

Collaborating and Sharing Knowledge Through Building Organizational Learning Culture and Knowledge Management as Determinant Key Factors to Face the Challenge of Open Education in Global Era

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Abstract

Global education requires higher institutions to improve their competitive ability. Open education through its uniqueness can organize distant education as well as spread knowledge and share information on open distance learning. The existence of qualified teaching staffs become the key to success of open education institution. The case of Universitas Terbuka provides evidence that how far each department is trying to improve performance to create quality and equitable education: flexible, open and online. The key is that learning culture has to be built which will have a positive impact to the knowledge management. By involving 99 lecturers from four faculties at Universitas Terbuka and using SEM-PLS tools, this study found the fact that the knowledge management is influenced by organizational learning culture, and knowledge management gives a positive impact to the department's performance. Leadership functions to reinforce and to support the creation of learning environment. However, organizational culture cannot influence performance. Future research can be directed to study factors that can affect the building of a good organizational learning culture.

Keywords: Open Education, Knowledge Management, Organizational Learning Culture

1. Introduction

Global education requires higher education institutions to improve their competitive ability. Open education institutions in the globalization era seemed to find a new platform to be able to provide wider access to community in acquiring quality education without being restrained by time, space and location. Open education through its uniqueness can organize distant education as well as spread knowledge and share information on open distance learning. The fundamental concept of open education is: students and teachers are separated by distance and sometimes by time. This contrasts with conventional education, where students and teachers meet in class rooms in the same time and place. Teachers deliver subject matters to the group of students, and these students receive the subject matters directly from the teacher.

The question posed is, what if some students cannot attend the classroom frequently to study? Open education emerged in response to the need of providing access to those who would otherwise not be able to participate in face-to-face courses. It encompasses the programs that allow the students and teachers to be physically apart during the learning process and maintain communication in a variety of ways (Keegan, 1986). It has evolved from correspondence schools to delivery mechanisms such as independent study, computer-based instruction, computer-assisted instruction, video courses, video conferencing, web-based instruction, and online learning. Technology has played a key role in changing the dynamics of each delivery option

over the years, as well as the pedagogy behind distance education. Technology is responsible for distorting the concept of distance between learner and instructor, and enabling learners to access education at any time and from any place (Beldarrain, 2006). Higher education institutions around the world have been using the Internet and other digital technologies to develop and distribute teaching and learning for decades. Recently, Open Educational Resources (OER) have gained increased attention for their potential and promise to obviate demographic, economic, and geographic educational boundaries and to promote life-long learning and personalized learning. The rapid growth of OER provides new opportunities for teaching and learning, and at the same time, challenge the established views about teaching and learning practices in higher education (Yuan, et al., 2008).

To support open education institution which can maintain a competitive advantage in regard to offering accessible education for all, quality human resources (lecturers) are required. The role of lecturers is very important to support optimal learning process delivery and to disseminate knowledge as well as conducting a variety of both institutional researchs (study program development through innovative program offerings) and researches for scientific development.

2. The important Role of Department to Support the Establishment of Collaboration and Sharing of Knowledge

The essence of open education is the availability of resources that can mutually collaborate and share knowledge. The teaching staffs in each department possess knowledge that can be shared amongst colleagues and can collaborate with each other even at cross-department to enable the acceleration of the development of knowledge that can have a positive impact on the quality of every teaching staff, especially in supporting their work in teaching the students. Therefore, every department in open education institutions must be able to facilitate and provide support facilities and infrastructure in order to provide a comfortable environment for faculty to conduct scientific development activities.

Department must be able to facilitate the learning as an important factor in accommodating the desire to learn of the entire teaching staffs, the learning should be used as the culture so that the activities and actions of all members of the organization are characterized by the values of learning. This is important as the success strategy of department. Each department is said to have a growing culture of learning in each department if completed with some aspects, namely dialogue, continuous learning, team learning, and systems that support and empowerment. Organizational learning culture needs the support of knowledge management. Knowledge management plays an important role as structured activities to develop the capacity of each department to acquire, create, share and use both tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge in order to survive and succeed. Important aspects to note are acquisition, sharing, utilization and creation.

With the establishment of organizational learning and knowledge management, sharing and collaboration of knowledge will go well, that could improve organizational performance and therefore can meet national and international quality standards. The performance of each department can be said to be good if they have been able to determine the vision, mission, goals and objectives as well as the achievement of a clear strategy. The leader of each department holds the central force to direct his department to achieve institutional goals well. Leadership

plays a vital role in the organization as a leader, in addition to defining the vision, mission, goals and strategies for achieving, also in charge of leading, directing, and motivating group members to achieve the goal.

3. Lesson Learnt from Case of Open University of Indonesia: Building the Capacity of Staffs Through the Creation of Organizational Learning Culture and Knowledge Management.

Universitas Terbuka (Open University of Indonesia), with its vision in 2021 in becoming a world-class open and distance higher education institution, is required to be able to compete with other open distance universities. In order to survive in the global education, Open University of Indonesia has to produce graduates with high competitiveness and develop theories and practices of open and distance higher education. One of the attempts of Open University of Indonesia to increase competitive advantage is to obtain international accreditation of ICDE. Requesting the public to learn new knowledge encourages Open University of Indonesia to continue developing its departments to fulfill the needs of the market. Until now, Open University of Indonesia has developed 32 departments—both bachelor degree and diploma.

Department quality is a reflection of the overall performance of university. The success of Open University of Indonesia in achieving optimal performance cannot be separated from the human resources (lectures). This is in line with Resource Based View (RBV) concept mentioning that “Human knowledge is a resource that is believed to be able to meet the criteria VRIO (Valuable, Rare, Intimate, Organizational) (Barney, 1991). RBV supports the concept that an organization would take the lead because of differences of capabilities and resources. It requires an appropriate strategy so that the potential of human resources capability can be empowered. Knowledge is one of the most important intangible assets that has strategic value for institution. In order to be a valuable resource for the organization, knowledge must be managed properly. Knowledge management can be used as one of the organization's success strategies, as stated by Allamel and Saba (2010) that knowledge management can add value to the organization by applying knowledge on their products/services. Knowledge management is a structured activity to develop the capacity of the organization to acquire, create, share and use in order to survive and succeed (Bergeron, 2003; Mc Shane, 2008, Rao,2005)

Knowledge management cannot be properly built without the support of the establishment of the organizational learning culture. It is a set of norms or values that support the learning of individuals, groups or organizations and believes learning as a critical factor of success of an organization (Kandemir, 2005; Serlavaj et al, 2007, Kondalkar, 2007). Furthermore, Wang (2004) states that “organizational culture is for facilitating knowledge sharing”. In organizational context, the leader is an important role as a facilitator, motivator and director in achieving organizational goals. This study applies leadership as moderator variables to detect the extent of its role in promoting the development of learning culture. Leadership is process in which a person influences, directs, motivates and makes other people want to contribute to the achievement of organization objectives. (Certo, 2009; Robbins, 2009; Scheiman, 2010, Rijal, 2010)

The real occurring problem is that the performance of departments in Open University of Indonesia is not optimal, with the number of lecturers per July 1, 2014 amounted to 754 people. Various constraints exist, such as: a) low competence of human resources (Lecture); b)

limitation in conducting research and publications, c) limitation in building a network (international/global), d) lack of innovation (cannot fulfill stakeholder's demand); e) weak formation of team work. This study aims to explore the extent to which the role of organizational learning culture influences knowledge management and its impact on performance.

3.1. Methodology

Research designs used were verification and survey. Stratified random sampling was used as data collection procedure. Population was 183 lectures from 4 Faculties, target sample were 125 lectures. Structural Equation Model (SEM)- Partial Least Square was used to test the hypothesis. This study utilized 4 variables:

- 1) Organizational learning culture: continuous learning, dialogue, team learning, embedded system, empowerment
- 2) Knowledge management: acquisition, sharing, utilizing and creation
- 3) Leadership: inspiration, individual consideration and non-transactional behavior
- 4) Organizational performance: vision/mission, quality assurance, research and information system.

3.2. Result and discussion

Respondent Profile

Respondents who participated in this study were 99 lectures (64% female and 36% male). Based on age, majority respondents were above 50 years old (45%). Respondents participated were from 4 faculties: 1) Faculty of Teacher Training and Education (34%), 2) Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences (22%), 3) Faculty of Social and Political Sciences (28%), 4) Faculty of Economics (15%).

Hypothesis Testing and Findings

Hypothesis testing by SEM-PLS proved five hypotheses (influencing between variables) (See Figure:1):

1. Knowledge management influenced the organizational learning culture significantly. Indicators that play an important role affecting the performance of department are open discussions, sharing knowledge, and appreciating each other's opinion.
2. Performance of department was not affected by organizational learning culture significantly. It means that learning culture that has been formed through open discussion, mutual respect cannot be fully able to affect organizational performance in terms of achieving the vision/mission, organizational goals, conducting research and the desire to build a network of professional, as well as the achievement of quality standards.
3. Performance on UT's department was significantly influenced by knowledge management. Knowledge management indicators that affect organizational performance are recruitment system, the establishment of a situation where the sharing of knowledge among faculty has run optimally, and knowledge sharing.
4. Leadership moderate strengthened the relationship between knowledge management and department's performance. One indicator of leadership that is able to strengthen the establishment of knowledge management that affects the performance is a leader who can communicate the vision/mission well and concern with what the lecturers need. Leaders

assessed by lecturers are able to perform its function to motivate and inspire lecturers to achieve organizational goals.

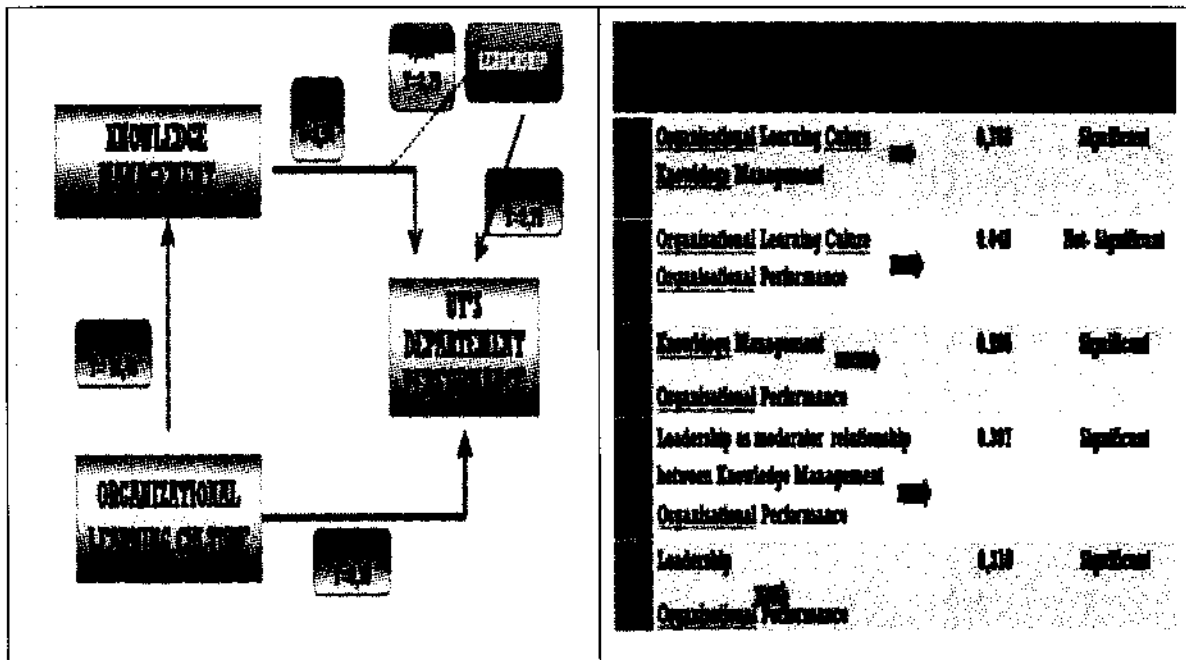


Figure 1: Hypothesis Testing Result and Model

Based on the research result, suggestions for improving the departments in Universitas Terbuka:

1. Facilitate and encourage the establishment of an organizational learning culture through open discussion.
2. Create team building courses (team learning).
3. Increase awareness to the educational staff of their duty as scientist to continue and participate in the deployment and enhancement of knowledge through research and publications.
4. Selecting the leadership (Head of department) based the aspect of competence and find person who is able to inspire and motivate.
5. Build a network of professional/academic actively in order to gain access (issues and new phenomenon) that can be used to conduct research and publication.

Future research can be directed to study factors that can affect building a good organizational learning culture. For future empirical research, knowledge management can be placed as an intervening variable toward the relationship between organizational learning culture and leadership.

4. Conclusion

The case of the Open University of Indonesia (Universitas Terbuka), namely research on the effect of organizational learning culture and knowledge management as well as its impact on organizational performance, is proven based on facts on the ground that one of the uniqueness of

open distance education is to encourage the establishment of collaboration and knowledge sharing to accelerate the empowerment of teaching staffs to become qualified individuals. The results showed that the culture of organizational learning and knowledge management have a strong impact on the department performance. These findings indicate that in order to be able to be an open education institution that is able to face global competition, the empowerment of lecturers is the key to success in the future. Open education institution should be able to maintain and develop the uniqueness of encouraging the strong spirit of open collaboration by utilizing both internal and external resources. Building network resources is one of the surefire strategies by building relationships and collaboration to utilize the resources of other parties.

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