SIGNIFICANCE OF LEARNING ORGANISATION IN HOSPITALITY AND RETAIL INDUSTRIES – IMPLICATIONS TO HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

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Abstract

This paper aimed to review previous and recent researches of learning organisation, and organisational learning in hospitality and retail industries, as well as the implications to human resource management, in regard to their roles and strategies to changes, learning environment, and organisational competitiveness. Supporting by the present state of understanding on the topic, it tried to demonstrate on a theoretical basis and further studied in-depth on the research trend of learning organisation related from human resource view.

This paper can be a foundation possibly for future development or extension of a new research relating to the topic of learning organisation, and further exploration of relevant new findings. It can potentially contribute to the area of organisational learning with the particular industries.

Keywords: learning organisation, organisational learning, human resource, change, hospitality, retail

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1. **Learning Organisation**

   1.1. Meaning of Learning Organisation (LO)

   Considering competitiveness, sustainability and survival were in a rapidly changing business environmental. Learning and development of a transformational organisation are essential, which drove an idea of learning organisation (LO) (Senge, 1990a) (1). The process of learning included knowledge acquisition, its enlightenment and application, which enabled an organisation to refine and upgrade its strategy and framework with an innovation (Gilaninia, Rankouh, & Gildeh, 2013) (2) at various organisational levels. Also, knowledge discovery, its acquisition and application were formed as a key process of the organisation with its memory and recall in knowledge (Metcalfe, & Gibbons, 1989; Odor, 2019) (3, 4). LO should have abilities and skills in creating, acquiring, developing and translating as organisational knowledge, with a behavioural change for adaptability, another new knowledge and perceptiveness (Garvin, 1993; Giesecke, & McNeil, 2004) (5, 6).

   1.2. Three Levels within Learning Organisation: From Individual, Group to Organisational

   Organisations could potentially be improved and enriched by incorporating learning and work tasks together. These would be across three organisational levels, from individual, team or group to organisational aspects, with proactive mindset and intelligence in an organised way (Watkins & Marsick, 1996b) (7). The three levels of LO could also be found from different academic literatures.

   Regarding individual level from LO, the genius of people faced doubtful environment and keen competition, took actions and responses in the process of individual learning with adjustment and sustainability (Dodgson, 1993) (8). Individuals learnt and could be affected by the social impacts, both cognitively and behaviourally. Individuals also had an opportunity to work together in the organisational learning process (Salancik & Pfeffer 1978, Hackman 1992) (9, 10).

   Regarding group level from LO, teammates with efficacy was vital in the learning process of the organisation (Senge, 1990b) (11). The group learning, from the organisation, could contribute to market needs in the learning process. The group learning included idea collection from different individuals, as well as set up common goals, developed an interpersonal relationship, and formed a team culture (Edmondson, 2002) (12). The group of individuals could potentially achieve desirable outcomes, with their willingness and preparation for more duties and situational change (Osterman 1994) (13).

   Regarding organisational level from LO, adjustment for environmental change was essential by organisational learning of different groups. This included collective intelligence and communication method, with an instruction and a direction to employees (associates) from the organisational level (Amir-Kabiri, 2006; Odor, 2019) (14, 4). Also, gaps and biases should be identified and addressed in the organisational learning process (Levitt & March, 1988; Edmondson, 2002) (15, 12).

1.3. Learning Organisation Model

The Dimension of Learning Organisation Questionnaire (DLOQ) by Marsick & Watkins: The topic of LO had been researched by different scholars previously (Watkins & Marsick, 1993, 1996b, 1997; Marsick & Watkins, 1996a) (16, 7, 17, 18), and as a reference of context analysis. The Dimension of Learning Organisation Questionnaire (DLOQ) had been adopted extensively with organisational influence on human learning from cultural and organised ways, in further diverse research and application with testing and amendment. Organisational or commercial objectives and performance outcomes should be addressed by HR and organisational leaders with their relationship, and they manage, pace and focus on organisational learning, which includes informal learning and its strategy (Marsick & Watkins, 2003) (19).

The DLOQ with authentication was formed to identify the organization's condition, adjust its direction and organisational learning approaches, which related LO to its efficiency and effectiveness (Marsick & Watkins, 2003) (19). Seven key components of LO were organised as the DLOQ basis (Marsick & Watkins, 1993, 1999, 2003) (16, 20, 19). Referred to the citation (Watkins & Marsick, 1993, 1996b) (16, 7), the DLOQ was developed as the LO's theoretical context since 1990s, seven core dimensions consisted of "continuous learning", "inquiry and dialogue", "team learning" (and collaboration), "empowerment" (of people to a collective vision), "embedded system" (for captured and shared learning), "strategic leadership" (for learning) and "system connection" (from its organisation to the environment) (Song et al., 2013) (21).

Model diagram 1 – the concept of learning organisation (LO) by Marsick & Watkins (1993, 1996a, 1996b, 1997, 1999, 2003) (16, 18, 7, 17, 20, 19), as well as the LO concept was further explored by Song et al. (2013) (21).

1.4. Significance of Learning Organisation

The different scales of organisation, such as start-up company, small-and-medium enterprise, sizable corporate, these required to emphasize on LO components, also manufacturers had concerned those components as well (Ramos, 2018) (22). The vigorous era with keen competitiveness revealed organisational change would be more important, with organisational learning, its implementation and flexibility (Morgan, 2006) (23). Regarding enterprise sustainability, LO framework was used and referred significantly by organisations in competitions with a learning atmosphere (Wilkinson, Rushmer & Davies, 2004; Lee, 2008) (24, 25). Managers, from an organisation, were essential as a role of change agent (Dymock & McCarthy, 2006) (26) in an organisational change through learning approaches.

Also, change process should be addressed and managed from the view of technology and the consideration of knowledge management system (Yoo & Huang, 2013) (27). Associates' expectation and their organisational goals potentially differed from other organisations. Organisational learning and relevant policy situationally contributed to both an organisation and its individuals (Dymock & McCarthy, 2006) (26). LO idea was important, hence developing an organisational competitive edge, according to different scholar researches (Ellinger et al., 2002) (28).

2. Scope of Industries

2.1. Hospitality Industry

The hospitality was found commonly from restaurant, hostel, museum and airport, etc. (Kotler, 1973; Bitner, 1990; 1992) (29, 30, 31). Broader scope of hospitality business included e.g., hotel, pub, cafe, holiday centre, and casino (Slattery, 2002) (32). Hospitality researches covered more in accommodation, catering and visitor services, travel, and transport (Binder, 2019) (33). Guests' feeling, action and experience were influenced by hospitality places, whether or not they felt satisfactory, accepted or protected (Augé, 1995; Adey, 2006; 2007; Gordon, 2008; Venkatraman & Nelson, 2008, Singleton & Losekoot, 2020) (34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39).

A potential incongruity would be there, between financial initiative and generosity, in the business environment (King, 1995; O'Connor, 2005; Hemmington, 2007) (40, 41, 42). The hospitality included welcoming guests without financial consideration privately (King, 1995) (40), and boarder social practice (Bell, 2007) (43). Hospitality business provided glamour accommodation and experience to guests with their returns, nice memories, and positive recommendations to other people (King, 1995) (40). A guest enjoyment from the hospitality experience was perceived as an exchange from the financial viewpoint in an economy (Lashley, 2000) (44).

Commercial hospitality business was emphasized basically (Nailon, 1982; Brotherton, 1999) (45, 46), which pleasant experience and feeling of the guests, and an acceptable price in hotel services were highly concerned (Singleton & Losekoot, 2020) (39). Hospitality was definitely a vital part of service economy in different nations (Lee and Khan, 2008) (47).

2.2. Retail Industry

Basically, various original-brand companies had focused on service-orientation in the retail industry, which included e.g., cosmetic, electronic, sports product, furniture, and portable electronic equipment, around 20 years ago (Pinto et al., 2017) (48). The interaction between customers and retail organisations, as well as advancement of customer experience would be addressed essentially from different fields, such as fashion beauty, grocery, food and beverage (Savastano et al., 2019) (49).

Due to the importance of value-adding service and creativity, a recognizable retailer-and-customer relationship and positive shopping experience was crucial from a retail setting in the long run. This was also essential from customer viewpoints (Jelčić & Mabić, 2020) (50). Consumers tended to be value-driven (Sweeney and Soutar, 2001) (51), executives had to address on value accurately for consumers, and organisations should be positioned themselves as more prestigious to their target market with a competitive edge (Woodruff, 1997; Levy, 1999) (52, 53). To a certain extent, a key scope of service referred to value and creativity for consumers, which were amplified as a particular part of retailing potentially (Pinto et al., 2017) (48).

Product, place and people should be crucially addressed. The interaction between consumers, products and places, were key in retail services. This interaction, with a positive shopping experience, was better to integrate digital solutions as well (Pinto et al., 2017) (48). Besides, associates' attitude and emotion could influence on organisational outcome and consumer shopping experience in the retail industry (Hemalatha et al., 2015) (54). Associate' mutual supports, their knowledge exchange, and learning leadership, were essentially to be addressed in retail researches. These researches included the fields of appliances, financial services, jewellery, stationery, and toys, etc (Balwant et al., 2019) (55).

3. Learning Organisation, Industries and Business Environment

3.1. Business Environment and The Industries

Environmental Change: Globalisation had been being faced by organisations from different industries (Gielens & Dekimpe 2001; Assaf et al. 2012; Shi et al. 2018; Nath et al. 2019) (56, 57, 58, 59), and the factors of business world were changing, the environment had shown instability and inconstancy from the latest century (Hemalatha et al., 2015) (54). Tricks and stereotypes had to be identified within an organisation (Levitt & March, 1988; Edmondson, 2002) (15, 12), and further actions should be taken addressing environmental changes. For connecting to the commercial environment, those changes should be acknowledged and adapted by changing organisations as well. The LO, therefore, had to be operated as a knowledge-based organisation with records, practices and as its asset (Nelson, & Winter, 1982; Odor, 2019) (60, 4). Communicating and sharing knowledge among groupmates, from the organisational learning level, and the group practice should be transformed as every single individual learning towards appropriate direction of LO (Amir-Kabiri, 2006; Odor, 2019) (14, 4).

Hospitality: The sustainability development in hospitality was a key issue, which should be acknowledged from the economic, social and environmental perspectives (Stylos and Vassiliadis, 2015; Melissen et al., 2016) (61, 62). Addressing to the organisational challenges of environmental change, those views contributed to hospitality, such as hotels, the measurement of the organisational preparedness (Melissen et al., 2016) (62). Acquiring and developing knowledge in the hospitality industry, were essential for organisations to protect themselves from uncertain environmental factors. These helped to connect organisations between their hospitality business and relevant community (Martínez-Martínez et al., 2019) (63). The factors, influencing on environmental change and sustainability of hospitality, should be addressed by the knowledge acquisition and development in the industry (Bratton, 2018) (64) again. Making hospitality organisations be congruent with their external strategy, internal hospitality service to organisational associates, was imperative for change acknowledgement (King, 1995) (40). Hence, the relationship between the host and the guests would be in a positive dynamic. Guest feeling, memory and experience were developed positively due to profession of managerial associates (O'Connor, 2005; O'Gorman, 2010) (41, 65) which was supported by appropriate organisational learning with a success.

Retail: A challenging "battlefield" of retail industry (Perumal, 2009) (66) required the organisational learning, which also assisted in connecting between changing organisation to the environment significantly. The industry knowledge, such as consumers' value and their feedback, was very crucial for retail executives to position their changing organisations and differentiate themselves form the competitive market by organisational learning approach (Wang, Lo & Young, 2004) (67). Positivity of consumer shopping experience, service delivery, client relationship, and better emotion of frontline associates were essential (Kim 2010) (68). The strategic relationship between retailers and core client groups should be developed and executed compellingly, as well as the valuable and glamour experience of consumers (Savastano et al., 2019) (49).

3.2. Learning Needs of Hospitality and Retail Organisations

Hospitality: People from individual, group and organisational levels, they were included in the LO development. Innovating hospitality services with creativity were driven by organisational people, with their insights, knowledges and application from the workplace, such as frontline associates providing innovative services (Sørensen and Jensen, 2012) (69). It showed the essence of LO and insights from individuals, teams, groups and to the whole enterprise eventually. Then actions were taken to respond to the changes of business environmental. Considering this scenario, learning needs were implied in the hospitality industry. Edghiem & Mouzughi (2018) (70) inspired the needs of obtaining new ideas and knowledges in the organisational learning process. Hence, knowledge sharing and interaction among groups of associates, with a collaborative learning, could be asserted and facilitated by management within a hotel.

Retail: Learning needs from retail organisations were inspired by different viewpoints. These included addressing the needs of consumer and market by appropriate strategy, technology system, workforce support, groupwork across different departments of the retail organisations (Oh & Polidan, 2018) (71). The scholars also stated the essence of leadership and communication for the rapid-changing market. Knowledge and skill practice from LO should link up the business environment collaboratively. From the perspective of learning needs, all levels of retail organisational people should pay attention to their knowledge, skills and develop competences by organisational learning approaches. Significant elements should be fostered, which included data analytics, critical thinking, cross-functional teamwork, communication and leadership (Oh & Polidan, 2018) (71).

3.3. Best Practice with Learning in Hospitality and Retail Industries

Hospitality: Best practice from LO in hospitality was a key to the industrial success. One of the key sustainable developments from hospitality was the environment, which should be asserted by different levels of associates, e.g., from rank-and-file, supervisors to managers in the learning process of the organisation. Managerial associates encouraged learning and developed their organisations to be more effective, while HR practitioners supported associate learning with self-direction (Bratton, 2018) (64). Considering a path development combining environmental application by an organisation with its capability and attributes, which was an environmental knowledge for the

stability development of hospitality organisations (Martínez-Martínez et al., 2019) (63).

Associates from hospitality organisations were expected to create values and communities, with a learning quality, by investigating cases and scenarios. A wide scope of the industrial issues should be communicated in inquiry and dialogue, which further enhanced leadership development in the hospitality industry and its organisations. (Cox, 2003) (72). Having a clearer picture, this industry was specified with a host's traits. The host provided hospitality services to guests friendly, cared and comfortable feelings, as well as food, beverage, and a cosy environment, as the "Holy Trinity" (Brotherton, 1999) (46).

Retail: Best practice from LO in retailing was a key to the industrial success. Organisational learning for best practice insights covered self-directed learning in conceptual thought and transformation in retailing (Keevy & Perumal, 2014) (73). Identifying variables from quality of service, as well as addressing associates' dynamic between their competences and traits, could contribute potentially to the retail service quality from the consumer view (Dabholkar et at., 1996) (74). For achieving business objectives, every associate could learn from their teammates with guidance, and their insights could be generated by self-reflection from the learning process (Lieb, 1991) (75).

Besides, both formal and informal induction systems (Marchington & Wilkinson 1996) (76), were potentially regarded as the channels for staff learning within or outside the LO, such as units from a complete course, and a plan of learning activities, etc. (Lashley & Best, 2002) (77). These kind of learning by inductions engaged different levels, e.g., from rank-and-files, supervisory and managerial associates in the career commitment, with knowledge-and-skill acquisition and professional development sustainably (Lashley & Best, 2002) (77). From the innovative view of the retail-setting, all these possibly combined with strategic omnichannel, indeed its enhancement with further analysis and review (Savastano et al., 2019) (49).

3.4. Advantages of Organisational Learning to Hospitality and Retail from HR View

From the HR view to the organisational learning in hospitality, knowledge acquisition, sharing and transference among associates were essential to the LO. Associates could be fostered as the human capital within an organisation by continuous learning and development, and it was regarded as an organisational investment (Nieves & Quintana, 2018) (78). In addition, the human capital combining with an appropriate HR practice, it potentially contributed to hospitality LO. Organisational effectiveness could be driven by the operational processes, which was enriched by associates whose capabilities had been upgraded in the vocational learning. In this situation, HR practitioners crucially bridged different functions, such as selection, learning and development, employee engagement, helping skills, to performance outcomes of both associates and their organisations (Madera et al., 2017) (79).

From the HR view to the organisational learning in retailing, LO as well as its associates, could be benefited by more sense of belonging, empowerment, and engagement, once supervisory and managerial associates took the ownership

with initiatives of their roles and responsibilities within the retail organisation (Chang et al., 2015) (80). Whereas, analytical skills, critical thinking, leadership development, teamwork and communication among different departments were necessary. These key strengths enabled organisations adapting to the complicated environmental change. Organisational talents had to apply their knowledge and skills, with advanced technology, data, processes, and systems (Oh & Polidan, 2018) (71).

4. Implications to Human Resource Management (HRM)

4.1. Role and View of HRM to Organisational Learning

Role of HR Practitioners in Learning Organisation: HR practitioners played a key role, with the commitments of top management, to facilitate organisational learning to individual, group and organisational levels (Hooi & Ngui, 2014) (81). HR specialists tended to focus more on learning and benefits to the organisation. Training & Development with a reasonable incentive scheme and inclusive programme from organisational view (Birkinshaw & Gibson, 2004) (82) were regarded as the elements of strategic HRM, which the organisational learning was possibly directed, driven and influenced by individual learning process consistently (Stewart, 1992) (83). Apart from direct training module, the methods of learning coordination and management became more significant to associates and managers (Sambrook & Stewart, 2000) (84). In this situation, HR practitioners were increasing important in LO, as well as their increasing capability in term of organisational learning (Hooi & Ngui, 2014) (81).

Employee Learning from HR View: Employee learning was regarded as associates learnt continuously, who obtained and extended their knowledge and skills, with an enrichment of their work capabilities in an organisation (Bezuijen et al., 2010) (85). The employee learning could contribute to information sharing, associates had a stronger sense of commitment, accomplishment and innovation in the workplace. HR practitioners facilitated and supported employee learning, and also played a vital role in people empowerment, competence development and performance recognition. These positively related to employee learning (Liu, 2018) (86).

4.2. Creation of Learning Environment and Change Addressed by HRM

Learning Environment: Suitable learning environment, learning enthusiasm, learning support, communication platform and industry knowledge update, etc. were essential for HR practitioners to develop LO (Olsen, 2016) (87). Strategy and practice in organisational learning should include a system for associate learning response, experience sharing with records, so as to create a learning environment (Olsen, 2016) (87). Sufficient employee learning with inquiries, dialogues and actions (Birkinshaw & Gibson, 2004) (82), contributed to the LO development.

Interrelation of Changes – Organisation and Business Environment: LO consisted of different learning levels. The individual learning was included in these various levels (Lau et al., 2019) (88). Communication platforms were significant for individual associates to share their career experience and success with family members, and to share their family experience or story to their co-

workers or supervisors in a suitable way. With a proper balance between personal life and work life, it resulted in a better communication and understanding associate's current status through the learning process as well (Clark, 2000) (89). Family and social activities from the external environment of the organisation (Bierema, 1999) (90) were potentially linked up associates' actions with changes (Honey & Mumford, 1986) (91), as well as their thinking styles during the process of individual learning (Bandura, 1977) (92) as well.

People and departments learnt among each other within an organisation, it could also link up other organisations, e.g., institute for community partnership, commercial enterprise and academy. Sharing knowledge and opinions from different people between organisations were importantly addressed (Bierema, 1999) (91), and the sharing promoted collective learning internally and externally. Besides, ideas of change were also inspired, which included employee's thought and action, diversity and inclusion, shift of knowledge and skills, globalisation, or any of these integrated, by researches from the field of industrial-and-organisational psychology (Kozlowski et al., 2017) (93). Also, workforce diversity and technology (Bliese et al., 2017) (94) induced changes. Likewise, changes and challenges were also caused by consumers as well as diverse market segments. For instance, consumer response, opinion and process of service delivery influenced on job descriptions of associates and managers, operational procedures for enrichment of consumer services (Wisdom, 2019) (95).

Change Addressed by HRM: As "living entities" of organisations (O¨rtenblad, 2005) (96) in a changing environment, it was essential to acknowledge both external and internal changes, and to adapt to the changes by the abilities of identification, interpretation and transformation (Baxter et al., 2009) (97). Organisations succeeded in the change, which was often driven by strategic training, employee learning, leadership development as well as a norm of coaching (Walker-Fraser, 2011) (98). In this situation, HR practitioners played an essential role in the developments of employee learning, training strategy, knowledge and skills, teamwork, empowerment and organisation, etc. (Khan, Khan & Mahmood, 2012) (99). These facilitated and supported organizational change with innovations.

4.3. Strategies of HRM, Organisational Learning and Knowledge

HR practitioners facilitated active self-learning of associates, they applied knowledge and skills to deal with complicated issues in the workplace, as well as got used to the changing organisation. "Long-lasting learning outcomes" were contributed by associate's inclination in the learning process and knowledge application, which managerial encouragement positively reinforced them (Salas, Kozlowski & Chen, 2017) (100). Collective learning in an organised way (Heron 1997) (101) should be included in HRM strategies for organisational learning. Managerial performance outcomes were made if manager expectation was better managed by the appropriate HR strategy with a best practice, and organisational people learnt new alternatives with a refinement of competencies (Ubeda-Garcia et al., 2019) (102) in LO.

HRM strategy and practice, with associate training and staffing, contributed to knowledge development, employee collaboration, and organisational innovation (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995) (103). Latest knowledge acquisition and sharing, among associates within the organisation, could benefit to further learning (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004) (104). Even "knowledge-oriented" HR strategy and practice were critical for the process of learning, both HR strategy and employee learning influence (Chiang & Shih 2011) (105) on the changing organisation essentially.

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Model Diagram 1

The concept of learning organisation (LO) by Marsick & Watkins (1993, 1996a, 1996b, 1997, 1999, 2003) (16, 18, 7, 17, 20, 19), as well as the LO concept was further explored by Song et al. (2013) (21).

3-Level Concept of Learning Organisation Model

Organisational Level

- embedded system for captured and shared learning -
- people empowerment to collective vision -
- system connection from its organisation to the environment -
- strategic leadership for learning -

Group Level

- team learning and collaboration -

Individual Level

- continuous learning -
- inquiry and dialogue -