphere can improve creative capacity of its members, in order to grow and improve the ability of the members of the Organization to actualize its potential. To encourage all these mentioned above the college needs full means such as libraries, laboratories and other facilities. Above barriers should be minimised, so educational institutes can build learning organization.



### Conclusion

Based on the above discussion, a few conclusions can be drawn, namely:

- 1) to build a learning organization in a higher educational institute a transformative leadership is necessary
- 2) Commitment from all members of management, educational personnel, dosen professors, students is very much needed for the organization in the process of becoming a learning organization
- 3) Barriers of building a learning organization in a higher educational institute could as well come from members of management, lecturers and education personnel as well as because of lack of campus infrastructure.

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