

Changing Unconducive Working Culture in Islamic Higher Education Institution to be Learning Organization

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Abstract - Some Islamic Higher Education Institutions in Indonesia share common problem in leadership and management quality. They need to improve their culture becomes more conducive and healthier culture to increase their capacity to face the challenge in the global world. The purpose of this paper is to analyze how Islamic higher education institutions can be better learning organization by focusing on improving their culture in order to be able to facilitate team learning. What culture that needs to be changed and what leadership style that is appropriate to support the culture change is discussed and suggested. Seniority culture is analyzed as the culture that should be shaped into collegial culture to encourage and motivate the teaching staffs of these Islamic higher education institutions to learn in team and share their vision. Democratic style of Islamic leadership is encouraged to create collegial culture that facilitate team learning. Then, open communication among lecturers and between seniors and juniors lecturers are encouraged by conducting leadership training, out bond training and also conducting a regular discussion forum to share knowledge, skills and expertise among seniors and juniors lecturers.

Keywords: *Changing culture, Seniority, Collegial, Learning Organization*

1. Introduction

Islamic Higher education institutions need a holistic strategy to face the challenge in the global world. The quality of Higher education institution in this majority Moslem country needs to be improved in several aspects such as: in the leadership and management quality, facilities, curriculum, in social service and capacity to prepare young Islamic generation to survive living in the globalization and high technology era.

Based on my experience, and also based on sharing and discussing with several colleagues who are lecturers in several Islamic Universities such as: Yogyakarta state Islamic University, in Tarbiyah and syariah faculty, Walisongo state Islamic University, IPMAFA, and also in Islamic studies (FAI) Unissula, these Islamic higher education institutions share the common problem. We can find the seniority culture, that is the culture in which people are given more respect, more listened and more priority in accessing facilities together in management structure of campus or other facilities because of their seniority.

To compete in the global era, the Islamic higher education institutions need to change this kind of unhealthy culture, seniority culture into collegial culture, in which all member of the organization, whether juniors or seniors lecturers are treating equally.

Wilson (1993) argues that if organization changes the culture, it will be able to solve the majority of current organizational problems. Referring to Wilson's (1993) statement above, it is implied that how powerful the role of culture for the effectiveness of the organization. Therefore, I argued that changing culture from seniority culture into collegial culture in order to become

the better learning organization can increase the capacity Islamic higher education institution to face the challenges in the global era. The purpose of this essay is to explore how to change Islamic Higher education institution culture. Firstly, changing part of the culture from seniority culture into more collegial culture will be discussed. Secondly, the use of power that support the learning organization will be analysed. The next is the suggestion would be proposed to transform Islamic Higher education Institution to be better learning organization.

1.1. Changing organization Culture

Discussing culture changes can be very amusing unless what it means by change is defined. Change in the context of changing culture refer to “planned, more encompassing, and more substantial kinds of changes than those which arise spontaneously within culture. Or as a part of conscious efforts to keep an existing culture vital” and this culture change is mark by “real changes in the behaviour of people throughout the organization (Shafritz, Ott, & Jang, 2005, p. 383). By defining this, the meaning of change culture becomes clear.

There are three types of culture change dimensions. Those are: changing the entire culture of organization (Revolutionary, comprehensive) in which the proportion of changing activities affected by this type of culture change (pervasiveness) is high. The distance between old understanding and the new one, magnitude, is also high. Then the degree of the idea originality (innovativeness) and the duration is variable. In addition, changing subunit within organization only involves low pervasiveness, moderate to high magnitude and the innovativeness in variable. Finally, gradual and incremental changes (cumulative comprehensive reshaping) involves high pervasiveness, moderate magnitude and innovativeness but high duration (Shafritz, et al., 2005). Therefore, what does it mean by changing culture in this paper is the just changing subunit within organization that mentioned above, that is an incremental change, changing Islamic higher education institution culture from seniority culture into more collegial culture.

In addition, what kind of changing culture will be conducted by organization should be considered based on the needs of organization and the time constraining or resources available.

Furthermore, the resistance of changing culture should also be understood and recognised. People are often resistant to change because change can bring not only gains but also loses and the gain are not more certain than the loses (Trice & Beyer, 1993). There are some sources of resistance based on Daft (2010) and Choi and Ruoma, (2010). The first is lack of communication. Poor communication can make organization members are confuse, deny and angry to the changes. In addition, Focusing on cost is also may become the source of resistance. Changes that not focus on cost may not be appreciated by the dean as the manager. There is a syndrome that “it’s not in the budget” consideration. The last is lack of employees motivation because of their past failure innovation.

Then, Managers’ lack of skills to implement changes, and they are who fear of loss

power and also employees who fear to be fired or loss the job. Therefore, it is clear that changing culture is not easy process (Kanter, 1984 cited in Shafritz, et al., 2005).

To solve those problems, managers should be optimistic and create optimistic outlook that changing culture will succeed and can bring the organization to be more effective. The managers should be able to make the member of organization sure that they can get the benefits from the changes. They can do this by providing open communication, training and give opportunity to participate and involve in planning and implementation of changing culture (Shafritz, et al., 2005).

1.2. Learning Organization

Learning organization has been defined in a wide range of literatures (Wang & Ahmed, 2003). It is defined in one literature as “a group of people pursuing common purposes (individual purposes as well) with a collective commitment to regularly weighing the value of those purposes, modifying this when that makes sense, and continuously develop in more effective and efficient ways accomplishing those purposes”(Leithwood and Atiken, 1995 cited in Silins, Zarins, & Mulford, 2002, p. 25). Whereas, the basic meaning of learning organization is “continually expanding its capacity to create its future” (Senge, 1990, p. 14). Thus there is no single accepted definition of learning organization (Silins, et al., 2002).

Senge (2006) describes that there are five disciplines of learning organization. Those are systems thinking, personal mastery, mental models (as individual learning), team learning, and share vision (group learning). Based on Confessore (2007), in order to create learning organization, all of those five disciplines should work together. Then, learning organizations should be structured to value teamwork, collaboration, creativity. He goes on to argue that learning organization is essential and demanding for organization as each member capacity to contribute to the base of knowledge are acknowledged explicitly within organization.

There are several characteristics of Islamic higher education institution as the learning organization. based on the examination of literature, environmental scanning, vision and goals, collaboration, taking initiatives and risks, review, recognition and reinforcement, continuing professional development are characterize Islamic higher education institution as the learning organization (Silins, et al., 2002). In addition, based on Brandt (2003), there are 10 characteristics of the Islamic higher education institution as learning organization. Those are: this institution has incentive structure, has challenging but achievable goal, has member who can identify the stage of organization development, gather suitable information for the purpose of organization, has institutional knowledge base, can exchange information with external source frequently, get feedback for the outcomes, refine their basic process continuously, has supportive culture, and open system. Thus, Islamic higher education institution should have those characteristics in order to be learning organization.

1.3. The constraints to be better learning organization

To be better learning organization, there are several obstacles that might hinder in striving towards this transformation. Firstly, conflicts between informal day- to- day learning and formal learning on training programs. Secondly, the status- sectionalism and use professional specialism to defend the status quo. The next is linking learning with the power and control in relationship with

knowledge and information in organizations. Finally, the conflict which can happen between the openness and challenges needed (to achieve learning and change) and group loyalties and consensus (Salaman and Butler, 1994 cited in Rowley, 1998). Thus, implementing learning organization effectively may be challenged.

Effective communication among teaching staffs and between teaching staff and management is essential for the success of developing better learning organization. Open communication will allow advanced improvement of knowledge and meaning within an organization (Stambaugh, 1995; King, 1996; West III and Meyer, 1997; Nesan and Holt 2002 cited in Sudharatna, 2003). Thus, learning organization will succeed if people within organization communicate effectively each other.

1.4. The Use of Power to Support the Effectiveness of Learning Organization

The learning organization can be created in organic or flatter structure of organization (Walkins and Marsick, 1993 cited in Ortenblad, 2002). This is because teamwork as one of important part in the learning organization can run effectively if there is a democratic power structure. Then, participative leadership is implemented which is supported by secure learning environment (Kriz, 2003). Consequently, there is a need for each organization including Islamic Higher education Institution to move from a hierarchical, top-down leadership structure towards a democratic model or flatter structure where leadership roles are distributed because this model enables teaching staff to have a direct influence on development and change (Hook, 2006; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Keedy (1999) states that a flatter organizational structure will make distributive patterns of leadership possible (Muijs & Harris, 2006; York-Barr & Duke, 2004) Furthermore, Leithwood, Louis, Anderson and Wahlstrom (2004) state that distributed leadership gives greater opportunities for teaching staff to learn from each other. Thus, the Dean should distribute their leadership responsibilities (Danielson, 2006).

2. Discussion and Interpretation

2.1. Culture in Islamic higher education Institution

Islamic Higher education institution has some positive cultures. The main positive culture that can be found is that the Dean and the teaching staff have religious beliefs and values that are reflected in their motivation to work. They work hard not because of salary only but because the sincer intention to reach the love of Alloh. They believe that "teaching or working has the same values as worshipping God". These religious values and beliefs are also reflected in their good manners and behaviours. They try to be a good role model for their students. The way they treat their students is good. One example is in Unissula, the management staffs and the teaching staffs treat their students as the guest who should be treat very well. They respect to their students and they are friendly and eager to help their students whether in academic or non academic problem. Thus, religious values reflected from the Dean and the teaching staff behaviour is included as healthy culture in this organization.

However, there is also unhealthy cultures that also operate in Islamic higher education institution. Some of young and competence lecturers tend to be quite in several meetings as they might feel good just to listen to the seniors

opinion and be followers. No wonder as several of young lecturers were their university students. The junior in unwritten rules, think that they should not show their disagreement publicly or in the meeting. Feeling save if they are quiet in the forum where the junior and senior lecturers meet together. They do not communicate openly like a commonly a colleague. The opinion of senior lecturers are more listened and noted, they also usually have better priority in accessing facilities or in management structure. So, there is a need for more open communication between “seniors” and “junior” lecturers and treating juniors and seniors lecturers equally. Therefore, this unhealthy culture should be changed into positive culture in order to to be better leaning organization and be able to face the challenge in the global era.

In addition, seldom we find a discussion forum between juniors and seniors lecturers in Islamic higher education institution that facilitate them to share their knowledge, skills, experience and expertise. This forum is needed to bridge the open communication between the seniors and the juniors lecturers.

2.2. How to be better learning Organization

As describe in the literature above, environmental scanning, vision and goals, collaboration, taking initiatives and risks, review, recognition and reinforcement, continuing professional development as the characteristics of schools as learning organization (Silins, et al., 2002). Learning organization is one of reform movement that needs changes in organization culture (Shafritz, et al., 2005). Therefore, it is a must for Islamic Islamic higher education Institution to change the unhealthy culture becomes the positive one.

The culture that needs to be changed is seniority culture becomes more collegial culture. To develop this collegial culture, teaching staffs should be encouraged to work collaboratively in team because working in team with their colleagues will improve the capacity of the teaching staff themselves and the department to have the best quality in the education field. In addition, whoever who has an expertise are encouraged to share and even coach their peers. No matter they are junior lecturers or the senior lecturers. In addition, Islamic higher education institution can change the seniority culture becomes collegial culture by facilitating a forum for senior and junior lecturers to discuss to shape their paradigm, share their knowledge, skills, and conducting research together as a team.

Encouraging lecturers from working in isolated classroom become working collaboratively in team and sharing their expertise with their peers. By doing so, Islamic higher education institution might can change the seniority culture into collegial culture, that can improve it's capacity to face the internal and external challenges in the millenium era.

However, collegial culture can only operate if the Dean distribute their power to the lecturers to make decision. The dean should give more autonomy to the lecturers. This is also the way the dean empower lecturers and encourage them work in collegial culture to achieved shared vision. The more lecturers are involved in making decision, the more they feel self of belongingness to their Islamic higher education institution.

In addition, it is revealed in the literature that changing culture is not easy. There might be resistance from senior lecturers as they are difficult to change. Because of that reason, communication among lecturers and between lecturers and the dean are essential. The dean has to create an optimistic outlook that

changing culture is needed and positively impact on the growth of the organization and each individual member of organization.

Furthermore, there should also professional development training such as, leadership training, how to build and work in team training, ESQ training, and also out bond training that involve the several experts might be useful to change senior and junior lecturers mental model. As a result, all members of organization respond positively to the culture changes.

3. Conclusion

Some Islamic higher education institution share common problem, having seniority culture. The seniority culture need to be changed into more collegial culture if Islamic higher education institution want to be better learning organization. A good learning organization has a capacity to face the challenge in the global world. Based on the literatures, changing culture or shaping culture can solve the majority of problems in organization. Therefore, the unhealthy culture, seniority culture in some islamic higher education institution needs to be changed becomes the healthier culture , collegial culture.

Collegial culture may encourage each lecturers and other member of this Islamic higher education institution to work collaboratively in team, share their expertise and may create open communication between all members of organization. Collegial culture facilitate equally each member of organization to be listened their ideas and opinion, to give the same facilities, to share their expertise without considering whether they are seniors or juniors. This culture can make learning team does work in this Islamic higher education institution. Thus it can make this institution transform into better learning organization that have a capacity to face the challenge in the globalization era.

A regular discussion forum that facilitate the senior lecturers and the juniors lecturers to discuss and share their knowledge, research skills and their expertise are suggested. Then, the dean should share their power to facilitate team learning as one of dimension in the learning organization.

Moreover, the resistance in changing culture from lecturers can be solved by providing open communication among lecturers and between lecturers and the dean or management. Then, by giving leadership training, ESQ training , outbond training can also be used to change the seniors and juniors lecturers mental model.

To sum up, changing culture from seniority culture into collegial culture is needed by Islamic Higher Education Institution including Islamic studies department (FAI) in order to be better learning organization that have high capacity to compete in the global world.

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