Organisational Learning Capabilities and Knowledge Performance: A Conceptual Framework

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Abstract. Organisational learning capability is defined as the organizational and managerial characteristics of factors that encourage learning process or enable an organisation to learn. Knowledge performance can be explained as an ability of individual, group and organisation to understand what they have learned. This paper aims to capture the perceptions of organisational learning capabilities among information professionals (librarians) and the outcome as knowledge performance in Malaysian institutions of higher education. This paper discusses the conceptual framework of a study on organizational learning capabilities and knowledge performance as perceived by information professionals in the university libraries. Based on the framework, the five main independent variables are shared vision and mission, organisational culture, teamwork cooperation, transfer of knowledge and ICT. The dependent variable is knowledge performance which has been adopted from the previous models and scholarly literatures. The study is significant to the librarians and the academic libraries for improving the skills of acquiring knowledge and learning capabilities. It will also assist the Ministry of Higher Education and interested researchers to provide effective baseline information in constructing a model for similar studies.

Keywords: organisational learning capabilities, knowledge performance, information professionals, university libraries, Malaysia.

1. Introduction

In this knowledge era, the main role and the function of libraries in higher learning institutions are to nurture and instil necessary higher learning skills and knowledge capabilities among individuals or group by presenting existing or creating new knowledge. Libraries in higher learning institutions is now connected to the knowledge society which tries to make clear on how to use the knowledge in order to achieve its interest as well as to manage the streams of information. Moreover, both learning and knowledge are most important resources of the organisation which remain and give competitive advantages. The existence or learning and knowledge will create and define the true concept of knowledge management process through knowledge acquisition and organisational learning capabilities at libraries in the higher learning institutions. Knowledge management is not a new thing to the global society, however most people are still unfamiliar and unconscious with the practices of it. As the phenomenon forced knowledge management to expose to the global, the roles of knowledge management need to be explored and penetrated deeply by other disciplines. The emergence of both knowledge management and organisational learning dimension are perfectly matched and need to be convergence throughout the learning environment. The increased capacity of identifying, distilling, harnessing and using information will help to construct knowledge for the organisational learning practices to become indispensable objective for any organisation.

Thus, it strengthened the organisational learning process as the organisational learning mechanism. Bauman (2005) described that organisational learning has been promoted to the community of institution when three main conditions that takes place: existing of new ideas, cultivation of doubt in existing knowledge and practices and expanding as well as transfer knowledge among the institution community.
Organisational learning is also defined as organisational learning capability which enables the organisation to practice the most appropriate and accurate management practices, structures and procedures that facilitate and encourage learning. Goh (2003) believes wide spread of these practices throughout the organisation. However, most of academicians believed that they are only responsible in managing knowledge which is already involved with the particular level of knowledge management. In the institutions of higher learning, faculty, staffs and administration have different views on how organisation have been structured and operated. The different unique perspectives or views will affect the organisation’s ability to acquire knowledge, to create the shared attitude, shared vision and common goal. In order to make the knowledge acquisition process and learning capabilities possible inside the organisation, the organisation need to focus on the ability of “learning”. Hence, it is important to focus on human resource and to provide their personnel in order to acquire competitive advantage inside learning environment by identifying learning capabilities. The successfullness of organisational learning is based on the culture, leadership and the value of the organisation’s learning capabilities. Learning capabilities has been designed to encourage the process of acquiring, creating and sharing of knowledge among the institution of higher education community. The features of organisation learning capabilities such as consciousness, systematic mechanism, activities and practices throughout the organisation help in facilitating the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Organisational Learning and Organisational Learning Capability

Organisational learning is also referred as organisational learning capability. Organisational learning capability is about the ability of one organisation in order to apply the accurate and appropriate management practices, its structures as well as the procedures which enhance, facilitate and encourage learning. Goh (2003) believed that the growth of this practice will result stronger learning capability throughout the organisation. Organisational learning has been described by four interest; existent, breadth, elaborateness and thoroughness. It has been assumed that, each units of learning organisations will involve the process of acquiring knowledge. This is the advantage for the organisation in present and future. The results of two assumptions revealed that an organisation is still learning even if only few units are learned. Organisational learning is possible to happen if the organisation’s unit or department is having, acquiring knowledge and realising of its impending benefits in future. This will fix the breadth of organisational learning and constructed the four learning-related structures in organisational learning. It involves the knowledge acquisition process, information distribution, information interpretation and organisational memory (Huber, 1991). Knowledge acquisition is the process of obtaining and accumulates the knowledge. Information distribution is the process of sharing information or knowledge. It potentially leads to the emergence of new information or perceptions. Information interpretation occurred when the distributed information is being accepted and understood. Organisational memory is the process of storing information for future use. Some of the storing involved the technology with the advance applications such as coding, e-filing and others.

According to Marquardt (1996), knowledge acquisition is about gathering knowledge from the external of organisation and creating knowledge from activities inside organisation. Learning capabilities need to be designed to valve the available knowledge domains and knowledge source, with the purpose to expand the knowledge acquisition from the external sources. Huber (1991) proposed knowledge acquisition need to be carried out through few processes; by learning when observing other firms, intentional search and monitoring. Commonly knowledge acquisition capabilities consist of processes and mechanism for collecting information and creating knowledge from both internal and external sources. The successfullness and development of a knowledge-based organisation is based on the capturing and acquiring knowledge. Zakaria and Ahmad Kassim (2010) added that in academic library, learning and research are always connected with each other. Library is a vital component for the researcher, teacher and students as it provides the services such as acquiring, storing and retrieving demanded information resources. Nonaka and Takeuchi’s (1995) research is well known as a meta skill process of acquisition which gives results in research paper or on any innovation of patents, explicit and communicable communication. It gives the best result to the field of teaching and learning of university towards being a world class university. Besides, research will be declared as the centre of university activity. Studies on organisational learning capabilities have received a great deal
of interest from scholar academic perceptions. Previous literatures helped in analysing the general elements of organisational learning capabilities that been proposed by previous researchers. There were about five elements of organisational learning capabilities that had been identified as to determine the knowledge performance among the information professionals (librarians) in the academic libraries. Each of the elements of the organisational learning capabilities has been cited by previous researchers (Hishamuddin et al., 2010). The elements were:

2.2. Shared Vision and Mission

Senge et al. (1990) affirmed that shared vision is about developing sense of commitment in organisation by designing the future images of principle and ambition as a guide to be successful. Determining the clarity of vision and mission in an organisation is important in order to prevent the leak of performance consistency (Hishamuddin et al., 2010). Pearce and David (1987), Calantone et al. (2002) and Hishamuddin et al. (2010) agreed that shared vision and mission help in generating the optimistic performance of organisation, financial including sales and profits. Shared vision is a well-accepted mission in library context which helps in encouraging the librarians to generate and contribute the aspiration in satisfying and fulfil the information needs among the users. In order to promote sharing knowledge among employees, Lopez et al. (2005) believed that employer should set up goals of achievements of each projects as well as share the vision of organisation. Therefore, the products and services provided are at the higher level and the organisation business expanded.

2.3. Organisational Culture

Organisational culture was recognised as a set shared value that was responsible in making the organisational community to understand the functionality of the organisation itself. At the same time, it is to help in guiding the way of thinking as well as behaviour. They agreed that culture is such a complicated system that gives the value in shaping and affecting process and behaviors (Barney, 1986). In addition, McKenna (2000) listed 4 types of cultures that surround the organisation; power, culture, role culture, support culture and achievement culture. The cultures are totally different from one to one country. Howard and Sommerville (2008) affirmed that a set of organisation’s vision should acknowledge the organisational structures and communication system as it helps in to facilitate decision making process through staffs’ mutually dependent learning. Base on this perspective, culture in organisation provides elements of appreciation and growth of positive action within organisational system (Jenlink & Banathy, 2005).

2.4. Teamwork Cooperation

The powerful working team has brought the employee’s skills and knowledge in order to bear on problems as well as to develop innovative ideas for the organisation. In order to improve team’s spirit, employees should be grouped in one from variety of “functional areas”. Besides, the environment of cross-functional teamwork helps in reducing the “stove-pipe syndrome” each time when the employees are rotated inside the different team as part of deliberate career development program and human resources management policy (Goh & Richards, 1997). A case study by Lim et al. (2006) indicated results of General Linear Modelling (GLM) that teamwork in learning within or out of organisation is allied with each other as it supported the commitment to shared vision, learning and open mindedness.

2.5. Transfer of Knowledge

Simons (1957) insisted that cognitive is limited to storing and processing information inside human body. Any of individual knowledge can be well known as it can be transferred which is moving with person, retention and accumulation of potential problems. Skills and acquisition become valuable once it is transferred to the other part of an organisation and it manages to help on solving problems. Learning from past failures and talking to other staff members regarding successful practices or experiences are considered as transfer knowledge. It also believed that by having benchmarking activities, this will help the employees to continuously learn and improve the process of management as well as the products and services. So this is one of the activities that also promote the process of knowledge transfer (Goh, 2003).

2.6. Information Communication Technology (ICT)
Proves on the effectiveness of information technology to organisational learning has started to emerge. Consequently, Chou (2003) stated in his study that organisational learning computer systems gave the positive impact on the organisational learning process. Moreover, it is one kind of systems that is enriched with knowledge acquisition, knowledge distribution, broadcasting, updating and memory features. On the other hand, librarians and information professionals are facing complex tasks and exciting future as the results from the rapid change of technologies. It is a necessity for both librarians and information professionals to constantly update with technologies, systems, new forms of information, information media and information sources. Hence, developments of new products of ICT required them to be knowledgeable on how to emerge the technologies and products to their service.

2.7. Knowledge Performance

Knowledge performance is about the ability of individual, teams and organisation to understand what they have learned (Selden, 1998). On contrary, Marquardt (1996) insisted traditions, culture, technology, operations, systems and procedures of one organisation are always based on the knowledge and expertise. Knowledge is sustainable and it has been divided into four subsystems including acquisition, creation, storage and transfer. The management of knowledge is vital as it is the centre or the heart of organisational learning. According to Marsick and Watkinson (1999), human is the vital carrier agent of knowledge awareness or knowledge understanding. It has been agreed that learning organisation that engaged with the knowledge is always growing and develop by not having to destroy the knowledge capital of organisation. There were vast difference between the mindset of an organisation with learning and knowledge development in term of core from the mindset of an organisation that have short-term competence and productivity with single aims.

3. Proposed Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is adopted and modified from Goh and Richards (1997) with revised edition by Neefe (2001) on Organisational Learning Survey (OLS) Model. Previous study revealed that there is a positive relationship between organisational learning capability elements and organisational performance (Hishamuddin et al., 2010). The tools focused on shared mission and vision, organisational culture, teamwork cooperation, transfer of knowledge and ICT. The proposed conceptual framework is also based on knowledge performance among the librarians. The dependent variable indicates knowledge performance while the independent variables measured by organisational learning capabilities dimensions/items as illustrated in Fig. 1:

![Proposed Conceptual Framework](image)

**Fig. 1: Proposed Conceptual Framework.**

4. Conclusion

Organisations that engaged with knowledge and learning capability process showed that the mission and vision of the organisation is successfully accomplished. Learning and knowledge management models that have been adopted are to attain the effectiveness of organisational capabilities as well as knowledge
acquisition among information professionals in the academic libraries. Furthermore, organisational learning capabilities elements play as the benchmark to measure knowledge performance and level of learning inside the library and other industries either nation or worldwide. Therefore, these positive impacts are the path to the greater performance and leading to the further research in the library and information science fields. These structures and procedures will define the learning capability and assist organisation in making appropriate adjustments to improve organisational performance effectiveness and competitiveness.

5. References