Work-Related Self-Directed Learning Practices among Executives in a Private Company in Indonesia: A Comprehensive Understanding

Ida Juliana Hutahutu

Doctor of Philosophy
(Human Resource Development)
2016
Work-Related Self-Directed Learning Practices among Executives in a Private Company in Indonesia: A Comprehensive Understanding

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of a Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Human Resource Development)

Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SARAWAK
2016
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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my late father, Syahrul Hutasuhut, for his legacy to be always striving for the better life in this world and hereafter.

To the most loving mother in the world, Nanni Murni Harahap.

To my lovely husband, Adi Dewanto who makes me fly, spread my wings exploring this world yet ensure that I would come home for his love and caring.

To my amusing children, Raden Satria Pambudi Dewanto and Raden Rara Dinda Aisyah, who makes me stronger undergoing my challenging journey, their patience and assurance were steadfast.

To My Sister, Lola Novita Hutasuhut and Brother, Faisal Rizal Hutasuhut for being there for me.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My deepest gratitude and appreciation to my supervisors, Dr. Sopian Bujang and Associate Professor Dr. Shahren Ahmad Zaidi Adruce, for their guidance, advice, motivation and all the hours patiently spent in scholarly guidance throughout my challenging journey of this doctoral study.

A special thanks to Mrs. Indira Ratna, my former Manager that have paved the way for me to get the opportunity to carry out this research at the Company X. Many thanks to the Management of Company X who are very helpful by allowing me to interview quite a number of their staffs who are identified as prominent in practicing work-related self-directed learning (WRSDL). A remarkable tribute to the thirty participants who can not be named one by one, who are very cooperative in sharing their experience in carrying out WRSDL.

Many thanks also address to two Professional Architects who are very prominent in self-directed learning and who unconditionally agreed to participate in the pilot studies and provide very constructive feedback and suggestion to improve the interview guideline.

A special word of thanks goes to Dr. Zaiton Hasan who is very supportive and helpful to guide me when sometimes I was lost in the middle of my long journey and Dr. Surena Sabil for her support and sense of empathy towards this long journey.

Last but not least, a special word of thanks goes to Dr. Mohd. Azhar B. Abd. Hamid and Dr Hasbee Hj Usop for their thorough and constructive feedback which aims to improve this thesis.
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate WRSDL practices among staff and managers from various fields in order to get in-depth understanding and ways on how to cultivate it in the organization. The research design of this study was done by using qualitative method in order to obtain answers to “what”, “why” and “how” questions in getting an in-depth understanding of WRSDL phenomenon. It was conducted in the biggest motorcycle-manufacturing company in Indonesia where improvement and innovation had always been the central issues and become a way of life ingrained among employees. A total of thirty staff and managers were purposefully selected to participate in this study in sharing their experience in carrying out their WRSDL. Participants were interviewed using semi-structured questions. These participants were selected based on the criteria of having a minimum one year working period with the current company and perceived as prominent in practicing WRSDL by their supervisor. The data collected were analyzed using content analysis approach. The results of this study indicated several driving factors and barriers that influence the emergence of WRSDL. Besides that, it has identified the preferred learning methods used by the self-directed learners and several benefits for the employees and organization. All in all, this study provides a deeper understanding of WRSDL and has offered good contributions and recommendations to the body of knowledge, practitioners, as well as for the future research.
**Amalan Pembelajaran Kendiri yang Berkaitan dengan Pekerjaan di kalangan Eksekutif di sebuah Perusahaan Swasta di Indonesia: Pemahaman yang Menyeluruh**

**ABSTRAK**

Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk menyiasat amalan WRSDL di kalangan kakitangan dan pengurus dari pelbagai bidang kerja untuk mendapatkan pemahaman yang mendalam serta menemukan cara-cara bagaimana untuk membudayakan pembelajaran ini di dalam organisasi. Kajian ini dijalankan dengan menggunakan kaedah kualitatif untuk mendapatkan jawapan dari soalan "apa" dan "bagaimana" bagi mendapatkan pemahaman yang mendalam tentang fenomena WRSDL. Kajian ini dijalankan di sebuah syarikat pembuatan motosikal terbesar di Indonesia di mana penambahbaikan dan inovasi sentiasa menjadi isu utama dan menjadi satu cara hidup yang berakar umbi di kalangan pekerja. Seramai tiga puluh kakitangan dan pengurus telah sengaja dipilih untuk mengambil bahagian dalam kajian ini untuk berkongsi pengalaman mereka dalam menjalankan WRSDL. Para peserta telah ditemuramah menggunakan soalan separa berstruktur. Para peserta tersebut perlu memenuhi kriteria iaitu mempunyai tempoh minimum bekerja satu tahun dengan syarikat semasa dan dilihat sebagai menonjol dalam mengamalkan WRSDL oleh penyelia mereka. Data yang dikumpul dianalisis dengan menggunakan pendekatan analisis kandungan. Hasil kajian ini menunjukkan beberapa faktor pendorong (driving factors) dan halangan (barriers) yang mempengaruhi kemunculan WRSDL. Selain itu, kajian ini mengenal pasti kaedah pembelajaran yang lebih disukai yang digunakan oleh pelajar kendiri dan juga beberapa manfaat pembelajaran ini terhadap pekerja-pekerja dan organisasi. Secara umumnya kajian ini memberi kefahaman yang lebih mendalam tentang WRSDL dan mengenal pasti beberapa sumbangan yang baik dan cadangan kepada teori (body of knowledge), pengamal dan juga untuk kajian akan datang yang akan dijelaskan secara terperinci kemudian.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

This introductory chapter presents an overview of the study. It includes the background of study, statement of the problem, research purpose, the significance of the study and operational definition of terms.

1.2. Background of the Study

In the 21st century, globalization, tight competition, dynamic and uncertain eco-sociopolitical circumstances have brought drastic changes to the way organizations conduct their business in order to survive. Moreover, the advancements of technology and the acceleration of new knowledge has spurred the ability to react, learn, and change. In fact, being creative and innovative are now of considerable significant competence for an organization (Bates & Khasawneh, 2005; Hiemstra, 2008). Guglielmino (2008) stated that in order to remain competitive and ensure long-term profitability, organizations need to expand demand for learning and change. Senge (1990), in his book The Fifth Discipline, also asserted that the ability to learn faster than the competitors may be the only sustainable competitive advantage.

Organizations are accepting their employees as the brain-ware, which enables the organizations to respond quickly and effectively to the rapid change. There is no doubt that learning is very important in resulting improvement or innovative product or services. Learning is becoming a core demand in order to acquire, manage and create new knowledge, skills and attitude in order to ensure the ability to produce the best and the most needed
products or services. To keep pace with the drastic demands of the job change, workers need to be more independent in their approach to learning (Cross, 2006).

These global circumstances have brought changes into the way individuals do their work as well as affecting the way they learn in the workplace (Hashim, 2008). Many organizations have begun to change the way they develop the competencies of their human resources. They make great cuts to their structural hierarchies that brought changes to the way the employees work and being supervised. There are no tall hierarchical structures where the supervisor closely monitors and directs the subordinates. Management plays the role as the partner in developing the staff, empower them to improve their competencies and strive to perform based on the self-direction so that they have the passion for the work and to derive fulfillment from it (Thomas, 2000).

With these circumstances, employees at all levels are required to change their mindset about the way they develop their competencies. They need to realize that organizations require people who are not just well aware of the importance of learning but they must also have initiative and responsibility to take learning (Garger, 1999). This circumstance also forces employees to keep up-dated, hence again employees must continue their learning to remain competent. Employees should strive to be among the fastest to get the information and process it creatively to create new knowledge. In sum, employees should be able to capture knowledge faster than before due to technological advancements (Cross, 2006; Smith 2001).

Employees are recognized as adult learners who have natural self-initiative to learn (Cross, 2006; Knowles 1975). A common label assigned to this approach of learning is self-directed learning (SDL) which is defined by Knowles (1975) as a process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning,
choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes. Each individual needs to empower themselves as self-directed learners in order to meet the demands of the rapidly changing workplace (Guglielmino & Guglielmino, 2006). Knowles (1975) added that employees who are aware of the importance of learning will be more responsible for their learning and they will voluntarily spend more time to learn. Hashim (2008) in her study found that workers will be more self-directed in their learning when they know the value of the knowledge they learned. Therefore, no doubt that SDL is important as a tool or asset for the organizational survival and success.

There are several disadvantages of training programs that are considered less appropriate in answering the needs of a specific and urgent learning (Guglielmino, 2008). Training has been seen as a reactive approach to meet the demand of the up-to-date knowledge (Garger, 1999). SDL appears to hold numerous advantages over traditional employee development strategies such as workshops, classroom-based training, and on-the-job training (Cho & Kwon, 2005). It is increasingly required such a learning method which provide significant outcomes of employees development with the lowest cost. Empirical data from Schultz and Fogarty (2002)’s study found out that the transfer of training rate in 2001, only less than 30 percent of what people learn in training actually transfers to the job, which means 70 percent of training cost is wasted. Weldon and Denny (1994), on the other hand, discovered that 90% of learning occurred on the job as opposed to formal training programs. Although formal training programs have been used as a prevalent strategy for employee development, the majority of training costs have produced disappointing outcomes (Palmer & Smith, 1999). The role of training in changing employee behavior or performance is questionable, and as explained by Rothwell (2002), it was deemed unreliable.

Therefore some scholars believed that the implementation of self-directed learning is crucial for the success of learning organizations in the 21st century (Chien, 2004; Cho &
Kwon, 2005; Guglielmino & Guglielmino, 2001). Many companies are likely to recognize that self-directed learning (SDL) is an essential tool of human resource development (HRD) to increase flexibility in delivering training programs and reducing training costs (Cho & Kwon, 2005). With the availability of human-kind technology that makes learning easier for everyone (Smith, 2001), learning can be conducted when needed, not when it is available. Now everyone can have access to huge information and knowledge resources easily. Guglielmino and Murdick (1997) reported that at least 12% of training costs can be saved with SDL implementation. Approximately 70% of adults’ gain in knowledge occurs through self-directed learning (Cross, 1981). The development of SDL leads to significant savings in the training budget (Cho & Kwon, 2005).

Considering that the literature has provided confirmation that self-directed learning provides a positive impact for the organization (Knowles, 1975), it is very beneficial to study the phenomena of SDL among employees who have grown up in a system where the direction and responsibility of providing lesson learnt and instructional methods of learning commonly in the hands of teachers or instructors, and ignore self-directedness of the learners. Besides, the learners are not trained to demonstrate their initiative to learn in accordance with their interest, to raise questions, to develop and show their own thinking. It is often that this pattern was brought to the workplace context where the employees expecting supervisors to give them detailed guidelines for their work and development programs. Therefore a comprehensive and in-depth research on these phenomena will enrich insight and understanding about SDL and in the end, it is supposed to provide the best ways on how to facilitate and promote the skills and attitudes of self-direction in learning.
1.3. Statement of Problem

A better understanding and perspective of work-related self-directed learning (WRSDL) needs to be reaffirmed in order to cultivate learning in an organization. However, there are many studies that are still trying to find out the factors associated with work related self-directed learning are often producing confusing and contradictory findings (Clardy, 2000; Merriam & Cafarella, 1999). Of the growing literature on the application of self-directed learning into the workplace, many of them tend to be prescriptive; little is known about the types of work-related self-directed learning (Clardy, 2000). It is necessary to identify the types of WRSDL that often occur in order to enhance the emergence of these learning will be taking place. Besides that a clearer definition of WRSDL also need to be proposed.

Furthermore, based on many studies that have been done in this field, researcher identified two classifications of driving factors that influence the emergence of WRSDL, which include intrinsic and extrinsic factors. It is possible where one who is well-known as very self-directed in learning in his/her field, but manifest inconsistency in learning other fields or in other situation which is not in accordance with his/her interests or personal characteristics (Long, 2001).

A more comprehensive view which believe the interaction between intrinsic and extrinsic factors will influence the emergence of WRSDL come from Brocket and Hiemstra (1991), Spear and Mocker (1984), Spear (1988), Foucher (1996) and Kops (1993, 1997). Foucher (1996) recognized that self-directed learning represents a complex phenomenon that is triggered by a variety of internal factors (e.g. interests, aptitudes, etc.), and external factors (e.g. incentives, availability of support, etc.). This indicates that both intrinsic and extrinsic factors and the interaction of these two factors will determine the strength of WRSDL.
emergence. In short, WRSDL is not a phenomenon that “exists or not”, it is something that exists in a continuum.

Knowles (1975) indicated that the self-directed learner is a person who has self-concept as nondependent and active learners; they are motivated by internal incentive such as a need for self-esteem, a desire for satisfaction that will be obtained after achieving something. Kim and Park (2011) believed that motivation is an important factor that effect in self-directed learning. The self-directed learners come to learn more purposefully and with greater motivation than do people who passively wait to be directed by others (Knowles, 1975; Garrison, 1997). Self-directed learners demonstrate a greater awareness and are usually motivated to take responsibility in making learning meaningful and they are able to monitor the whole learning process (Garrison, 1997). Furthermore, personal characteristics such as curiosity and willingness to try new things (Bonk, Lee, Kou, Xu, & Sheu, 2015); motivated and persistent, independent, self-disciplined, self-confident, goal-oriented, able to view problems as challenges, desire to change, and enjoy learning (Taylor, 1995); having confidence, commitment, self-direction, and critical reflection (Brookfield, 1986; Candy, 1988) are essential for self-directed learner. In addition, Guglielmino and Guglielmino (2002) from their study identified that people must possess eight factors to be considered ready to pursue self-directed learning: openness to learning, self-concept as an effective learner, initiative and independence in learning, informed acceptance of responsibility, love of learning, creativity, future orientation, and the ability to use basic study and problem-solving skills. However, studies have shown that the factors above were perceived as too widespread and not focused, therefore they failed to provide a robust understanding of the driving factors of the emergence of WRSDL (Knight, 2012; Damianoff, 2010; Noor Fitriyati, 2009).

According to Kops (1997), there are some of the organizational conditions recognized which could enhance self-directed learning while others diminished it. This is relevant with