

Different Ways Towards the Learning Organization

Palmira Jucevičiene

pjuceviene@yahoo.com

Institute of Educational Studies at Kaunas University of Technology
Donelaicio 20- 402, Kaunas 44236, Lithuania

Abstract

Despite the variety of existing concepts of the learning organization (Pedler, Burgoyne, Boydell, 1989; Senge, 1990; Watkins, Marsick, 1993; Pearn, Roderick, Mulrooney (1995), Hodgkinson, 2000 ir kt.), all of them explain that in such organization the continuous learning takes place on individual, group and organizational levels. Different researchers agree that it is very difficult to achieve the full learning organization. However, their opinions differ regarding the ways of doing it.

The aim of this article is to distinguish several strategies of development towards the learning organization.

The background for such strategies is laid by the critical approach of Poell, Tijmensen and Van der Krogt (1997), Wilson (2006) to the existing concepts of learning organization that is more focused on vision rather than reality. These researchers suggest that the learning organization should „explicitly address the relationship between learning and work, and provide people with possibilities to connect the two in multiple ways“ (Wilson, 2006:107). At the same time, Kline, Saunders (1993), Walton (1999), Martin (2001) give more attention towards the complex processes of liberating and enabling the powers of learning by claiming that these processes of individual and collective learning will *per se* determine the organizational development. This is where two questions can be posed: How to enable the continuous learning on the individual and collective levels? How these emerged powers of learning could be made fit the activities of organization so that this learning enables the continuous improvement of organization?

According to Walton (1999), the organization of different countries develop into the learning organization by choosing one out of two strategic directions:

- a) *Systemic development of learning organization*: the vision of learning organization is conceptualized and the systemic solutions of its implementation are implemented in practice;
- b) The development of learning organization by the principle of „side effect“; in this case, organization first of all takes care of improving its various activities, while the characteristics of learning organization form as a „side effect“.

Both these strategic directions are analyzed in the paper. The first strategy (explicit way of developing the learning organization) is analyzed by presenting the model of learning organization development that was designed by the author of the paper herself (Jucevičiene, 2007). Its validity was tested in practice by developing one of the Lithuanian contemporary manufacturing companies into the learning organization and executing the expert evaluation of this process. The second direction of developing the learning organization (implicit way of learning organization development) is analyzed by going deep into the organizations of different types: a) business and

other work organizations; b) artistic groups (orchestras, choirs, dramas). Based on the results of interviews of conductors of 10 choirs (Jucevičiene, Jucaite, Tamusauskaite, 2007) the characteristics of organizational activities are revealed that naturally without any efforts produce organizational learning in these specific organizations. Particular attention is paid to the so-called „collective interpretation linked by the same line“. It is discussed how this specificity of the activity could be applied in the activities of work organization.