IMPROVING LEARNING ORGANIZATION AND PRACTICAL COMMUNITY THROUGH KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Dameria Sinaga
Universitas Kristen Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia
Email: dr_dameria_sinaga@yahoo.com

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Keywords: Learning Organization, Practical Community, Knowledge Management.	A learning organization is one of the popular concepts in management literature in the 1990's. Learning is a deliberate effort by someone to change behavior out of an interaction. The implications of the learning organization are collective learning, question and answer sessions. The manager expects colleagues are a part of a learning organization. Practice community is the combination of work and learning.

INTRODUCTION

Learning as one of the attempt to get behavior changes in a conscious mind as the result of interaction with the environment. The concept of a learning organization is described with critical evaluation, related to a new opinion about practical community. Learning organization in one of the most popular concepts in management literature through 1990s. The critical approach helps to give more information to a perspective. Two cases in Netherlands describe how concept of learning organization can be implemented to a practice. Application of theoretical improvement in the community is connected to discussion in learning organization and equitably evaluate. Knowledge management is a set of techniques and strategies to support, analyze, improve, organize, and share understanding and experience. Understanding and experience is built upon knowledge, either it is shows in a person or attach in the process and application of an organization. The focus of knowledge management is finding new ways to process unrefined information to useful information and eventually become knowledge.

Cut Zurnali (2008) stated that the term "knowledge management" was first used by Wiig in 1986 while writing his first book about knowledge management foundation that was published in 1993. These days the concept of knowledge management gains a large interest. This is indirectly explaining the process of transforming information and intellectual assets of enduring value. Knowledge management in an organization-specific that has the basic focus on exploitation and improvement of organizational knowledge assets for the next organization's purposes. Knowledge management is not a better thing, but to figure out how to make things better.

The action in knowledge management usually corresponds with the purpose of the organization to achieve something, such as common knowledge, performance improvement, competitive excellence or higher level of innovation. Generally, the motivations of organization to implement knowledge management are:

1. To make knowledge related to product development and service available in an explicit form
2. To reach a faster new product development cycle
3. To facilitate and manage innovation and organizational learning
4. To upgrade abilities people across the whole organization
5. To improve individual connection between internal and external
6. To manage business environment and enable employee gain relevant understanding and perception about their profession
7. To manage intellectual capital and intellectual assets in work places

Knowledge is not just information, knowledge is not placed in the vessel of storing information (e.g. databases), but in the people who used relevant information. There are a few things that differ between knowledge, information, and data. Understanding the difference between the three is so important to knowledge management.

Knowledge transfer (one of the aspects of knowledge management) in every form has long been done. One of the examples is through proportionate discussion in works, professional training, internship, company's library, and mentoring program. Despite that, in the late 20s, additional technology has been put to use to do this assignment, such as basic knowledge, expertise system, and knowledge repository.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of a well-known learning organization. According to Garratt (1995) the key idea surrounding learning organization quickly developed after the second world war. The concept brings impact with the rapid development of the work and organization world. Pedler, Burgoyme & Boydell (1991) search through the history of concept (and the connection as quality management) like the previous approach is an organizational development, self-improvement, action learning, and progress quickly in the 1970s and 1980s, after the war, the focus is the aim of systematic exercise.

The official report of the EC in 1996, exercise training highlighting the impact of information in society about work and organization, the international impact is the needs of competitiveness, and the impact of knowledge in technology and science in industry. The level of Competitiveness development, technology improves, new work methods, reorganization, integration and such as, evoke a need to improve learning organization that is suitable for changing the circumstance.

Definition of Organization Learning

The concept of a learning organization is continuous learning, innovation, adaptive, committed, cooperation/ collaboration, has a vision, openness in communication, the usage of information and technology, and so on. The definition is descriptive; that is based on norm.

Pedler, Burgyne & Boydell, they explain a learning organization that simplifies learning to all the members and continuously changes their form (1989:2). As explained previously, this definition is individualistic and organized. Learning individually is needed, but not enough, because to learn we need an organization. The writer describes that the concept of the organization is to simplify their members in learning and consciously fix our capacity in creating. Organization is capable of giving impact to their environment as well suiting/adapting them-selves with the changes that are happening. Mintzberg expresses how the organization has an effect in places where they operate.

Individual And Group Learning

Pedler emphases how important it is to learn organized, Mumford (1995) found a literature stating that learning organization is too focused on structural elements. In his opinion a person and group should have learned before learning organizationally. About learning organization, Senger (1990:3) is trying to integrate the other two approaching above, he stated that however in an organization where people keep expanding their capacity to create result that they aim for, finding new system of thought, collectively have a freedom to determine their aspiration, and where people constantly learning how to learn together.

Senge expresses five disciplines of learning organization;

1. Self-control, people need to have a commitment to learn and expand their potential optimally.
2. Mental form, to create a transparency
3. Built a vision together, built a long-term commitment together
4. Team learning, to improve group capability
5. Thinking systematically, act according to structure and system

Every discipline has an impact on one another. Hodgkinson (2000, 2002) explains that learning organization is a process, not a circumstance, something that above all of the members of a company has to work along the time.

Knowledge Management

Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) explain a system that creates knowledge within a company. They categorize it into four based on everybody knowledge development that can be combined along the time:

1. Socialize, people obtain something from the experiences, mimicking, trying, and others
2. Externalization, people learns something from managing and arranging their hidden to visible knowledge
3. Combination, people learn by using other material and resources in detailed
4. Internalization, people learn by exercising their abilities, and introducing themselves with the result of their work.

Nonaka and Takeuchi are talking about hypertext organization, not a learning organization. In their opinion, this kind of company exceeded in combining efficiency in a bureaucratic organization with innovation.

The Repeated Theme in Learning Organization Literature

In a literature, Poell, Tijmensen, & Van de Krogt (1997), conclude even though there are many definitions of learning organization concept, those definitions are often repeated. Definitions that explain elements in the learning system in efficient, healthy and flexible company:

1. Learning continuously in every group level and system
2. The process of learning individually and double repetition, even arrange the third repetition: not only doing a few things properly, but better 3.
3. The creation and distribution of information and knowledge 4.
4. Examination and interview in groups (learn to share experiences) 5.
5. Improving learning capacity of members. And collaboration of working and learning 6.
6. Sharing a vision (theory of action)
7. Self-control, giving skill's exercise to people for a specific job
8. Training for the manager
9. Changing form and innovation
10. The learning is aimed to the business result and self-improvement

Poll & Tijmesen (1998) draw a conclusion that learning organization is clearly defined as a structural organization that is based for groups, so considering that the combination of learning and working. Every act of work can be interpreted as an act of learning. Every task is done in multifunction groups, thinking and integrating in the work field, and workers are authorized to take part in the process of group decision making.

Practical Community

As a result of giving more attention to the collaboration of work and learning, the concept of practical community became really popular in the last years (Wenger, McDermott, and Synder, 2002). That idea is found (created by Lave and Wenger (1991) and has been further more occupied by Wenger (1998). The involvement in social contexts is respected by others while learning. People gradually improve their knowledge about their profession through their involvement in work activities. Practical community usually organized in one theme or certain knowledge.

On the other side, the practical community actively manages and organizes knowledge that is close to the employees; on the contrary, they are the means to individual learning form works, until the real-life problem solving and knowledge development.

Practical community is different from another organization (such as a working team or groups) they emphasized learning from people other than direct colleagues (Wenger 1998). Like the concept of learning organization, practical community is emphasized too in social relation and learning points. Practical community conjunctly increases learning interest and knowledge in something that is related to work. This is giving added value to the public and members.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Improvement Team / Group

One of the electronic Dutch company wants a learning organization with introducing an internal competition called the improvement team. A multifunction work group is formed by the company to investigate and try to solve problems. Each of the improvement group has been equipped with special abilities guidance to help the team think about an approach to solving a problem. Every improvement group has a leader that manages a basic daily activity. There are a few different written rules to be followed. Each group responsible for their tasks between their members, present their program and improvement to their clients in the organization, and formally reports the result about the effort of improvement to the management.

The first group consists of eight operators, five of them represent the shift workers. Management gives this group a task. The team will work together to resolve the leftovers problem. They meet for two hours every week to discuss their tasks. Their early analysis concludes that transparency is the key to leftover problems. The group works together to form a list of questions to every element of an operator that is connected to their problems. The result allows them to make an early plan of action. The team pays a visit to a manufacturer to see how they deal with the problems. They too invited a few experts to talk about the problems and a possibility of problem solving.

The member of the team monitors the progress daily. The improvement team organizes a few instructed sections for the operators. The sub-team takes on special tasks to try a few possible changes, that are then discussed with the whole team. After six months or so, the flow of work has steadily fixed up some improvidence.

The second group consists of nine developers, products and technical engineers. They have been tasked by the management to reduce the experimental process of work. The team has a representative of every department that is connected to the problems, they meet every two weeks and use a model for solving the problems. In the beginning they conclude that incompatibility is the source of the problem, to wit the communication between the development and production department. They asked a sub-team to create an ideal image of the operation that they can work on, after that the sub-team gave it a try and evaluated it. Gradually the procedure is proceeding uniformly. After eight months of the process, the experimental process of work is eradicated.

After a deep and whole understanding has been achieved in the production process and amongst department is capable to work together with other colleagues. The organization has been profitable and the problem is solved.

Learning Project Base at Work

A Dutch evening school for adults wants to become a learning organization with a learning project that is related to teacher's work. The school's management wants the teacher to include groups instead of a person, so they can serve a varied and gradually increasing population in the school better. The survey shows that teachers need more training. Two experimental projects to gain basic experiences with a group base learning and working

The first group consists of teachers that speak Dutch as a second language. And then the coordinators of this group invite external experts to teach them Dutch. The consultant starts the project with a one-day seminar for all of the teachers. Coordinators also send a few minutes of the seminar to the teacher that cannot come.

The second group consists of cultural knowledge teachers that want to figure out every possibility for them to work with the students. They involve external consultants, and are asked to monitor the group studying process instead of the uptake of knowledge. The group gathers information that started with conducting experiments, instead of doing it in class they do it in an open space. Occasionally they pay a visit to the other colleges. They discuss their experience in their group.

The school management evaluates both projects, by comparing the two projects on how they teach as a process towards becoming a learning organization. This experience is useful to prepare two new lessons in the teacher's group: gradually many teachers are enthusiastic to take a part in learning groups. On one hand, they find advantage as an individual and professional. Whereas school's management is dependent on the teacher's learning experience.

Critics of the Learning Organization's Concept

Ignoring Ascendants Metter

There are a variety of critics to the concepts of a learning organization. County, gray, and Ortenbland (2003) admit when learning organization is capable of replacing repetitive or bureaucratic learning, Ortanbland (2004) stated that learning organization is just another way of company to not be bound to anyone. In his opinion, practices like job turnover and share-out information, are similar to the idea about shared vision. In a similar way, looks like the concept of practical community is used to avoid the power meter, focussing on interest that is related to adherents understanding the equality between members.

Point of View of Learning and Working

Poll, Tijmensen and Van d Krogt (1997) express there are three foci around the concept of the learning organization. **Firstly**, his assumption is that limited learning includes discussion and leads to the shared value. **Secondly**, it is not clear yet how the work implements. Implicitly, work types are mostly based on group work. **Third**, the perspective of a learning organization is interesting, but it has not definite how the concept can be executed satisfyingly.

Learning organization demand many things from workers:

1. The willing to continue learning
2. Needs that is innovative and preoccupied with continuous learning as a permanent basis
3. Responsibility to self-improvement
4. The ability to work together with colleagues

The last point from the critic oriented to an internal concept of the learning organization. Every employee, manager and training consultant. External orientation is limited to the expansion of the market and clients. External influence, such as

government policy and employee union accelerated progress in professional fields is difficult to consider, even though they have a considered impact on learning matters.

An alternative point of view to the learning organization

Poll, Tijmensen & Van de Kroght (1997) come out with one alternative concept of learning organization as an answer from the critics that has been pointed out. Focused on learning adjustment and a lot of tasks (not only group learning in a multifunction team) and not dealing with the tension they usually face in daily work (not only developing shared values). The tension arises because there are actors in and out of the organization that has impact in the learning process and organizing the work. To create learning and organizing work where everybody can take part effectively, it is important to:

1. Give autonomy and authority of the employees individually
2. Give clear policy and instruction
3. Allow them to participate and learn in groups emphasize on togetherness
4. Considerate professionally where these methods and deep understanding is just starting to involve

A learning organization needs to be assertive in pointing out the relation between learning and working, and prepare sources in every possibility to connect these two habits in various ways.

CONCLUSION

Even though there are a lot of definitions in learning organization in the literature, mostly emphasize on vision, value that is shared together, learn collectively, continuously improving, turning ulterior knowledge and make it explicit, and entering the interview. It seems the reason behind neglected values came from managerial perspectives that are generally applied. When managers wish for their colleague to take a part in a learning organization, it is assumed that every employee is necessary to take part too. But the employee is allowed to have a drastically different view on how they amend their circumstances, and training consultants might not need to agree upon the strategies that have been proposed by the management.

The tension and conflict happened because there are differences in interest and authority between manager, employees, training consultant, and other external factors. People need guidance and instructions, but they also need autonomy and freedom. They need to learn how to work together with their colleagues, but they also need to progress professionally. They have ideas for their-selves about what they need to learn and how they learn it.

These following questions can be asked when giving reasons from an alternate viewpoint about learning organization. These help, directly identify the few elements in learning organization as a base to take initiative.

1. What kind of learning needs to be held?

2. Who's going to organize the learning? Is there external influence in the company learning system? (Such as government policy, employee union, or professional association)

3. How do people handle the tension in organizing learning? Who has the dominant influence in determining the type of learning we are doing?

Every person in an organization is allowed to decide what kind and how they learn. The awareness of the situation in the company's learning system is a great starting point to a learning organization.

REFERENCES

Argyris, C. (1992). *On organizational learning,* Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, Inc.

De Geus, A. (1998). Planning as Learning. *Harvard Business Review, 88*(2).

Garratt, B. (2000). *The Learning Organization.* London: Harper Collins Publisher.

Garvin, D. A. (1998). *Building a Learning Organization*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

Ramsden, P. (2003). *Learning to Teach in Higher Education.* London: Routledge Falmer.

Tellefsen, T. E. (1990). *Improving College Management, An Integrated System Approach.* San Francisco: Jossey-bass Publisher.