The application of learning organization idea at Malaysian University:
A case study of University Malaysia Pahang (UMP)

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• Introduction
• Learning organization (LO) in higher education
• The understanding of LO
• UMP as LO
• Conclusion
Introduction

• LO as an inspiring concept since early 90s to both public and private sectors

• Examples of LO companies: Toyota, Apple, Johnson & Johnson, Microsoft, Pizza Hut, Intel, Disney, Dell
Studies on LO

• Adoption of LO in various nation and cultural settings
  – China (Elkin et al., 2009), Singapore (Retna & Jones, 2003).
  – School (Agaoglu, 2006), university (Dill, 1999), academic libraries (Abdullah and Kassim, 2008),
  – Industrial organizations (Khadra and Rawabdeh, 2006) banking (Jamali et al., 2009)

• Studies of LO in Malaysian context
  – multinational companies (Zahidul Islam et al., 2008)
  – public company (Jassa, 2000; Sta Maria, 2003; Yusoff, 2005)
  – private companies (Ng, 2008).
Learning organization in higher education

- Modern universities’ common attributes: hierarchical structure, bureaucracy, stagnant curriculum, financial policies, etc.
- Inflexible and resistance to change can be disastrous in fast moving environment
- Most universities are not learning. They are teaching organization and not a learning organization (Friedman & Friedman, 2002)
The understanding of learning organization

- Many definitions - many understandings

- Definition:
  - An organization that is continually expanding its capacity to create its future (Senge, 1990)
  - an organization that facilitates the learning of all of its members and continuously transforms itself (Pedler et al., 1991)
Understanding of LO

- Although there are many definitions, there are no contradicting meanings, the variations are only in description and approach.

- A typology of LO by Anders Ortenblad (2002):
  a) organizational learning;
  b) learning at work;
  c) earning climate; and
  d) earning structure.
Initiatives by UMP to be a learning organization
UMP as learning organization:
1. Organizational learning

• The focus of organizational learning is more on the knowledge storage of the organization and that the knowledge stored can be used and by its members.
• Each individual learns and store the information and knowledge in the organizational memory to be used later and shared with all members.
E-Management system

- Integration
- Automation
- Artificial intelligence
- Paperless
- Dynamic
• Double-loop learning is practiced
UMP as learning organization:
2. Learning at work

• Learning at work implies the continuous learning of the employees at their workplace apart from the formal courses and trainings.

• It is integrated with the daily working activities.
The e-community
• Files and documents of all types are stored in Files Bank in e-community portal for easy access. Accessible 24x7
• The e-forum provides opportunity for staff to discuss not only working-related issue but other issue as well
• Staff are encouraged to learn, share and improve their knowledge
• Knowledge sharing session every Monday morning
Process Team

Business Associates
Customer
UMP as learning organization: 3. Learning climate

- LO facilitates the learning of all its members.
- The LO is where the learning activities are always encouraged, promoted as well as rewarded.
- Members of the organization are encouraged to talk to each other, learn from each other and have positive attitude toward learning.
- Learning becomes easy and natural with more space and time for experimenting and reflection, and tolerates failure
• UMP has adopted the Total Quality Management System to develop all administration processes
• The top management involve actively in all Process Team meeting
• Love *et al.* (2000) argue that organizational learning can be realized by adopting and implementing TQM in its totality
KUKTEM Total Quality Organization
UMP as learning organization: 4. Learning structure

- The learning organization is also understood as a flexible organization.

- The learning structure refers to the organic structure which refers to the flexibility of a specific kind of structure.

- Decentralized structure and empowered workers are preferable in this aspect where the individuals need to make their own decisions quickly.
At UMP, staff are equip with the understanding of university’s core values;
- Strong bond with the Creator
- Steadfast in upholding shared principles
- Creative in making wise decisions
- Resolute in facing challenges
- Proactive in taking actions

The core values are related to learning structure
• Staff are expected to be able to take over each other’s task. This was possible with the implementation of TQO where a group of staff develop together a process flow chart and together they redesign and improve the process during a series of presentation session.
• Comments, remarks and suggestion were received from all staff category from various departments.
Conclusion

• Becoming a learning organization requires lots of work and dedication, time, energy and resources.

• Inability to preserve, unable to cope with daily working commitment, lack of support from the top and unwillingness to fully commit to the idea can become a hindrance in the journey to be a true learning organization.
Thank you

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