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Non-Formal Learning and Learning Organizations. Review of the Primary Notions

This paper seeks to assess the impact of non-formal learning models in the increment of knowledge within organizations. In order to achieve this, it introduces the work which is presented herein and proceeds to analyze the concepts non-formal and informal learning, formal education as well as the differences that exist among all of them. The next part of the paper preempts the crisis society is experiencing today in terms of knowledge and educational influences by assessing the culture of organizations of learning being the most useful factor to consider in order to understand the responsibility assigned to learning. Before discussing and ultimately concluding the assessment conducted, there is a section of the paper dedicated to discussing the relationship existing between models of learning and learning organizations. It is prudent to note that the purpose of this analysis is this particular section. The analysis elements are based on P. Senge's literary work as well as E. Schein's. There is also reliance on papers from UNESCO.

Keywords: *non-formal learning, informal learning, formal education, organizational culture, learning organization*

Currently, many organizations are experiencing rapid environmental changes. This has led to many procedures, actions as well as principles become obsolete. In order for the organizations to remain viable, there is a need to learn the new ones as well as react to them fast enough. As such, the organizations need to be learning organizations. The organizations must have capacities that support continuous learning, adaptation as well as changing (Robbins, Coutler 2005, p. 42). Training of employees therefore becomes the organizations' priority and in the long run achieves competitive advantage. The value that is attached to the knowledge passed on to the employees is

today equivalent to the production equipment and the raw materials that the organizations use.

To achieve this in the organization, one of the issues that must be addressed includes how the employees ought to be educated. Ordinarily, when the employees are hired, they already have some form of formal education and they have the attitude that this is adequate, therefore it is hard for them to adopt informal or non-formal models of education. The organization must show the employees how this will increase their knowledge and how the knowledge will be shared. The employees are of the opinion that formal education is superior and allege it provides “real” and systemic knowledge. However, there are individuals who support the informal and non-formal learning and perceive it as the cornerstone of every functioning system in the society. In the event an organization does not have informal and non-formal learning, then their functioning would be rendered impossible (Cross 2007, p. 23). There is difficulty in determining who between these two proponents is correct in their assertions. There are many factors that influence this answer but all them point to the educational aspect primarily due to the fact that many learning organizations are perceived as the places where excellence and advantages can only be obtained via knowledge.

Herein below, the influences as well as roles of informal and non-formal learning in learning organizations are discussed. For this to be precisely understood there is a need to define the constructs that are relied on in the analysis. This is primarily because there are different views of learning spheres and these are no precise and easy definitions of organizations (Werquin 2007, p. 34). There is an importance in the comparison of the types of learning that can be undertaken as well as the organizations discussed. Further, it is important to note that the assessment was not without obstacles, which included the definition of learning institutions and non-consensus in what constitutes learning models definitions. Unavailability of literature in regards to the co-relation between learning models and learning organizations was another obstacle.

Objective of the Study

There has been an acceptance that formal education is the most important type of education. This has been without any due regard to the fact that there are individuals who do not have an affinity for the same. Further, many organizations have realized that the people they hire have the requisite education but are not able to sufficiently perform the duties that are associated with their profession. This particular study was designed to explain the differences in the types of education and learning. Further, it also sought to illustrate the importance that is ascribed to other forms of learning that are dissimilar to formal education. The manner in which these different forms of

learning have been beneficial to organizations as well as the entire society at large are also an important factor in the paper. These are elements that have not been widely covered in the studies that have been undertaken in terms of this topic and as such will be a great contribution to the research community.

Precise definitions of non-formal learning and formal education and the specific differences between the two terms must be discussed. Formal education is undertaken in an institution and its introduction was way before non-formal learning had been validated in many countries as a mode of education. However, the latter existed from the start of the humankind; it is today not recognized as being equal to the acceptable formal education types (Commission of the European Communities 2001a).

Learning types is determined by the economic pressure and needs more than it is dependent on the people's choice. Informal and non-formal learning is only available to the economically stable people owing to the fact that education of any form is expensive. The economy of an area determines the development, way as well as implementation of learning. The social modifications have also changed learning needs; people's competencies are focused on today as compared to before (Loewen 2011).

The increment in competition and social conditions has increased the need for an education continuously. Individuals are in need of changes in terms of working conditions, occupations, career developments as well as places of work. Organizations have also increased the demand for applicable knowledge but the standards of traditional knowledge are much lower. Diplomas are not an essential need for a person to secure a position but there are some more important conditions like experience. However, states require that certificates be used to as a standard for competencies or they are deemed unacceptable (Commission of the European Communities, 2000a).

The term "non-formal learning" was officially developed in 1968 under the perception that the education that was being offered then was not enough and was not addressing the needs of the society (Coombs 1968). Non-formal education was therefore designed to be a cure. Non-formal education was considered to be more ideal and developed than the offered formal education (Lave, Wenger 1991, p. 90). Further, the UNESCO study of 1972 referred to as the Faure (1972) study indicated non-formal education's importance in relation to the needs of the society. The need for knowledge in the growing world economy was also indicated in this report. The Delors Commission Report of 1996 reinforced these views (Delors 1996). The 2000 EU Memorandum of lifelong learning explained the development of the awareness on non-formal learning and propounded that an important aspect of learning was free time. The development fast technology and IT facilitated development of knowledge in the society and this brought about the filtration need of this information as well as its transformation into knowledge. The formal education provided by traditional institutions could not respond to knowledge demands that were in existence. As such, non-formal education emerged to mitigate the inadequate knowledge that formal education could not cure (Commission of the European Communities 2000a).

Education and learning

Education and learning are two very different concepts. Education is a type of learning wherein habits, skills as well as knowledge of a group of individuals is transferred from one generation to the other via training, researches or teaching. It is undertaken through guidance of the people who are in charge (teachers have permission from the states) and the institutions where this occurs are certified by the state (Dewey 1998, p. 110). Learning on the other hand refers to a process through which knowledge in regards to the world is gained (Kandel et al. 2000, p. 43). There is a permanent change in the behavior of individuals who undertake learning because of the practice, exercise or experience gained therein. Learning results from personal development, education or training (Kimble et al. 1962, p. 11).

As such, in the context of the assessment of this part, formal education is classified as education while informal and non-formal educations are forms of learning. Education is undertaken in state verified institutions and the teachers who undertake the teaching herein accept the fact that learning and recognition of diplomas need not occur in special institution and the lecturers herein need not be sanctioned by the state. Learning is relatively permanent and measurable while knowledge and competencies are acquired via learning. Certificates are indicators of a person's education obtained through education. However, it is not automatic that specific education means automatic competency of the skills, knowledge, values and behaviors expected (Commission of the European Communities 2001a).

Formal education refers to teaching undertaken in a state controlled institution and the learning programs are strictly defined and can hardly change. The European Commission's definition of formal education is "learning in pedagogic – education institution, structured in terms of objectives, time and learning demands which are the pathway to certification" (EC 2000, 1, p. 33). According to P. Mayo (2007, p. 8), there are several criteria of formal education, inclusive of:

- learning is undertaken in institutions and students know this making learning an intentional and conscious process;
- there is a defined curricula setting out objectives and content;
- the learning results are followed at a particular period of the year;
- a certificate is provided at the end of formal education leading to the students' transference to a higher education level or possibility of obtaining a professional job;
- teachers in these institutions provide diplomas, which are acknowledged by a state authority that is qualified.

The state is charged with the structuring of formal education including the curricula that is followed. This is because the states seek to orient all its citizens towards a particular direction as well as have a control over them.

Non-formal learning refers to an education obtained separate from the context of a school institution. The European Commission defines non-formal learning as the form of learning undertaken away from high schools or education institutions (Commission of the European Communities 2001a). Further, there are no certificates awarded at its conclusion. However, it has systematic duration, learning resources and objectives. There are also certain goals that the students must accomplish.

However, this definition is not cast in stone, as there is some form of learning that is considered as non-formal but does not meet these criteria. For example, there might be a certificate upon its completion. The most common definition of this form of learning does not mention the certificate awarding. It is to the effect that informal learning is an education activity organized beyond the formal system that seeks for the clients to identify the needs of learning that they have and satisfy them by achieving some set objectives (Coombs et al. 1973, p. 5).

Informal learning has also been defined by the European Commission as the kind that is undertaken at the workplace, everyday life, during one's free time as well as in the family circle. There are no learning objectives, no certification and no learning time frame. Although there are some instances where informal learning is targeted, most of the cases are unconsciously or unintentionally undertaken (Commission of the European Communities 2001a).

	Intention	Individuality	Institutionality	Diploma/ certificate	Flexibility	Approach	Learning	Education/ learning
Formal education	intentional	common	mandatory	mandatory	nonflexible	mandatory	organized	education
Non-formal learning	intentional	collective	nonmandatory/ mandatory	nonmandatory/ mandatory	flexible	nonmandatory/ mandatory	nonorganized/ organized	learning/ education
Informal learning	nonintentional/ intentional	individual/ collective	nonmandatory/ mandatory	nonmandatory	flexible	nonmandatory	nonorganized	learning
Lifelong learning	nonintentional/ intentional	individual/ collective	nonmandatory	nonmandatory	flexible	nonmandatory	nonorganized	learning
Experiential learning	intentional	strictly individual	nonmandatory/ mandatory	mandatory/ nonmandatory	flexible	nonmandatory/ mandatory	nonorganized/ organized	learning

Fig. 1. A comparison of formal education, experiential, lifelong non-formal and informal learning

The reflection of differences of these two concepts is perceived in the certificates awarded to students, individuality of industrialization, access, flexibility, education as

well as education (Werquin 2007). Formal education is general and is an obligation to all the members of the society. On the other hand, non-formal learning is dedicated to specific students. Institutionalization is a compulsory element in formal education and students are ordinarily subjected to certification. Non-formal learning need not be in institutions and there is no certification for the same.

Informal learning is an issue undertaken by an individual while non-formal learning is provided to individuals in a group. There is consciousness in this form of learning and the students undertake it intentionally. Further, it is systematic as instructions are provided by an instructor. It ought to be noted that sometimes there is similar content in informal and non-formal learning.

There is also a difference in the purpose of the models. Formal education organized through the government and its goal is to guide its learners to a particular direction. This is indicated through the plans and programs that have been strictly set, demands for qualified teachers and inflexibility of the teaching styles. Contrastingly, the pursuit of non-formal is essential for the organizations. There is pressure on the employees to gain further education so that the organization can maintain sufficient advantage in the market (EC 2000).

Informal learning is designed only to serve individuals' needs. It is undertaken at the initiative of the learners to change or support their personalities as well as to gain further advantages. This conflicts with the assumption that informal learning is undertaken unconsciously because individuals make a conscious decision to improve themselves.

Learning and education are undertaken in learning institutions. The institutions for formal education are controlled by the state and must meet a bare minimum. Similarly, non-formal learning can be undertaken in institutions but the common practice is provision of the same at the organization which seeks to have the advantage. Informal learning takes place in a variety of places and there are no established institutions for this (Loewen 2011).

From the above, there are various differences in informal learning, informal and non-formal learning. However, the boundaries that previously existed in the models are slowly disappearing with informal learning being perceived as formal education and vice versa.

Learning Organization

Learning organization is a management concept that developed in response to insecurity rise, political and economic turbulence as well as the global crisis that was in

existence in the 1990s (Schön 1983). It sought to act as a call for change in individuals and the organizations in which they worked in. Three decades later, there are still a small number of such organizations but their placement is murky at best. A learning organization is considered as ideal regardless of the business that is being conducted therein. However, according to C. Argyris and D. Schön (1978), it is difficult for an ideal organization to be realized and reached. As such, the pursuit of organizations to reach this state is a life long undertaking that is continuous. Further, it should not be the responsibility of one individual in the organization. There would be progress if the organization can be able to derive ways which encourage all the employees to be engaged in the same. This means that all the levels of the organizations work towards the same goals (Chawla, Renesch 1995).

The study conducted by J. March and H. Simon led to the original description of learning organization. The authors relied on modifying organizations' routine so that the best solutions and results could be achieved (March, Simon 1992). According to C. Argyris and D. Schön, learning organizations work towards the discovery as well as correction of mistakes (Argyris, Schön 1978). Further, the form of learning that organizations engage in can be single loop, double *deutero learning* or double loop (Bateson, Catherine 1972). In single loop learning detection and subsequent correction of mistakes is undertaken via the old objectives and policies. In double loop, detection of mistakes and their correction is done through the change of the objectives and policies of the organization. Finally, *deutero* implies learning conducted first and then undertaking the second loop. For learning to be effective, every person therein must be aware that there is learning present.

R. Mason also asserted that changes in policies, strategies as well as objectives are crucial if the organization seeks to survive and develop (Mason 1993). Further, M. Pedler, J. Burgoyne and T. Boydell, asserted that the learning organization is primarily based on the success of the business, which is provided by the organization, team and individual learning (Pedler et al. 1997).

The definition of learning organization has been propounded by many authors. M. Pedler defined it as an organization facilitating learning of all members therein and it transforms to meet the strategic goals of the organization (Pedler et al. 1997). D. Garvin described it as a skillfully created organization geared towards the obtaining as well as the transfer of knowledge to ultimately modify the behavior of the employees (Garvin 2000). Another definition of this term is by J. Redding as the undertaking of an organization to achieve learning ability. To do this, the organization must adopt strategy, vision, leadership, culture, management, structure of a specific as well as its processes (Redding 2000). The final definition of learning organization is the constant expansion of people's capabilities to create some desired results. In such an undertaking, expansive and new thinking patterns are sought and there is a common tendency of freedom (Senge 1998). Further, the people within the organization are in a constant state of learning in order to have an understanding of the evolving functioning of the same.

In line with the definition of learning organization, their objectives are the mobilization of individuals to learn so that better results can be achieved. If there was no need for development in the society, then learning organizations would never have been established (Pigozzi 1999). The prevalence of usage of the term became popular at the same time as the use society of knowledge. In the latter, human skills, capabilities and knowledge were a very important resource of development. As such, the terms society of knowledge and learning organization are interconnected.

In using the definition of P. Senge (1998), existence of learning organizations is so that there can be a quick response to any change in the work environment. In order for this to be realized, P. Senge propounds that five disciplines should be mastered as discussed herein under:

- system thinking: there is a need for all the employees of the organization to understand how the entire system of the organization operates so that they are in a position to react immediately and work towards development (Gilley et al. 1999);
- personal mastering: this implies that the learning of the organizations can only be achieved through the learning of all the individuals in the organization (Ehrhart 2005);
- mental models: this refers to assumptions, images as well as generalizations influencing the manner in which the world is understood and taking action in reliance on the same. The culture of the organization affects the culture of the individuals and vice versa. Invisible forces that hinder change are defined as organizational cultures (Schein 1992). There are a set of shared norms, values and expectations which eventually form the employees behaviors. In most cases, individual cultures are eroded by the organizational cultures but the speed of change depends on the strength of the organizational cultures;
- shared vision: for this to be accomplished the organization needs to forgo strict hierarchy and adopt democracy. Employees must be given a chance to make mistakes by being encouraged to participate in innovation and experiments (Saaty, Vargas 2012).
- team learning: this is also an important aspect for the learning of organizations. This according to P. Senge (1998) can be achieved through the provision of dialogue among the employees as well as encouraging them to form teams for united knowledge and energy.

In conclusion, despite the differences in the definitions of learning organization by the different authors, there are certain elements that are evident in all of them. These include the presence of values, norms and beliefs of the employees. The organization must also be working towards change in its cultures or adapting to the work environment or needs of the organization. The final aspect is that in all definitions the organi-

zation is perceived as a concept of multi-levels made up of team organization, behaviors, organizational structures and practices.

Crisis in society of knowledge

After change in the educational systems was enacted, it was very difficult to implement the same because such institutions are traditional and find it difficult to adapt change (Liessmann 2009). However, some companies took to the idea immediately. The need for capitalistic way of thinking and production forced the change to occur. However, dissatisfaction by teachers and students was indicated for this idea which had anticipated a phenomenal change in the sector of education (Bologna Declaration 1999).

The idea of creating a massive quantity of workers who were educated meant that they could access labor markets easily and also access knowledge. Ultimately, the quality of the society would be raised. The assumption was that the knowledge in this case would be available to everyone free of charge. The problem was that the society began treating education as if it was a commodity. Knowledge became an economic resource and capitalists undertook to finance it in order to satisfy their needs (Drucker 1969). In an effort to overcome the looming crisis, production was set aside for services activities. This created the need for qualified people as such a system must have continuous innovation. The people who had prior diplomas became unemployed because the economy had adopted a very different direction so their skills became obsolete. The only people who gained herein were the capitalists.

Even though there was an influx of institutions that provided knowledge to the students, the quality of the education became compromised. Private universities cropped up as their main aim was to make profits as well as survive in the market. This resulted in confusion within the education system. The diplomas that were distributed did not require any work and the leaders were generally machines that certified the students (Bodrijar 1991). The students who were created from this absurd scenario did not have very high chances of being employed. Their expertise was not required and the skills derived from therein became obsolete even when the students were still studying. The desperate ones undertook retraining with no definite guarantee that they would secure a job thereafter.

From the above assertions, it is clear that education systems were affected by the economy. It seemed to be at the service of the systems of the economy by assisting and supporting the same. It no longer had the autonomy that it previously enjoyed. Instead, it adopted qualities previously considered as economic categories such as mobility, flexibility and adaptability.

Learning organization models of learning and education

There are very interesting facts in relation to the above and they are as follows:

- the survival and development of any organization is dependent on the adjustment speed of the organization to the market and the environment. In order to realize this, there must be a transformation of the organization into an open organization and not closed by placement of the employees' learning first (Colley et al., 2002). The resources that are spent in the learning and education of the employees should not be perceived as an extra cost to it but ought to be considered an investment;
- innovation in a learning organization must be pursued. This is because an organization requires competent and creative people in order for it to experience change (Robbins, Coutler 2005). New processes will need to be introduced and this is only possible where the employees are innovative. The requisite competencies are derived from the employees undertaking constant learning.
- the culture of the organization undergoing the learning will affect the behavior of the employees (Schein 1992). This impacts on all levels. On the national level, it is evident that different countries have different cultural practices. This ultimately affects the cultures that are practiced in the different organizations. At the organizational levels, the different organizations have different cultures that are deemed acceptable to each of them. At the individual levels, each person who has been employed by an organization has different cultures, which they undertake to fit into the organization's culture. There is also the manager level where the different managers in an organization have a specific culture that they practice. The power of these practices is what determines the success of the organization. If the practices of the managers are very strong, then they have the power to effect change in the organization. The power of these also will determine if they are able to address a crisis in the area that they are in charge of. Similarly, if there is weakness in the organizational cultures of managers, then there are probabilities that they will become swallowed by the cultures that the organizations are practicing. They therefore will not be able to effect the changes that they perceive as important for the development of the organization. Based on these assertions, a conclusion can be derived that there is a continuous need of learning within the organizations and this can be achieved through the acquisition of new knowledge;
- there is power in having plenty of information. This means that people who have the information have power (O'Keeffe 2002). As such, they want to keep the power to themselves so that they can continue being powerful. In pursuing the concept of learning, the organizations seek to have all the employees have

similar information and have the ability to decipher or understand the said information appropriately. It should be noted that there are some organizations that keep sensitive information resulting from the nature of their work. This means such information and how it can be accessed cannot be shared with just anyone within the organization. Therefore, learning in regards to this information is limited to only the people who have the authority to access it. However, the organization also needs to deal with employees who seek to keep information to themselves so that they have an advantage over the rest of the employees. They should be educated that the sharing of information and knowledge forms the foundation of learning in many organizations;

- organizations engaged in learning should undertake some things in a continuous manner (Senge 1998). These include learning constantly, thinking and planning for changes (these changes ought to be undertaken in line with the organization's cultural practices). and the employees must be in a position to share knowledge and information.
- managers of the different departments in the organization need learning the most (Robbins, Coutler 2005). This is a paradox as the managers are the people within the organization who are expected to have the most knowledge and therefore ordinarily do not require any form of learning. They need learn how to move from hierarchical management and develop a democratic leadership. They must also learn how to relinquish control when the need arises to their subordinates;
- there will always be a need for competent employees within the organization (Robbins, Coutler 2005). Further, these employees also need to have the requisite knowledge to undertake the jobs that are under the description of the same. Any form of education that the employees have need to be supported by the presence of certificates or diplomas. Essentially, this means that any form of learning that the employees have takes precedence over their education.

Recommendations and conclusion

Knowledge that is acquired vide the models of learning and education discussed herein above have a characteristic of becoming obsolete very quickly. This affects the manner in which various organizations as well as the individuals therein behave. For the organizations to thrive in the markets, they must take steps that are geared towards ensuring that their employees learn and subsequently share the knowledge that they have. In such a scenario, the organization will be able to derive solutions that achieve its development.

In regards to whether models of non-formal learning can be able to facilitate the increment of knowledge in many organizations, the derivation from the above discussion is that it does. There is a necessity to have an organization of the learning at all the organizations' levels. This is geared towards achieving knowledge, which has been proven to be the most important resource that the organizations have towards optimally meeting the market demands (Pace 2002). In order for the organization to achieve a scenario whereby the employees are sharing the information in their possession without being forced to, the organization needs to pursue a culture that will foster this. From the discussion above, one of the impacts of organizational cultures is that it ensures that the employees form teamwork, which includes the sharing of information.

The essence behind the policies employed in learning organizations is that they cannot be able to effect any form of change by themselves. It can only be achieved through all the members of the same engaging in continuous learning. Further, the ability of all the learning organizations needs to be faster and bigger than all the other changes that may occur environmentally. The organization is also required to undertake learning better and faster than their competition in the same market. This is only possible where the employees are availed with an opportunity to learn as well as develop their skills. Further, the organization can only be considered as competent where the knowledge that it has is shared with its employees. Ultimately, the organizations' effectiveness will be more than the input or the total performance of all the employees.

Where the organizations have been able to achieve the above, they can now commence in learning (Watkins, Marsick 1997). Further, the structure of the organizations must adopt a structure that is tasks focused and not value focused. Tasks oriented organizations have predominant characteristics of control and command hierarchy. A small number of the organizations' employees usually the managers are the only ones with the authority to develop policies for the organization and make decisions on the same. Where there are good results, the mention of the employees is highly visible. Contrastingly, the organizations that are reliant on values are more open as well as attention giving to their employees. As such, this should be the system that is adopted by learning organizations.

All the models of learning are used by learning organizations. There is an assumption that informal and non-formal learning are employed more than formal education if the organization is to achieve success in the long-term. The continuous improvements derived from learning organizations pressurize many employees into training and learning. The task of many learning organizations is the changing of the cultures at that organization so that innovation can be achieved. There must be a balance between weak cultures and strong ones. The weak cultures can change organization into a weak one, which will cause it to have a poor market position. Strong cultures will make it difficult for the organization to adopt any change. Finally, the conclusion that

can be derived from above is that non-formal learning is a necessity and ought to be encompassed into the formal education.

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Pozaformalne uczenie się a uczące się organizacje. Przegląd podstawowych pojęć

Celem tego artykułu jest ocena oddziaływania modeli pozaformalnego uczenia się na wzrost wiedzy w organizacjach. Aby go zrealizować, autor najpierw przedstawia swoją pracę, a następnie przechodzi do analizy koncepcji pozaformalnego i nieformalnego uczenia się, koncepcji formalnej edukacji oraz różnic między nimi. Następna część artykułu dotyczy zapobiegania kryzysowi, którego obecnie doświadcza społeczeństwo w obszarze wiedzy i edukacyjnych oddziaływań, oceniając kulturę organizacji uczenia się. Są one najważniejszym czynnikiem, który należy wziąć pod uwagę, aby zrozumieć odpowiedzialność przypisaną do uczenia się. Przed omówieniem i ostatecznym zamknięciem przeprowadzonej oceny w artykule znajduje się rozdział poświęcony omówieniu stosunków istniejących pomiędzy modelami uczenia się i uczącymi się organizacjami. Ważne jest podkreślenie, że celem tej analizy jest właśnie ten rozdział. Analiza przeprowadzona jest w oparciu o prace P. Senge oraz E. Schein, jak również dokumenty UNESCO.

Słowa kluczowe: *pozaformalne uczenie się, nieformalne uczenie się, edukacja formalna, kultura organizacyjna, organizacja uczenia się*