

Conference Paper

A Learning Culture and Continuous Learning for a Learning Organization

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Abstract

This paper is aimed at studying a learning culture and continuous learning and finding out the benefits and the ways to develop continuous learning in an organization. The definition of learning culture and continuous learning is inferred from some experts' opinions such as Van Breda-Verduijn & Heijboer, Cerne Matej, Blackwood, Schein, Jain & Martindale, etc. An organizational learning culture is inferred as a set of norms and values about the functioning of an organization that encourages individuals or the organization to carry out continuous learning. A continuous learning culture is important to implement in an organization since it has many benefits for a learning organization. An organizational learning culture can be developed if there are supports in forms of motivation, learning opportunities, and facilities to its members.

Keywords: Learning Culture, Continuous Learning, Learning Organization

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1. Introduction

The development of technology and science requires every individual and organization to always learn. Learning is needed by every individual and organization to develop their thinking skills to be creative and innovative. Therefore, learning needs to apply both in the lives of individuals and in running an organization. Learning is an effort to self-actualize in developing quality and maintaining existence.

Continuous learning gives many benefits for life. It is instrumental for short-term and long-term success, both for individuals and organizations[1]. The importance of learning is for everyone of any age. Therefore, a learning culture should be embedded in individuals or organizations as a necessity throughout life.

Every individual in an organization must understand that they must always learn in order to compete, since the challenges ahead will always change as the development of science and technology. Today, more and more organizations realize the significance of innovation and continuous improvement, and learning is the main concern in this case. A strong learning culture[2] creates an effective place to develop[2]. However, have

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organizations or individuals in an organization understood about a learning culture? Has the organization provided an opportunity for its members to continue to learn and develop? Many professionals of learning realize the challenges they face, but they have not developed their own practices to meet responsive and adaptive training needs[3].

An organization usually has rules its members have to obey in working. However, different problems or challenges cannot be dealt in the same way. The members have probably carried out work in accordance with the rules or procedure, but the output is not as expected or unusual. It may due to the development of technology, the increase of customer needs, or the differences in challenges in the field.

Therefore, this paper discusses the literature on the culture of learning, continuous learning, and learning organizations from several experts. The main references are from Van Breda-Verduijn & Heijboer's papers. It is aimed at studying a learning culture and continuous learning, finding out the important benefits and the ways to develop continuous learning in an organization.

2. Material & Methodology

2.1. Data

Data were collected from several literature related to learning culture, continuous learning, and learning organizations from several experts. The primary data source is the Van Breda-Verduijn & Heijboer paper entitled Learning culture, continuous learning, organizational learning anthropologist. Then the data is supported by secondary data from the literature of several experts such as Schein, Cerne Matej, Blackwood, and Jain & Martindale.

2.2. Method

The method used in this paper is a qualitative research method that is literature study. Data is collected from journals, books, and articles about learning culture, continuous learning, and learning organizations. Then the data is selected, analyzed to obtain information, and processed so that it can be presented in a concise and systematic manner.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. The Definition of a Learning Culture and Continuous Learning

Learning is an activity that must be developed. A learning culture is not only needed by individuals, but also organizations to innovate to grow and develop, to get bigger and better.

There are several definitions of an organizational learning culture. An organizational learning culture can be defined as a set of norms and values about the functioning of an organization that supports a systematic, deep approach to reach a higher level[4]. A learning culture is also defined as a collective, dynamic system from the basic assumptions, values, and norms that direct one's learning in an organization[2]. This definition is associated with Schein's (1985) view that a culture consists of three levels, namely artifacts and symbols, espoused values, and assumptions[5]. The model can be seen in Figure 1.

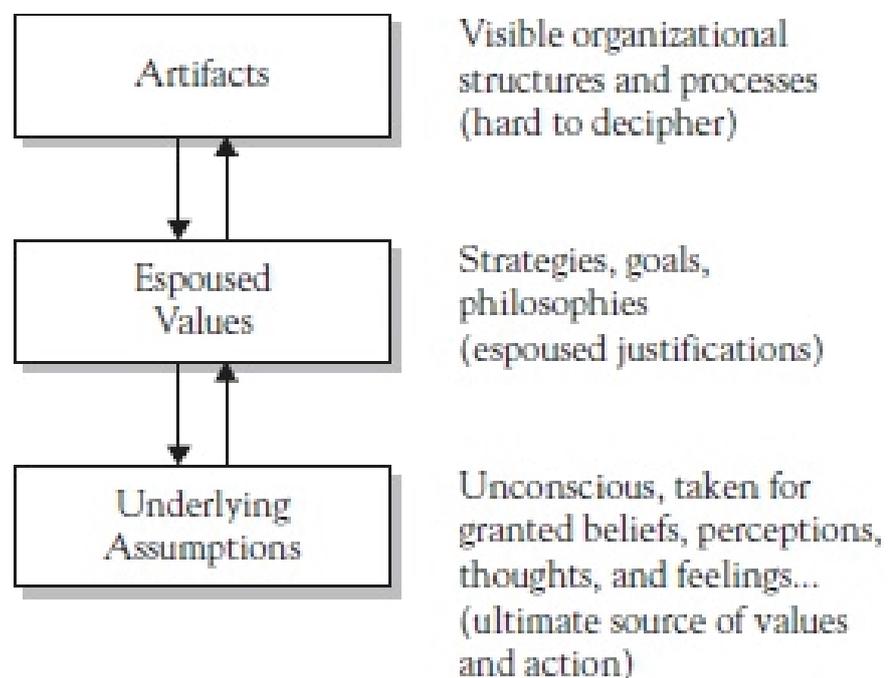


Figure 1: The Three Levels of a Culture.

The first level (artifacts and symbols) includes habits and things that can be seen (people appearance, physical aspects of the building, rituals, and visible symbols). The second level is espoused values which is about what people say is important to them and its reflected through strategies, goals, and philosophy. The third level (assumption) which is about people's believe in as a human nature and their association of one thing to another[2]. Based on this explanation, it can be concluded that a culture begins from

physical things into habits, from habits into something considered important, and finally into something believed as a nature or ingrained.

A learning culture is a set of values, systems, and practices of an organization that supports and encourages individuals and the organization to improve knowledge, competence, and performance level on an ongoing basis. This in turn encourages a continuous improvement and supports the achievement of business goals, innovation, and the ability to overcome changes[6]. In other words, a learning culture also encourages individuals or an organization to carry out continuous learning or lifelong learning.

Continuous learning is conceptualized by Jain & Martindale in several points[1].

1. Continuous learning is a continuous process of learning and development in an organizational context. There is no certain beginning or end in continuous learning.
2. Continuous learning can be formal and informal. It may be all day, every day, and every time, where someone consciously thinks, contemplates, and learns.
3. Continuous learning occurs in individual to group to organizational level and vice versa.
4. Continuous learning is difficult to measure, since this is a process that runs continuously and can be about anything.
5. The example of continuous learning is when a worker knows about social networking sites, he takes an initiative to discuss them more and shares information with other colleagues so that they can also explore themselves with extensive resources and opportunities through networks.

Based on these points, conclusions can be drawn regarding the concept of continuous learning. Continuous learning is a learning process that occurs continuously both formally and informally and is difficult to measure. The process of continuous learning begins from an individual by self-directing, to a group in a collaborative way, to an organization, and vice versa.

3.2. The Importance of a Continuous Learning Culture

A learning culture is important for an organization to continue to innovate as the development of science and technology in order to maintain its existence. There are many benefits of creating a strong learning culture of an organization, including: makes efficiency; increases productivity; increases profits; reduces employees turnover due to

increased job satisfaction; improves standards by creating a mindset for a continuous improvement, joint ownership for projects and mutual accountability for results; develops leaders at all levels that helps succession planning; creates a culture of inquiry, adaptive capacity, and knowledge sharing (vs. knowledge hoarding); and increases the ability of individuals and team to embrace and adapt to changes[5].

A learning culture has an inverse relationship with employee's negative responses to mistrust and workplace security problems. In addition, a learning culture also has a strong positive relationship with the incorporation of technological innovation into daily work activities [7]. Thus, a learning culture is very important for the sustainability of the organization. A continuous learning culture for a learning organization can support the creation of job satisfaction with the opportunity for members to continue to develop and explore their potential. The job satisfaction and self-development then impact on improving performance and innovation of members and also support the development and growth of the organization.

In addition, there are several reasons of the importance of building a continuous learning culture in workplace [8] as follow.

1. To be innovative.

Being innovative requires a team with critical and creative thoughts, while continuous learning is the key to making this possible.

2. Job satisfaction.

One of the main reasons of employees leaving their company today is a lack of professional development. It will be monotonous for the experienced employees if they are not constantly challenged with new problems, and they may look for new challenges elsewhere.

3. To adapt.

Today, the world of work changes much faster. Companies must be able to adapt, use its loaf, and expand the market if they want to survive. Tech-savvy employees who can find new solutions are those who will help to solve problems the company does not know yet. Experienced employees make business flexible.

Each organization would want to obtain the benefits of building a culture of continuous learning in the organization and trying to figure out what is the ideal formula for creating a learning culture of the organization. However, the theory of learning organizations gives a clear ideal image of the desired learning culture, that there is no such thing as an ideal learning culture because effective cultural characteristics depend

on the type and context of an organization [2]. This means that every organization may have different ways of creating a sustainable learning culture.

3.3. Developing a Learning Culture in a Learning Organization

A learning organization can be defined as an organization with constant learning and improvement orientation[9]. A learning organization is also defined as an organization that is able at creating, acquiring, and transferring knowledge, and modifying its behavior to reflect new knowledge and insights[10]. In other words, a learning organization is an organization that always learns in processing existing knowledge and/or seeking new insights to improve its quality.

An organizational learning culture cannot be realized without the support of the organization itself for its members. There are twelve tips that can be done related to the development of a learning culture for individuals, groups, and organizations, namely: assess and recognize the need for continuous learning; provide active learning energy to students; develop self-awareness; be open to new ideas, take time to learn; the teams, departments, and organizations must provide protected time for learning; develop a vision of the team, department, or organization together; develop leadership skills; think of the wider environment; learn from mistakes; take time to smell the roses [11]. Based on these tips, an organization plays an important role in developing continuous learning for the individuals in it. It will be difficult for the members of an organization to develop without encouragement, involvement, and opportunity from the organization, and it is also possible to inhibit the development of the organization itself.

In addition to the twelve tips above, there are also several steps that can be applied to help an organization shape a continuous learning culture. These steps include: make a plan; communicate the plan; provide resources and time; improve front-line managers' coaching skills; synchronize learning and business goals; set the employees or members' goals; encourage innovation; suggest external networks; support career development, and; provide facilitation[12]. Like the twelve tips mentioned earlier, these steps also emphasize the importance of the organization's role in giving motivation, opportunity, and facilitation to the members to innovate or develop.

A learning organization as an organization that is constantly learning and having improvement orientation must be highly committed in implementing the steps to realize a continuous learning culture in it. Every organization may have their own way in implementing the tips and steps related to developing continuous learning. It certainly

depends on the conditions of every organization. However, the organization itself will also develop as it provides opportunities for its members to learn, develop, and innovate.

4. Conclusion

An organizational learning culture can be defined as a set of norms and values about the functions of the organization that encourages individuals or the organization to carry out continuous learning or lifelong learning. A continuous learning culture is important to build in an organization since it has some benefits, including: creates innovative organizational conditions, gives job satisfaction, and helps individuals or the organization adapt to the current environment or conditions. In addition, a strong learning culture of an organization also increases profit efficiency, increases productivity, develops the leaders, etc.

An organizational learning culture can be developed with a strong commitment of the organization in supporting the development of its members. Some tips and steps related to the shaping of a continuous learning culture in an organization show the importance of the organization's role in giving motivation, opportunities, and facilitation to its members to carry out a continuous learning culture. Such tips and steps can be used as a reference in getting started to implement or shape a continuous learning culture for a learning organization. Each of these tips and steps can be studied and adjusted accordingly, depending on the conditions of the organization.

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