

An Empirical Assessment of the Relationship between National Culture and Learning Capability in Organisations in Cambodia

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Abstract

An intensely competitive world forces organizations to act ever more quickly. To enhance their capability to respond to change, organizations should seek to identify what are their core competencies and the competitive advantages which are their keys to success. The term “organizational learning” has become a term of interest to many academics and practitioners because this represents the organization’s ability to change. Simultaneously, organizations have to consider the cultural context in environments in which they act. This paper assesses the relationship between national culture and learning capabilities of a sample of organizations in Cambodia. The survey questionnaire, which received 417 responses, related to national culture and organizational learning. The study found that national culture had strong relationships with learning capabilities of organizations in Cambodia. The paper concludes by following some recommendations for Cambodian organizations to take into consideration to strengthen their levels of performance.

Keywords: Cambodia, Empirical assessment, Learning capability, National culture, Relationship

1. Introduction

In Cambodian culture, the individual from the age of a child is not encouraged to ask a lot of questions since it is considered to be impolite and annoying for adults (Pearson, 2006). The teachers are supposed to know all and the students know nothing. This is clearly related to the long-term suppression of the interests of the peasant classes both in terms of economic activities (e.g. Scott, 1976: 195-6) and through the production of cultural values such as *chbap* poetry, which stresses the importance of following the wisdom of the state as manifested through religious and societal norms (cf. Chandler, 1996). As Althusser might have observed, both repressive and ideological state apparatus have been mobilized to reinforce these messages (Althusser, 2001, pp.85-127).

Pearson (2006) observed that, in Cambodian culture, the primary purpose of learning is to be able to ‘do’ something, so learning is viewed as the acquisition of tools and techniques in a classroom or workshop setting. Learning is the responsibility of the teacher, not the student. She found that everyone in Cambodia over 25 years of age experienced a didactic teaching methodology which actively suppressed independent and analytical thinking. This means that if someone can not answer the question will lead to ‘loss of face’, so questions (and especially ‘why?’) tend to be viewed as something negative, rather than helpful. It is different from much of Western culture where the children are encouraged to ask and do whatever they are curious to learn and to do.

In relation to this aspect of Cambodian culture, it is interesting to observe closely individual practices in the organization. Each organization is unique, varying not only in the quantity, quality and types of resources deployed and in the outputs produced, but also in its culture (Ferguson & Ferguson, 2000). One interesting area to study concerning the organization in Cambodia relates to the nature of organizational learning, since Cambodia has emerged from periods of genocide and command economy which all but destroyed all Cambodian institutions. This paper aims to determine whether culture has a close relationship with the learning performance of organizations in Cambodia. Moreover, it is believed that the performance of the organization depends on how it learns from its individual staff because an “organization is a group of people acting to achieve particular outcomes” (*ibid*: 16). In other words, if the staff (or human resources) cannot contribute to organizational learning, then the organization seems to be doomed in Cambodia.

2. Literature Review

2.1. What Is Culture?

Although culture is a concept familiar to most people, it is difficult to specify exactly what it means. For example, two anthropologists (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952) catalogued 164 separate and distinct definitions of the word 'culture'. This issue is further complicated by the fact that the word 'culture' has several quite different meanings. It can refer to a shared, commonly-held body of general beliefs and values that define what is right for one group (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961; Lane & Distefano, 1988), or to socially elitist concepts, including refinement of mind, tastes and manners (Heller, 1988).

The word 'culture' apparently originates with the Latin *cultura*, which can be translated as a cult or a concept related to worship. Cult members embed the ways of doing things that is supernaturally mandated into the culture they develop. According to Terpstra and David (1985: 5), "Culture is a learned, shared, compelling, interrelated set of symbols whose meaning provides a set of orientations for members of a society. These orientations, taken together, provide solutions to problems that all societies must solve if they are to remain viable." This definition is used in the current paper.

2.2. Cambodia's Cultural Values

Cambodia has undergone various political changes and societal structures since the end of the colonial period. Since the Khmer Rouge period in particular (1975-9), the images used to describe Cambodia now generally involve mass suffering, refugees dependent on handouts for survival, victims of bombings and mines, corruption and the land of 'Killing Fields' and the 'Khmer Rouge genocide.' This is very problematic both for the Cambodians wishing to establish businesses in their own country and in overseas interests wishing to establish organizations within the country. Not only are there the problems of lack of business infrastructure but there are many deeper and often unstated problems of the trauma suffered by Cambodians and the damage inflicted upon Cambodian cultural values. Cambodia has been constructed under various values such as:

- From Brahmanism to Buddhism: Brahmanism was dominant in Cambodia until the sixth century CE until it was gradually replaced by Theravada Buddhism (Steinberg, 1959). Although Buddhism is now considered to be the religion of all ethnic Khmers, this is a Buddhism that is thoroughly intermingled with pre-existing animist and Brahmanistic practices and concepts. The two traditions vary in important ways: the spread of Buddhist ideology progresses through written scriptures and the formal organization of the Sangha, while animism spreads informally and orally on a face-to-face basis. Further, Buddhism appears to be part of a much more gentle tradition compared with what has been described as "... a basis for elite megalomania" associated with Brahmanism (Bit, 1991).

- Patriarchies: in common with most cultures, Khmer society is patriarchal in nature (Ledgerwood, 1995). While there is some flexibility in practice in society, there remain quite strong gendered distinctions concerning domestic labour both within and outside the house. In Khmer village life, men perform the external chores related to agriculture (e.g. fishing, ploughing, threshing rice, repairing tools, caring for cattle and livestock), while women took care of shopping and food preparation, child and elderly care, maintaining the house and caring for household vegetable plots. While men worked as bread-winners by working outside the house, it is the women who actually kept the money and purchased daily items in markets. Men are considered to be the heads of their households.

- Post-colonial period: the colonial period bound much more tightly the emergent Cambodian plantation economy into international market relationships and caused Cambodian (and indeed migrant Chinese and Vietnamese) workers to become part of the global division of labour and network of productions (Slocomb, 2007). The French colonial period (1863-1954) was ended with the defeat at Dien Bien Phu and evacuation of remaining French forces from the Indochinese region; Cambodia was placed under the control of King Norodom Sihanouk. The French period had featured institutional development in terms of ecclesiastical bureaucracies, systematic governance procedures and boundary determination but little took place to promote for Khmer people the educational and medical systems, nor to develop the infrastructure for national purposes.

- Post communist: after a lengthy and depressing history of war with neighbouring countries, civil war, a genocidal regime with the installment of communist system, Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge adopted the Maoist version of Russian Marxist-Leninism and this was in time supplanted by Vietnamese communism after the 1979 invasion. The upheavals that took place during this period turned Khmer society upside down and led to unparalleled misery and destruction (Chandler, 2005).

- Rice growing country: agricultural activities remain concentrated on subsistence rice growing with one harvest a year and agricultural methods that are largely traditional. This is a totally different lifestyle from those of the people living in the cities (Rigg, 1997: 155-69). Urban people are more individualist-oriented because they left from home in the early morning to go to their workplace and came back in the evening. Everyone focused on her or his own activities. Sometimes they did not know their neighbours since they did not have any time to communicate with each other.

- Multi-cultural influences: the indigenous people of Cambodia are the Khmer - the so-called 'true' Cambodians - who comprise 85-90 percent of the total population and speak a language unrelated to the other major languages of the region (i.e. Thai, Laotian and Vietnamese). The largest ethnic minority population is the Vietnamese, whose numbers range between 500,000 and a million. However, those numbers are hotly contested for political reasons concerning representation, taxation and so forth.

- Changes in Cambodian culture: the cultural drift of Cambodia towards paternalism, autocratic rule and ritualistic behavior, most noticeable in the centuries of direct Indian influence, set the course for succeeding cultural development. The changes had the outcome of intensifying a sense of insecurity among a population under foreign control and encouraging a further retreat into a fantasy view of past cultural achievements. On a more positive side, aspects of the culture received the first exposure to a modernizing process and resulted in new agricultural developments, public works, schools, and the scholarly revelations of a cultural history. Nevertheless, longstanding prejudices against people with disabilities, for example, tend to keep them marginalized from mainstream activities (see e.g. Gartrell, 2010). A similar situation exists for people from ethnic minorities for whom Khmer is a second language and so they face particular problems in joining the community and labour force (Gregerson, 2009).

2.3. Concept of Organizational Learning

The term 'learning organization' is often used interchangeably with the term 'organizational learning.' However, there are differences, notably that organizational learning describes certain types of activity that take place in an organization while a learning organization is a particular type of organization in and of itself (Tsang, 1997). The difference is that between 'becoming' and 'being.' Organizational learning is a process by which organizations can become learning organizations through promoting learning in a conscious, systematic, inclusive and synergistic fashion.

The concept of a *learning organization* is defined by Garvin (1998) as 'an organization skilled at creating, acquiring and transferring knowledge, and at modifying its behaviour to reflect new knowledge and insights; and by Pedler, Burgoyne and Boydell (1997) as 'an organization that facilitates the learning of all its members and consciously transforms itself and its context. These definitions recognize that a learning organization involves two key elements. First, the organization must be effective at gathering and creating relevant knowledge, storing it for future use, and disseminating it through the hierarchy, engaging everyone in the process of learning. Second, the organization must be able to evaluate the worth of that knowledge and be prepared to act on it, as appropriate, to stimulate and guide change. This second aspect of learning is important: the benefits of knowledge can only be realized when used effectively to inform and direct the organization's behaviour (Ferguson & Ferguson., 2000: 216). A learning organization is, therefore, more than an organization with a distinctive capability related to learning. It is one in which learning is endemic and one that can evaluate the worth of the knowledge it has created, draw out its implications and capitalize on it to influence its path. A learning organization is an organization skilled at creating, acquiring and transferring knowledge and at modifying behaviour to reflect new knowledge and insights (Garvin, 1993). Fundamentally, it is one which can be identified, diagnosed and replicated or created along systematic and scientific lines (Salisbury, 2010). However, some recent strands of thinking about the subject reject the original linear approach of Senge and seek to replace it with generative complexity approaches (Jörg, 2010).

Why should there be learning organizations? Why do we need them? There are at least two interrelated reasons (Hitt, 1995). Revans (1982) argued that learning must exceed environmental change or else the organization may shrivel and die. Second, there is the quest for excellence. Stakeholders are motivated and inspired by the search for improvement and this, itself, is necessary for survival for organizations that do not evolve will also face the threat of destruction. As economies move towards knowledge intensive industries as a means of achieving and sustaining competitiveness, the need for organizations to learn also intensifies (Liao *et al.*, 2010; Stancu and Balu, 2009).

To evaluate learning abilities in organizations, Alas and Sharifi (2002) grouped indicators of organizational learning through cluster analysis. This resulted in two clusters, the cluster of individual learning and the second

the cluster collective learning. Individual learning requires that people should be motivated to take initiative and make changes in their own working patterns, as well as being aware of the vision and goals of the organization involved (*ibid.*). Collective learning, on the other hand, involves staff willing to work together to improve connectivity and interactive relations. Instead of using the term ‘collective learning,’ this study uses “team/group learning” because it explains the meaning of the term more clearly.

The literature on Cambodian culture (as for the cultures of other countries) indicates certain specific features which are pertinent to Khmer society. These would not be applicable to all other societies. Hence, it is reasonable to assume that models concerning how to build learning organizations would need to be adapted to some extent by their application in Cambodia. The relevant ways in which this might be manifested concern the relationships between national cultural values, individual learning abilities and team learning abilities. It is the interrelationship between these variables that are used as the hypotheses examining the research questions in this paper.

3. Methodology

This section discusses the methodology used to conduct data collection and data analysis. This study uses a mix of *exploratory* and *formal* methods suitable for answering research questions which are considered to be descriptive hypotheses (Cooper & Schindler, 2006). It is based on both primary and secondary data sources. Before conducting the primary data collection, it was necessary to conduct secondary data collection which involves a literature review on theories and concepts as well as past research studies, and to get a clear problem statement of the topic of investigation. The secondary data of this research were collected from journal publications, reports from the United Nations (UN), non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and donor agencies, books, internet, research papers, theses, conference and other sources of information. The quantitative research methods and interview questions were used to collect primary data. In-depth interviews were conducted randomly among managers in order to explore the current situations of the organizations. Survey research was employed to generate data from the primary source which was all employees of all organizations throughout the country. Since the population of the study is large, the authors decided to restrict the survey to employees whose workplaces were located in Phnom Penh, the capital city of Cambodia.

The literature review led to the conceptual framework where the independent variable is national culture, and individual learning and team learning (which are the items of learning capabilities) are the dependent variables. This study proposes hypotheses, which are also presented in null format:

Ho1a: National culture variable does not have a significant relationship with the individual learning variable.

Ho1b: National culture variable does not have a significant relationship with the team learning variable.

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between the individual learning variable and the team learning variable.

The structured questionnaire were distributed to more than 2,000 people working in private organizations and NGOs located in Phnom Penh and the number of completed and returned questionnaires was 417. Inspection of completed questionnaires suggested there were no insuperable problems with non-respondent bias. The data were analyzed by hypothesis testing by SPSS analysis using tools such as descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, factor analysis and regression. The reliability of questionnaire responses, calculated by Cronbach’s Alpha, was 0.895, which is above the acceptable value of 0.70 (Zikmund, 2000). The respondents were from 18 international NGOs (INGOs), 8 local NGOs (LNGOs), four private organizations and one multinational corporation (MNC).

Various assumptions have been made about the statistical analysis and the data gathered. Investigation of the data did not reveal any systematic asymmetric bias and it is known that techniques such as factor analysis, correlation and linear techniques demonstrate a robust nature under such circumstances (Vasu, 1979). Plot analysis of predictor variables further alleviated concerns about homoscedasticity. Testing for the presence of multicollinearity involved examination of $1 - r^2$ (in which the latter is the measure of regressions against all other independent variables). The tolerance level (selected arbitrarily but conventionally at 0.20) was not violated. Further tests were taken to ensure that the quality of data and analysis were as high quality as might be reasonably expected.

Factor analysis can be a powerful tool for content validity in addition to data reduction. The strategy in this case was to formulate an exploratory model (principal components with varimax rotation) so as to facilitate interpretation and to help in interpreting scale validity of the constructs produced (Desselle, 2005).

4. Analysis of Findings

The questionnaire was answered by 417 respondents, of whom 144 (34.5%) were Cambodian, 19 (4.6%) Asian, 20 (4.8%) Australian, 46 (11.0%) American, 72 (17.3%) European and 116 (27.8%) wished not to tell their nationality.

The majority of leaders were Cambodian (33.1%) followed by European (16.5%), American (16.1%), Australian (4.3%), and Asian (3.8%). The remaining 26.1% did not answer the question, perhaps because some respondents might not know the exact nationality of their leader and some ignored this question.

The majority of superiors, 247, were Cambodian (59.2%), 34 European (8.2%), 23 American (5.5%), 7 Australian (1.7%), 5 Asian (1.2%), 2 African (0.5%) and 99 respondents did not answer the question for unknown reasons.

The study found that 49 respondents answered that their organization did not have any other offices; 33 gave the answer of one office; 29 said 2-5 offices; 6-9 offices for 12 respondents; 10 and more offices for 33 respondents and 261 did not answer. The non-responses for this answer might be because respondents did not belong to an international organization.

The number of offices of local organizations was divided into four rankings: 33.1% had 1 office; 11.0% answered 2-5 offices; 2.6% said 6-9 offices; 2.2% said their organizations had 10 and more offices spread around the country; 51.1% declined to give an answer.

It was found that there were 213 men, 193 women and 11 respondents who preferred not to be identified. The majority of respondents were aged from 21-30 years (67.6%), followed by those aged 31-40 years (20.4%); 41-50 years (6.2%); 51-60 years (1.9%); less than 20 years (0.7%); over 60 years (0.2%) and 2.9% did not answer. The result showed that there were 283 respondents (67.9%) with an undergraduate degree; 72 respondents (17.3%) held a graduate degree; 22 respondents (5.3%) had high school education followed by 12 (2.9%) with lower secondary education; 7 respondents (1.7%) had passed through vocational school; 2 (0.5%) had doctoral degrees and 1 (0.2%) had only primary school education. 18 respondents (4.3%) did not provide an answer. The position of respondents was divided into 5 groups: there were 6 directors (1.4%), 51 managers (12.2%), 27 supervisors (6.5%), 289 general staff (69.3%), 28 other positions (6.7%), and 16 no answer. The majority of the respondents had 3.1-5 years working experience (39.1%) followed by 1.1-3 years (26.1%), 5.1-7 years (8.2%), over 10 years (7.9%), fewer than 1 or 1 year (7.2%), 7.1-10 years (7.0%), and no answer of 4.6%. The experience of respondents in their current organization was 3.1-5 years experience (30.9%), followed by fewer than 1 or 1 year (30.2%), 1.1-3 years (28.3%), 7.1-10 years (2.6%), 5.1-7 years (2.2%), over 10 years (1.2%) and 4.6% did not respond.

4.1. Constructs

- *National culture* was constructed by 10 questions where the average result of $\bar{X} = 3.53$, $SD = 1.03$. The score fell in the range 3.41 – 4.20, which leads to the conclusion that national culture influenced the learning in the organization. Among the 10 variables, the respondents strongly agreed that “learning is believed to be very important in their culture” with $\bar{X} = 4.43$, $SD = 0.69$.

- *Individual learning*: Respondents agreed with individual learning in every aspect with the overall score ($\bar{X} = 3.65$, $SD = 0.926$) where the respondents agreed to all the factors except for a neutral response to question C-7, which stated that people are rewarded for learning ($\bar{X} = 3.03$, $SD = 1.164$).

- *Team learning*: Respondents agreed with team learning in every aspect with the overall score ($\bar{X} = 3.61$, $SD = 0.816$), in that the respondents agreed with all the factors except for a neutral response to question D-5, which stated that teams/groups are rewarded for their achievements as a team/group ($\bar{X} = 3.27$, $SD = 0.993$).

Factor analysis was used in order to reduce the number of components of each variable. All items were factor analyzed using principal component analysis method followed by Varimax rotation.

- *National culture variable* is composed of 4 factors named (1) importance of learning, (2) face saving and long term relationship, (3) favour wealth rather than education, and (4) do not favour change.

- *Individual learning variable* is composed of three factors, namely (1) rewards and supports for learning individually, (2) employee development and sharing to learn individually, and (3) employee relationship.

- The *Team learning variable* was composed of one factor named team/group learning.

The regression method was used in order to test between the interval variables in order to evaluate the null hypotheses, which can be rejected when the significance level of 0.05 is reached.

Prior to hypothesis testing and according to statistical principles, it was decided to factor analyze all variables, which produced the following results:

National culture

Thirteen variables concerning national culture were reduced to four components.

- *Importance of learning* results from the following statements: “learning is believed to be very important; males and females have equal opportunity to receive education; and young people are encouraged to challenge senior people;”

- *Face saving and long term relationship* results from the following statements “ teacher/instructor is the one we should show respect to rather than challenging them with questions; face saving is very important; people believe in long-term relationships;”

- *Favour wealth rather than education* results from the following statements “people are encouraged to share knowledge; people value rich people more than educated people;”

- *Disfavour change* results from the following statements “change initiatives are viewed as inappropriate; senior people are believed to have more knowledge and skills relative to their juniors.”

Individual learning

Thirteen variables concerning individual learning resulted in three components.

- *Rewards and supports for learning individually* is summarized from the following statements: “in my organization, people can get money and other resources to support their learning; in my organization, people are given time to support learning; in my organization, people are rewarded for learning; in my organization, people give open and honest feedback to each other;”

- *Employee development and sharing to learn individually* is summarized from the following statements “in my organization, people openly discuss mistakes in order to learn from them; in my organization, people identify skills they need for future work tasks; in my organization, people help each other learn; in my organization, people listen to others’ views before speaking;”

- *Employee relationship* is summarized from the following statements “in my organization, people are encouraged to ask ‘why’ regardless of rank; in my organization, whenever people state their view, they also ask what others think; in my organization, people treat each other with respect; in my organization, people spend time building trust with each other.”

Team learning

Six questions in team learning were reduced to only one component which is named *team learning*.

After factor analysis of all variables, a regression technique was utilized to test the relationship among the variables. The result showed that national culture is not related to individual learning but it is related to team/group learning (Tables 1.1 and 1.2). This result is different from what had been anticipated.

4.2. Hypothesis 1

The national culture (importance of learning, face saving and long-term relationship, favour wealth rather than education) did not affect individual learning because all factors had significance levels above 0.05. The model summary represented the strength relationship ($R = 0.104(a)$) between national culture and individual learning as being very low. The ANOVA tests the acceptability of the hypothesis from the statistical perspective and it was found that the significance value of the F statistic is 2.404 and Sig is 0.122(a) which is higher than the significance level of 0.05. From this it is concluded that no relationship between national culture and individual learning has been identified.

The national culture (importance of learning, face saving and long-term relationship, favour wealth rather than education) affected the organizational culture because all factors had significance levels below 0.05. The model summary represented the strength relationship ($R = 0.276(a)$) between national culture and individual learning as being very high. The ANOVA table tests the acceptability of the hypothesis from the statistical perspective and it was found that the significance value of the F statistic is 18.976 and Sig is 0.000(a), which is less than the significance level of 0.05. The null hypothesis (Ho1b) was thereby rejected. So it is concluded that there is a relationship between national culture and team learning.

4.3. Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 (H2): there is a significant relationship between individual learning and team learning.

Null Hypothesis 2 (Ho2): there is no significant relationship between individual learning and team learning.

Individual learning (rewards and support for learning, employee development and sharing and employee relationship) affected team/group learning because all factors had significance of less than 0.05. The model summary represented the strength relationship ($R = 0.673(a)$) between organizational culture and teams/group

learning as being very high. The ANOVA table tests the acceptability of the hypothesis from the statistical perspective and it was found that the significance value of the F statistic is 204.297 and Sig is 0.000(a), which is less than the significance level of 0.05. The null hypothesis (Ho2) was rejected. Thus it could be concluded that there is a relationship between individual learning and team/group learning.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

The researchers expected that there would be strong relationships between national culture and individual learning. In Cambodian culture, people were taught to be obedient and polite and to be followers rather than leaders. However, the results observed might be caused by the presence of a group of young respondents with high levels of education. Their behaviour may have changed over time and they may have different ways of looking at their own culture since they were trying to adjust to the competitive world by capturing new knowledge and skills perceived as important and appropriate. Argyris (1990) warns that culture can either block learning and change or it can stimulate learning; this study revealed that national culture did not support individual learning. In this regard, it is noted that the methodology employed seemed to represent a useful and helpful means of investigating the research question. Factor analysis, when employed prudently, can be a powerful investigative tool for content validity verification and also for interpretation of otherwise complex data sets and interactions.

The second hypothesis was also supported. There was a significant relationship between individual learning and team/group learning. This means that the result is uniform with the expectations of the researchers. It is assumed that organizations are composed of groups of individuals. Once each individual staff member of the organization is rewarded and supported for their learning behaviour, they tend to have a stronger career and skill development. At the same time, they seem to have good relationship toward each other which creates a favourable knowledge-sharing and learning environment. Reward structures and schemes certainly make a difference by affecting motivations and hence shaping employees' learning orientation and the amount of effective learning that take place. Various studies point to the importance of crafting flexible and creative rewards for learning, and offering a mix of monetary and non-monetary rewards to cater for individual needs and performance (Pedler, Burgoyne, and Boydell, 1997). Some interviewees claimed that their organizations have policies to increase the salary for the staff who could achieve their performance and learning expectations. They further argued that most staff were happy and were willing to learn and share their knowledge with other staff. They seemed to have good relationships with each other and this contradicts the idea that sharing is bad because another person might learn their duty and then supplant them.

Challenging, questioning and holding dissenting views are discouraged, conflict is seen as bad and loss of face is to be avoided at all costs. This is uniform with the uncertainty avoidance aspect of Geert Hofstede (1991). In this kind of society, people will learn to repeat what is believed to be appropriate and will not try to do anything different. This leads to low levels of creativity and learning. This concept is not only promoted by Buddhism but it is believed also to have a Confucian influence. Confucianism arrived in Cambodia via Chinese migrants and has had a strong impact on the behaviour of some individuals. According to Chang (2007: 190), Confucianism had previously discouraged people from taking up professions like business and engineering as well as developing creativity and entrepreneurships. However, some historians raised positive aspects of Confucianist cultural values such as "thrift, investment, hard work, education, organization, and discipline." This is indicated by the huge economic development in China, Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore, Korea, Taiwan and so on where Confucianism was practiced. Society is pluralistic.

Some 90% of Cambodian people work in rice production and have faced the stereotyped accusation of being lazy but Chang (2007), argued that people in East Asia in the past lived comparatively comfortable lives based on fertilized land and favourable weather. Today, where globalization and economic crisis affect every part of the globe, while climate change is increasingly causing natural disasters in the region, East Asian people have tended to work harder and to become more long-term oriented than their counterparts in the West. The accusation of laziness is revealed as false as people work hard when given an incentive to do so since economic development affects culture more than the other way round. It is shown, for example, that Cambodian migrants work harder and are more successful when they stay in a society where there is intensive competition to survive.

This research generally supports the view that progress toward the learning organization paradigm is incremental and long-term, rather than being an overnight metamorphosis. The findings, consistent with research findings in different contexts, support this observation, by pointing to sketchy patterns of progress vis-à-vis different dimensions of the construct. Learning should not be left to chance or overlooked but rather valued and integrated

into the organization and the work life of the employee. The process has to be constantly reinvigorated and reinforced with respect to different learning organization dimensions and considered more of a journey.

6. Recommendations

After analyzing the results of the study, recommendations will be suggested at three different levels:

6.1. Individual Level

Each individual staff member in the organization is an important asset for success because they are equipped of with organizational tacit and explicit knowledge. Each employee is recommended to:

- *Be open to new culture* other than their own as their own, which instructs them to be a follower rather than a leader. In Cambodian culture, challenging questions and raising questions during meeting or to senior people are viewed as inappropriate and impolite forms of behaviour. Thus, this cultural value should be left behind because it could block the learning capability of each individual.

- *Be ready to learn*: learning could be done formally and informally. Employees could have new knowledge from sharing discussions in formal or in non-formal meetings, via the intranet, from attending training, seminars, conferences or workshops. They could learn in group or individually. Hence, continuous learning and learning behaviour are crucial to prepare the organization for becoming a learning organization.

- *Be ready to accept changes*: change is the first way to improve the current situation of the organization. Change should be viewed positively.

6.2. Organizational Level

In addition to individuals contributing to preparation towards becoming a learning organization, greater attention should be given to organizational culture and to creating a strong feeling of solidarity. It is to be noted that leadership commitment is very important. If the leader is not willing to strengthen the learning capability of the organization, all initiatives are likely to fail.

In order to obtain ideas from the grass-roots level, managers should encourage direct communications between the highest and lowest levels of organizations, delegate authority to lower levels in organizations and create an atmosphere where people are not afraid to make mistakes. Peoples' well-being should be emphasized more and their good performance rewarded. In such conditions, people tend to be proud of their organization and concentrate more on the goals of the organization than on their own needs.

Most organizations in Cambodia follow traditional bureaucratic structures, focusing on orderliness and vertical lines of communications. Today, many managers realize that orderliness is not sufficient even though it may remain necessary. It is apparent that an organizational structure must be designed for both stability and flexibility. The learning organization should incorporate both dimensions by establishing dynamic networks within the vertical structure. This should help foster a participative decision making culture amongst the employees.

Apart from this investment in software, the leader should consider hardware investment such as workplace design and technology (internet and intranet installation). This investment is necessary for knowledge sharing among staff members both inside and outside the organization.

To promote the values and goals of the organization through an informal structure, managers can organize out-of-work activities and encourage people to get to know each other's personal lives and activities. It gives people a better understanding of how to communicate with each other and a willingness to discuss important matters with each other. They also then tend to help each other in job-related problems.

A learning and reward policy should be initiated in order to enable and encourage employees to obtain continuous learning. At the same time, it is necessary to have a performance measurement system such as the balanced scorecard approach because it is designed to pull people towards the overall vision. However, it is not recommended to use only one measurement technique because no single measure can provide a clear performance target.

In term of gender disparity, female employees should be encouraged to voice their ideas in any strategic planning and should to be considered as potential members of the management team. Both masculine and feminine values have a great deal to offer and, by extension, both women and men have something to learn from working together.

The results of the current research support the developmental view of organizational learning that there should be more time set aside in order to develop relationships, which is a necessary basis for organizational learning. At the same time, it is not guaranteed that at some stage every organization will turn into a learning organization;

it depends on various characteristics and factors. Among these, one that is particularly important is the personnel policy of the organization. This policy should enable the organization to retain highly skilled specialists for a longer period in the organization, keep their level of creativity and activity high and convince them of the need to cooperate with other members of the organization.

6.3. National Level

At the national level, it is the task of the government to take action in order to prepare itself to foster a learning society. The government should provide proper public services, in particular educational services in both the formal and informal sectors. Citizens are supposed to have the right to free basic education until high school level. This is not the case for the Cambodian people because public education is very poor in quality and also high in quantity. For example, in a classroom in the city, there are over or about 100 students and most of them are thereby unable to concentrate on the lecture in the classroom. It is necessary for pupils to take out of school tutorial classes which are very costly just so they can receive the mandated education. Only children from medium and high class families can of course afford these private tutorial classes. On the other hand, in rural areas, there is a lack of teachers. A teacher sometimes single-handedly manages classes from grade 1 to 6 at primary school level. It is very difficult for pupils to learn well in such an environment.

Moreover, the government does not have any schools for students who wish to study outside regular hours because of poor infrastructure. Most schools both in urban and rural areas do not have electricity. For this reason and because of safety issues, the government does not have a policy to provide night time schooling. Apart from electricity, some schools do not have proper toilets and this limits the number of female students. Some female students cannot go to school because they do not feel secure. The government's task is to provide proper facilities to ease the learning of each citizen. Cambodian culture tends to give more favour to men rather than women. The government should take serious initiative to involve women in societal development because excluding them is a waste of precious assets and qualified labour.

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