Learning organization and organizational commitment in schools

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This paper raised the question of to what extent and how learning organization was accepted, appreciated and practiced at different organizations and its relation to the commitment of the employees. The objective of this study was to identify the relationships between learning organization and organizational commitment among the public primary school principals. A quantitative cross sectional research design with purposive sampling was employed in collecting the data. The questionnaires were based on the *Learning Organization and Organizational Commitment* indicators that have been modified and used in Malaysia. The respondents for this study were principals of public primary schools who attended the three years intensive program (called the Head-Teacher Degree Program) which would award them the Bachelor's Degree in Education Management. Two cohorts comprised of 107 principals were chosen from 600 principals who enrolled for the Head-Teacher Degree Program. The study showed that, there was a significant relationship between learning organization and organizational commitment. Therefore, learning organization and organizational commitment are deeply interwoven and opens up new questions to be explored by further research.

Keywords: Public school; learning; learning organization; gender; ethnicity.

Introduction

Much has appeared in professional articles and journals regarding the importance of learning organization. Some had found that learning organization has come out with two focuses, the internal and external learning, where the combination produce a great impact for adapting and coping with the environmental challenges. Others found that, learning organization enable the workers to be committed with the learning process that encourages experimentation, sets open communication, dialogue and continuous learning towards the achievement of excellence. However, some looked at the integration of several factors that enables the organization to development a new culture for transformational process in the structuring and managing the organization. Thus, this paper raises the question of to what extent and how learning organization was accepted, appreciated and practiced at different organization that relates to commitment of the employees.

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Many attempt to define and describe learning organization, as the learning process, both for individual and organizations (Mayo & Lank, 1994). As research literature has demonstrated, there are various definitions of learning organization (Garvin, 1993; Daniels, 1994; Calvert *et.al,* 1994) and base on several theories (Levit& March, 1988). Meanwhile, Senge (1990) describes learning organization as places where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expressive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspirations are set free and where people are continually learning how to learn together. However in order to understand learning organization clearly, Garrat (1990) identifies three characteristics of learning organization as follows; (1) encourage people at all levels of the organization to learn regularly and rigorously, (2) have systems for capturing the learning and moving it where it is needed, and (3) value leaning and are able to continuously transform themselves. In another term, Pedler, Burgoyne and Boydell (1991) states that learning company is an organization that facilitates learning of all its members and continuously transform itself.

On the other hand, Garvin (1994) defines learning organization as an organization skilled at creating, acquiring, and transferring knowledge, and at modifying its behavior to reflect new knowledge and insights. To another extent, Toft and Reynolds (1994) defines learning organization as a cumulative, reflective and saturating process through which all personnel within the organization learn to understand and continually interpret the world in which they work in and the organizational experiences to which they are exposed. However, Dixon (1994) notified that there are several differences and common themes among the definitions in an attempt to understand and provide an insight on learning organization. Furthermore, Pearn, Roderick and Mulrooney (1995) pointed-out that the critical aspect of learning to organizations is that it helped organizations to achieve and sustain competitive edge, and becoming a sharper vision of possible futures. Learning is critical to competitive advantage and will make the difference in the future. Therefore, what is really important is to understand how organizations learn to become effective, and build the systems and structures that are necessary to gain and keep competitive advantage.

Besides that, according to Frahm and Brown (2006), the changes demanded by the learning organization approach cannot be mandated, but they can be led. They cannot happen rapidly, but as they begin to happen they can lead to major improvements. This is not working harder; it is not even just working smarter. It is working together in entirely new ways. It is engaging new depths of personal mastery and commitment, addressed to newly-found shared visions, using powerful new methods of team learning that address the mental models and assumptions that each person brings to the collaboration. Meanwhile Timperley (2006) identifies three challenges faces by school leaders in building a learning organization namely did not perceive themselves or their skills to be the target of the initiative, despite being nominated as the focus, they were more concerned about teachers collaborating with one another than whether that collaboration was leading to improved student learning and they did not put in place robust organizational processes to support evidence-engaged professional learning.

According to Serrat (2009), learning organization needs people who are intellectually curious about their work, who actively reflecton their experience, who develop experience-based theories ofchange and continuously test these in practice with colleagues,and who use their understanding and initiative to contributeto knowledge development. On the other dimension, Weldy (2009) states that becoming a learning organization and improving transfer of training could be the critical factors necessary to improve learning, better manage knowledge, make improvements in individual and organizational performance, and maintain a competitive advantage in turbulent markets.

Furthermore, Filstadand Gottschalk (2010) identifies, there are four stages for an organization to move from ordinary organization into learning organization. The four stages are activity organization, problem organization, value organization, and learning organization.

Commitment is a psychological frame of mind which motivates people to work towards certain goals. Commitment does exist in a person that has a positive attitude, while negative attitude is one of the major reasons for non-committal approach. Committed people commit their total resources, which include going extra mile for achieving goals assigned to them. The concept of commitment in the workplace has been a phenomenon of ongoing interest and focus which regard to the linkage between the individual and the organization. Building employee commitment to the workplace is one important goal of human resource policies and practices. Research shows commitment has a positive effect on productivity, turnover and employees willingness to help co-workers. In assessing employees' commitment, it is important to determine the focus of their commitment. Different individuals may have different "profiles of commitment"; they may be highly committed to the organization, but not to the team, or committed to both, or committed to neither. According to Meyer and Allen (1997) organizational commitment is "a psychological state that characterizes the employee's relationships with the organization, and has implications for the decision to continue membership in the organization. According to Hadibah (2009), there were some factors such as organizational culture, leadership style and human resources practices, which could be deliberately manipulated by organizations to influence the levels of organizational commitment in their employee. She further suggested that organizational commitment was a key to increasing public service motivation and recommends more empirical studies of employee commitment. Such studies were warranted for helping to understand the motivational base of public sector employees.

Commitment to organization is important and plays a key role in the formation of an integrated human effort in the organization. The important of organization commitment has attracted consideration over recent years and has been reflected in many management studies. According to Nik Mutasim and Mohd Hizam (2002) the commitment to organization is compatible with commitment to profession. They indicated that there was no conflict between employees' commitment to their profession and their organizational commitment. Meanwhile, Hapriza (2005) shows that, there are three variables such as gender, current position and duration show no significant different with organizational commitment, while only level of education is significant different. As a conclusion, they state that, the commitments of academicians towards their organization are moderate. Ju, Kong, Hussin and Jusoff (2008) mention that, both mandatory and fringe benefits were having significant and positive relationship with organizational commitment and fringe benefits having higher relationship as compared to mandatory benefits. The finding proposed that when employees received more fringe benefits, their organization commitment tend to be higher. Kadyschuk (1997) states that there are no significant differences between organizational commitment of teachers in public schools in Saskatchewan and gender. Furthermore, Al-Ajmi (2006) stresses that, the relationship between gender and organizational commitment has also remained unclear. Mixed results have been reported on the relationship between gender and organizational commitment in previous studies. Besides that, he also mentions that most of the studies in this area show no significant differences between males and females with regard to organizational commitment.

Hoy and Miskel (2001) state that, schools are service organizations that are committed to teaching and learning. If schools are to be effective, they must find ways to

create structures that continuously support teaching and learning and enhance organizational commitment. The learning organization is the important element that a management has to understand in her/his school in order to enhance the commitment towards the organization based on the belief that the more people learn, the better they can perform when they grow up. Therefore, there need a study to identify the relationship between learning organization and organization commitment, while the possible close link between organizational learning culture and organizational commitment has been much said and yet little investigated the relationship between the two constructs. According to Maryam Yaghoubi et.al(2010), there is a significant relationship between learning organization and organization commitment. On another study, Chien-Chi, T. (2010) identifies that there is a strong influence of learning organization practice on organizational commitment where the relationship between learning organization practices and organizational commitment is reciprocal.
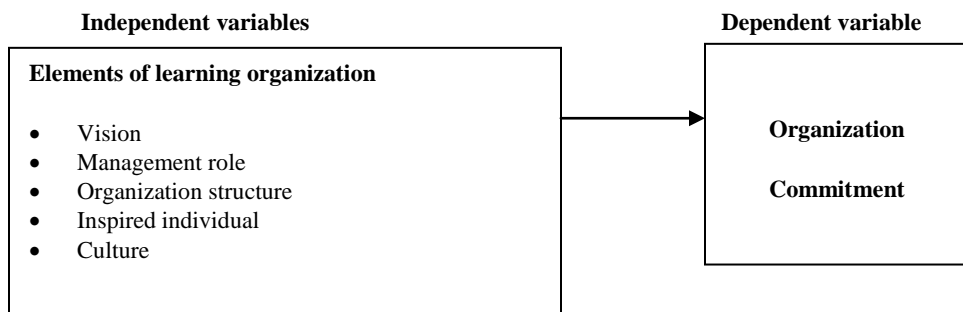
Conceptual framework

Independent variables		Dependent variable
Elements of learning organization • Vision • Management role • Organization structure • Inspired individual • Culture	→	**Organization** **Commitment**

Figure 1. Conceptual framework between Learning Organization and Organization Commitment

Objective

The objective of this study is to determine the relationship between learning organization and organizational commitment among senior teachers of Public Primary School in Malaysia.

Methodology

The research design used in this study was a quantitative and cross sectional by using a purposive sampling. A cross sectional survey design was used to determine the demographic variables of gender and ethnicity. The questionnaire consisted of two sections. Section One was designed to identify the demographic variables of respondents. Section Two was designed to measure the primary public school principals' perception of learning organization and organizational commitment. The questionnaire consisted of five elements that focus on the practice of Learning Organization at school level developed by Marinah and Omar (2004). Respondents were asked to choose from a 5 point Likert scale that ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Meanwhile, the questionnaire for Organizational Commitment was obtained by using the fifteen question organizational commitment measure which was adapted and adopted from Mowday, Steers and Porter (1979). This was

a widely accepted measure with strong predictive and discriminate validity, as well as internal consistency and reliability (Maathieu & Zajac, 1990). Respondents were asked to choose from a 6 point Likert scale that ranges from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Both the local language (Malay) and translated version (English) were given to the respondent. The respondents were requested to complete and return the questionnaire after one hour session given to them. Out of 107 questionnaires given, 100 were fully completed, accepted and analyzed. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17.0 was used in the process of data analysis. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, mean and standard deviation provide the information on the demographic variables. For inferential statistics, data was analyzed using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to determine the significant different between learning organization and organizational commitment with demographic variables.

Findings

A demographic summary of the sample was presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1**.** Respondents profile based on ethnicity and gender.

Ethnic	Male		Female		Total
	(n)	Percentage	(n)	Percentage	
Indian	10	52.6%	9	47.4%	n=19
Chinese	8	44.4%	10	55.6%	n=18
Malay	42	66.7%	21	33.3%	n=63
Total	60	60.0%	40	40.0%	N=100

Table 1showed the respondents profile based on ethnicity and gender. Data revealed that ethnic Indian 10 (52.6%) were male and 9 (47.4%) were female. For ethnic Chinese there were 8 (44.4%) male and 10 (55.6%) female and to ethnic Malay, there were 42 (66.7%) male and 21 (33.3%) female.A correlation analysis was performed to examined the relationship among the independent and dependent variables. The results of the Pearson *r* correlation are showned in Table 2.

Table 2. The Pearson analysis of relationship between Learning Organization and Organizational Commitment (N= 100)

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	r value	-	0.503**	0.268**	0.288**	0.303**	0.706**	0.270**
2	r value		-	0.560**	0.508**	0.481**	0.770**	0.382**
3	r value			-	0.410**	0.321**	0.594**	0.217
4	r value				-	0.412**	0.712**	0.374**
5	r value					-	0.660**	0.441**
6	r value						-	0.443**
7	r value							-

** correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)
Indicators:
1= Vision   5= Culture
2= Management role   6= Learning Organization
3= Organizational structure   7= Organizational commitment
4= Inspired individual

There is no relationship between organizational structure and organization commitment (r=0.217, p< 0.05). However, there is a positive and significant relationship between four others element of learning organization (Vision, Management role, Inspired individual and Culture) and organiztion commitment (r= 0.270 to 0.441, p < 0.5). There is also a correlation between learning organization and organization commitment (r=0.443, p < 0.05).

Discussion

The results in Table 1 reveal the proportions of the samples of employees in Malaysian organization. This reflect the nature of Malaysian society where its comprises of multiracial that promotes a society composed of various races, while accepting and respecting different culturalbackgrounds. It is a society that consists of a diverse mix of people, whether it be relative to their ethnicity, language, culture, religion, and traditions. Within Malaysian society there is a Malay culture, a Chinese culture, an Indian culture, a Eurasian culture, along with the cultures of the indigenous groups of the peninsula and north Borneo. The unity of Malaysian societies has been strengthen from time to time under the new slogan of "1 Malaysia" introduced by our recent Prime Minister.

The results in Table 2 show there are significant relationship between learning organization and organizational commitment except for the element of organizational structure. This study is in line with Yaghoubi et. al. (2010) and Chien-Chi (2010) where they identify there is a significant relationship between learning organization and organization commitment. However, the findings is inconsistant with the suggestion proposed by Hoy and Miskel (2001) which state that, school must find ways to create structures that continuously support teaching and learning and enhance organizational commitment. There is no relationship between organizational structure and organization commitment (r=0.217, p< 0.05).

Conclusion

In the findings of this study, results suggest that learning organization practices can be viewed as an important antecedent factor for organizational commitment although it has a moderately positive association. The findings does not only provide a new direction for organizational research on key variables, but also generated an important implication for organizational practice to strengthening learning organization practices in its relationship with organizational commitment. The results of this study further suggested that when it comes to performance, transforming the cultural dimensions of the learning organization approach should be the first priority. In turn changing the organizational culture accordingly, should be the first critical step when building the learning organization.

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