

DETERMINING THE LEARNING CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP IN LEARNING ORGANIZATION: A CASE OF THE SELANGOR STATE PUBLIC LIBRARY

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Abstract: *The purpose of this study is to identify the perceptions on the level of learning organization's practice in terms of learning culture in the Selangor State Public Library (PPAS) and the level of sustaining the library's performance. A research survey method using questionnaire was distributed to 100 staff in the Selangor State Public Library of which the return rate was 80 (8%). The results of the survey were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The findings showed that staff have positive perception on the level of learning culture (mean=3.84) and leadership (mean=3.85). The results show that there are differences regarding learning culture and leadership according to gender. There are differences regarding learning culture according work position. The finding will be useful in urging public libraries, especially those in the public sector to become better and sustaining the learning organization's performance by improving learning culture practice, optimizing management activities, and creating a formalized learning system within their organizations.*

Keywords: *Learning organization, Organizational learning, Learning Culture, Leadership*

INTRODUCTION

Like other organizations, public libraries are faced with new challenges that demand changes in order to endure the chaotic conditions in this revolving world. The advancement of information technology has led to the dramatic changes in the public library environment. Hence, in surviving this rapidly changing environment, the librarians should inevitably change and explore new strategies and continuously transform themselves in order to meet their strategic goals. The libraries in which they work should embrace the concept of learning organizations (LO) that can sustain the organization's performance.

A learning organization is an organization where people inside there are continually expanding their capacity to create the results that they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually

learning how to learn in a group together (Senge, 1990). Marquardt (1996) affirms learning organization as an organization that has the capability to look forward and adapt more readily to environmental impacts thus making greater organizational use of employees at every level of the organization. In addition, Watkins and Marsicks (1993, 1996) emphasize the attributes to become a learning organization such as continuous learning, inquiry and dialogue, team learning, empowerment, technology, system connection, and leadership.

Yet, according to Kassim (2010) in today's economy, the development of the learning organization concept is set up and defined different ways due to the need for organizations to hold on the sustainability and competitiveness of organizations. Learning culture and leadership are components in supporting the sustainability of the learning organization's performance. According to Senge (1990) learning culture in an organization is considered a forum for individuals to interact with their capacity to exchange skills, where learning is acquired by the learning organization itself to transform to become better. A learning culture is important in organization and learning can be cultivated (Farago & Skyrme, 1995). They also mentioned that the commitment of learning must have full support from the top management, where the leader or manager can encourage people at all levels to learn, develop and point out their ideas. Moreover, according to Rost (1991) leadership influence powerful relationship among followers and managers or leaders who aim changes that reflect a set of purpose that has been planned. Leaders need to facilitate and harness these learning activities for the organization's benefits. Leaders in a learning organization thus need to direct people throughout the organization towards continuously learning about how to do the tasks on sustaining organizational performance.

This study focuses on the perceptions on the practices of learning organization, namely learning culture and leadership among staff in the Selangor State Public Library (PPAS). The respondents of the study are among the librarians and library assistants because of their key role in managing and involved in learning activities and leadership in the organization. This study will explore on what staff perceived on the learning culture and the leadership practice in their organization.

The specific research questions of the study are as follows.

1. What do staff perceived on the practice of learning culture in the Selangor State Public Library?
2. What do staff perceived on the leadership practice in the organization?
3. Are there differences on the perceived learning culture and leadership practice between gender?
4. Are there differences on the perceived learning culture and leadership practice among staff of different work position?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Learning Organization and Organizational Learning

According to Senge (1994) learning organization is one 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. A learning organization is an organization that continuously encourages, maintains employee development, provides opportunities to learn and develop, and considers learning as an investment, which aims to increase the success and the capacity of the organization.

Senge (1994) in his book of *The Fifth Discipline* contends that the only long term sustainable source of competitive advantage in an organization is for it to learn faster than its competitors and if it is to achieve this, it needs to be more effective than the sum of its parts. These visions of a learning organization must be supported by a group of people who are continually enhancing their capabilities to create what they want. He sees these five disciplines as central to learning organizations, such as personal mastery, mental models, building shared vision, team learning and system thinking.

According to Huber (1991) organizational learning is a dynamic and multi process that refers to the development of new knowledge and has the potential to change behavior of the whole. Since it involves deep in changing the view or mindset of individual and organizational behavior, it sure does a time consuming process (Murray & Donegan, 2003). Comparatively, Huber (1991) emphasized that firms that have developed a strong learning culture are good at inventing, creating, acquiring and transmitting knowledge, changing behavior that reflect new acquired knowledge and insight. There have been numerous trials to define organizational learning and its multi aspects. Moreover, Simon (1991) posits that organizational learning is a dynamic process of using new knowledge and insights in order to improve behavior and performance.

On the other hand, Senge (1990) notes that organizational learning is a continuous application of experience and its transformation into knowledge available to the whole organization and relevant to their goals, while Huber (1991) sees it in different perspective which is a combination of four processes: acquisition of information, information dissemination, information explanation and organizational memory. Argyris and Schon (1996) in their study find that organizational learning emerges when organizations started to acquire information (knowledge, understandings, know-how, techniques and procedures) of any kind by any means. Tran (2008) posits that learning culture is an organization's ability to learn which is based on the assumptions it makes about itself, an assumption on its environment, and every relationship that consists its context.

Learning Culture

Learning issues are dynamic and will be based on the requirements of the people to learn. In keeping up with the required growth of a learning infrastructure, organizational members should be supported to advance their professional qualifications. These facilitate essential

means to create and enhance a learning culture based on group work. Continuous learning opportunities are the prerequisites to enhance personal and professional growth and development among organizational members. An introduction to learning culture needs to begin with understanding the concept of learning. A learning culture is important in organization and learning can be cultivated (Farago & Skyrme, 1995). The commitment of learning must have full support from the top management, where people at all levels were encouraged to learn, develop and point out their ideas.

Moreover, Chinowsky, Molenaar, and Realph (2007) assert that to have a proactive learning culture, an organization obliges expenditure of time and resources. They also identified some key contributors to adopt learning culture in organizations such as performance, aging workforce, distributed workforce, best solutions, and development of the organization. Azmee, Kassim and Sulaiman (2012) emphasize the benefits of a learning culture in organization that comprises of providing good quality of products and services, satisfying customer's needs, superior performance, committed and result-focused workforce.

The selective modeling learning process is one of the important elements that can sustain learning organization in the future. A systematic modeling learning process will create an active learning culture in an organization. The organization can use internal communication such as manager to explain and encourage cultural learning environment in the learning organization. According to Teare and Dealtry (1998) in modeling a learning process of organization, organization can aim to recruit and retain people with different cognitive styles and skills to avoid organizational cloning and aim to use teaching and discovery methods, and where appropriate, a combination of both that can sustain the quality of the learning organization. Other than that a leader can determine how to encourage creative thinking and its application to generate opportunities for learning in organizations.

According to Kassim (2010) organization and societies have recognized that the organizational learning process is more effective in creative teams or groups of people rather than individuals working alone. Teare et al. (1997) presents case studies from 14 UK and US manufacturing and service firms that based on team working and learning, provides arrays of evidence that works based on teams are making a significant contribution to organizational learning culture. These cases show that organization needs to create active team learning in order to sustain learning organization performance and supporting organizational learning culture.

Leadership

Ghazali, Kassim, Khalib, Jaafar and Idris (2015) identified leadership in conceptualizing learning organization towards sustaining learning organization performance. Yukl and Heaton (2002) in their research noted that leadership is commonly understood as the use of influence to encourage participation in achieving set goals. Antonakis (2004) in his case study explains that the leadership process involves the leader's personality and behaviors, the follower's perception of the leader and the context within which the interaction takes place. Locke (2003) emphasizes that the main concept of leadership is the relationship, that is taking place between

leaders and followers. Bass (1991) notes that leaders must structure or restructure situations, perceptions and expectations of group members.

Leadership is a relational process between leader and followers, and is molded by the context. For leadership to be effective, Chemers (2002) suggests that leaders must focus on their credibility and legitimacy with followers, the development of a relationship via identification of followers' needs and motivations, and deploying resources as to draw the best out of followers in order to meet established goals. Kotter (2001) clarified that leaders must embrace change, motivate and inspire followers to move in a desired direction. The effectiveness of leadership can also be focused by relationships beyond their immediate subordinates. According to Balkundi and Kilduff (2006), leadership is related to social capital, which is leadership as a social capital that collects around certain individuals.

Balkundi and Kilduff (2006) posit that traditional leadership research has focused on the human capital attributes of leaders such as traits and behavioral styles and situational attributes such as task structures, leadership substitutes, the nature of decision processes, and leader-member exchange quality. Bass (1991) explains the idea that leadership is about leaders supervising subordinates, about subordinates working hard toward institutional objectives as the primary goal of leadership and about the leader's ability to motivate subordinates to release their own needs to work toward the interests of the leader or the institution that the leader represents.

One of the best known theories of leadership is that leaders are transformational. Its leading exponent is James Mac Gregor Burns. Burns, who begins by distinguishing transformational leadership from the more typically practiced transactional leadership. Transactional leadership occurs when one person (the leader) sees possibilities for exchange. Thus the transactional leader approaches followers with an eye to exchanging one thing for another: jobs for votes or subsidies for campaign contributions. Burns (1978) notes that the exchanges under transactional leadership can be economic, political or psychological in nature.

In creating active and effective learning organization, a leader should know how to play their role in conducting management task. Effective learning about how to create and innovation of new markets, products, services and processes and about how to respond to environmental change has always implicitly underpinned strategic success. Ultimate responsibility for successful organization referring on wide learning remains that of the top leader. A great leader is a person who carries the responsibility and brings a very high impact and value of prescriptive approach to the improvement of organizational learning and emphasizes the design and employment of administrated learning programs, which aim particularly, to improve the way in which the organization's existing business outcomes are achieved.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a survey method using questionnaire as the instrument. The samples of this study were staffs of the Selangor State library, Shah Alam, Malaysia. Self-administered questionnaires were distributed randomly to one-hundred selected staffs who worked in Selangor State Public Library and the return rate was $n = 80$ (80%). The items in the

questionnaire were adapted from previous studies which have been modified by the researchers after synthesizing several studies in the field of learning organization, organizational learning and learning culture. The questionnaire was measured on a 1 (strongly disagree) through 7 (strongly agree) Likert Scale. Learning Culture consists of 9 items and Sustaining the Learning Organization's Performance consists of 9 items. For data analyses, descriptive statistical analysis was performed using the Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS).

RESULTS

Profile of respondents

The distribution of respondents by gender shows that more than half (45 or 56.3%) of the respondents are female while the lesser half (35 or 43.8%) are male. Respondents within the age of 20-30 form the largest group (34 or 42.5%) followed by those within the age of 31-40 (33 or 41.3%). The lowest of respondents (13 or 16.3%) are made up of those who are between 41-50 years old. More than half (45 or 56.3%) of the respondents are made up of administrative staff while 25 (31.3) are assistant librarians. Only 10 (12.5%) of the respondents are librarians. Majority (34 or 42.5%) of the respondents are made up of those who have working experience of 1-5 years. This is followed by a distant second (25 or 31.3%) who have working experience of 6-10 years. There are 17 (21.3%) who have experience of below 11-15 years. A small number (4 or 5%) has been working more than 16 years.

Perception on Level of Learning Culture and Leadership

For the purpose of analyzing the staff's level of the practices of learning organization in terms of learning culture and leadership; the whole sample of 80 respondents consisting of employees were used. In this study, the scale used was Likert scale of 1 to 5 to match the practices on learning culture towards sustaining the learning organization's performance. A score of 1 represents Strongly Disagree and a scale of 5 represents Strongly Agree, while a score of 3 represents Quite Agree. The sample mean, which summarized the collected data from the sample, was calculated to determine the practices of learning organization in terms of learning culture and leadership. The level was ranked from level 1 to level 5, where level 5 represented strongly agree on the practices, level 3 represented the mid-point, and level 1 represented strongly disagree on the practices of learning culture and leadership.

Research Question 1: What do staff perceived on the practice of learning culture in the organization?

Table 1: Mean Score for Learning Culture

Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation
My leader encourages me to learn as a team (meeting, discussion, brainstorming, seminar)	3.96	0.683
My organization motivates or encourages staffs in informal learning	3.89	0.693
My organization allows me to further my study in 6. a learning institution	3.86	0.791
My organization rewards staff for taking initiative in learning	3.84	0.719
In my organization, staff view problems in their work as an opportunity to learn	3.83	0.742
My organization supports me in term of financial or motivation to further my study	3.81	0.828
In my organization, staff help each other to learn	3.80	0.786
My organization recognizes that creative team learning is more effective to organization rather than individual learning	3.80	0.701
My organization motivates or encourages staffs in formal learning	3.73	0.693
Overall mean for Learning Culture	3.84	0.737

Table 1 shows the overall mean score of 3.84 and standard deviation of 0.737 which indicates that respondents quite agree with the statement on the practices of learning culture. The mean scores for all items are between 3.96 to 3.73 and this indicates that they quite agree with all the statements. Among the nine statements, the mean score is highest for *My leader encourages me to learn as a team (meeting, discussion, brainstorming, seminar)* (mean=3.96). Even though respondents consider the statement *My organization motivates or encourages staffs informal learning* (mean=3.73) is the lowest, it still indicates that respondents quite agree that the practice of learning culture is one of the practices in sustaining learning organization's performance. Overall, it can be concluded that respondents have positive perception that learning culture is being practiced in their organization.

Research Question 2: What do staff perceived on the leadership practice in the organization?

Table 2: Mean Score for Leadership

Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. My leader generally supports requests for learning opportunities and training	3.98	0.795
2. My organization expects leadership practices to staff at all levels	3.91	0.830
3. My leader gives frequent and supportive communication to worker	3.90	0.773
4. My leader ensures that the organization's actions are consistent with its good values (for society, for nation).	3.88	0.817
5. My leader shares up to date information with employee about industry competitors, trends and organizational directions	3.86	0.759
6. My leader encourages learning for productive work	3.86	0.725
7. My leader encourages delegation of works to lower staff	3.85	0.731
8. My leader allows for subordinates to work problem out on their own	3.81	0.956
9. My leader guides others to help achieve the organization's vision, mission and goals	3.81	0.858
10. My leader empowers staff to participate in organizational goal	3.79	0.791
11. My leader allows staff to participate in decision-making	3.78	0.763
Overall mean for leadership	3.85	0.799

Table 2 depicts the overall mean score of 3.85 and standard deviation of 0.799 which indicates that respondents quite agree with the statement on the practices of leadership in their organization. The mean scores for all items are between 3.98 to 3.78 and this indicates that they quite agree with all the statements. Among the eleven statements, the mean score is highest for *My leader generally supports requests for learning opportunities and training* (mean=3.98) followed by *My organization expects leadership practices to staff at all levels* (mean=3.91). Despite the statement *My leader allows staff to participate in decision-making* (mean=3.78) is the lowest, it still indicates that respondents quite agree that the leadership is one of the practices in sustaining the learning organization's performance. Overall, it can be concluded that respondents have positive perception that leadership is being practiced in their organization.

Reliability and Normality of Scales

To see the reliability of the scale, the researcher computes the Cronbach's Alpha for each dimension of the learning organization. It can be summarized that Cronbach's Alpha on learning culture and leadership (0.929 and 0.622 respectively) were reliable. In addition, the Shapiro-Wilk statistical test of normality was used to see whether the distribution of data is normal or not. The result shows that the observation values with respect to the dimensions on learning culture and leadership showed normal distribution of data ($p = 0.056$ and 0.199 respectively).

Consequently, statistical test of significance for the practices of learning culture and leadership used parametric techniques.

Differences on the Perceived Learning Culture Practice and Leadership between Gender

Research Question 3: Are there differences on the perceived learning culture and leadership practice between gender?

Table 3: The Independent Samples T-Test Results of the Learning Culture and Leadership between Male and Female Respondents

Item	Gender	Sample size	Mean score	p-value
Learning Culture	Male	35	3.5302	0.000
	Female	45	4.0716	
Leadership	Male	35	3.6779	0.015
	Female	45	3.9960	

The independent samples t-test is a parametric statistical test used to measure the difference between two groups regarding the variable when the data of respondents were normally distributed. Table 3 presents the result of the comparison of mean score using the Independent Samples t-test. In the case of learning culture, leadership, the p-value are less than 0.05. They are significant at 5% level or $0.00/0.015 < 0.05$. Specifically, female perceived higher than males that their organization is practicing learning culture and leadership than male (4.0716 against 3.5302) and (3.9960 against 3.6779) respectively. Therefore, it can be concluded that male and female respondents differ in their opinion regarding the practice on learning culture and leadership in their organization.

Differences on the Perceived Learning Culture and Leadership Practice among Staff of Different Work Position

Research question 4: Are there differences on the perceived learning culture and leadership practice among staff of different work position?

Table 4: ANOVA Test Result of Learning Culture among Respondents with a Different Work Position

ANOVA

Learning Culture

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2.885	2	1.443	5.387	0.006
Within Groups	20.621	77	.268		
Total	23.506	99			

**Post Hoc Test
Waller-Duncan**

Respondent Position	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05	
		1	2
Administrative Staff	45	3.6765	
Librarian	10	3.8889	3.8889
Assistant Librarian	25		4.0978

Groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.

Analysis on the learning culture between position of staff in Selangor State Public Library is carried out using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) based on the fact that the respective variables are normally distributed (Table 4) and the Duncan Multiple Range Test was explored to determine among which groups the true differences lie. The results are presented and discussed in the succeeding sections. The practice of learning culture is significant between respondent from the three positions (p -value < 0.006). The Duncan Multiple Range Test confirms that all the mean scores are significantly different from one another. In particular, the assistant librarians perceived higher ($m=4.10$) than the librarians and administrative staff ($m=3.889$ and 3.6765 respectively) that their organization is practicing learning culture in their organization. Overall, it can be concluded that there is a difference regarding the practice of learning culture among different positions of staff in the Selangor State Public Library.

Table 5: ANOVA Test Result of Leadership among Respondents with a Different Work Position

ANOVA					
Leadership					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.479	2	.739	2.218	.116
Within Groups	25.674	77	.333		
Total	27.153	99			

Table 5 shows the comparison on the practice of leadership among respondents with different position based on one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test result. The F statistics is at 2.218 and p -value of 0.116 is not significant at 5% level or p -value of $0.116 > 0.05$. It is concluded that, the perception on the practice of leadership is the same regardless of which position the respondents belong.

CONCLUSION

From the findings, it can be concluded that the staff of the Selangor State Public Library have positive perception that learning culture and leadership is being practiced in their organization. This shows that the organization has a positive inclination towards being a learning organization. Specifically, the finding indicates that their leader encourages them to learn as a team (meeting, discussion, brainstorming, seminar) and the organization has motivated or

encouraged the majority of staff in informal learning. It can be assumed that the staff learn new knowledge from informal learning, such as handling an event or tasks for the libraries. A leader generally supports requests for learning opportunities and training. It can be assumed that the leaders in the Selangor State Public Library have direct impact on demonstrating good leadership attitude and encourage productive learning opportunities to their staff. Furthermore, there are evidences that male and female staff differ in their opinion regarding the practice on learning culture and leadership in their organization. This implied that staffs do not equally acknowledge the leadership practice in the Selangor State Public Library.

This study was based on data from only one public library; hence the result should not be generalized to other public libraries. In future, this study should use a larger representative sample from various population of the organization. The items in the instrument should be expanded to include other dimensions of learning organization practices. Other than that, demographic information can be compared between age, work experience and qualification. The findings of the study are useful to organizations in building a learning organization whereby people are learning continuously to create, acquire, share, and apply the knowledge and thus, competitive advantage and organizational performance can be maximized. The implications of the study are that public libraries can use this study to better understand the practices that contribute to the learning organization concept in organizations, and ways to apply it. It can help the librarians to improve the library services and performance. This study can give an idea for public libraries in Malaysia to develop learning organization programs and expand this study in a bigger context and organizational level.

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