Learning Organization (LO) and a Critical Look At Undergraduate Tourism Programs in Turkey

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ABSTRACT

Universities, which is the scope of this study, have been acknowledged as learning organizations that pursue "continuous learning" besides "continuous development". The study aims to assess the Schools of Tourism and Hotel Management in Turkey, which are going through a transformational process to become faculties, in terms of the "Learning Organization" (LO) concept. The information that has been obtained is significant as it has revealed the facts about the maturity level of the Schools of Tourism and Hotel Management as "learning organizations".

Keywords: *learning organization; knowing organization, tourism education, tourism programs, continuous learning.*

INTRODUCTION

The modern-day competitiveness has almost made it imperative for organizations not only to deliver an outstanding performance when introducing their products and services, but also to experience various techniques to accomplish that goal. To be successful, organizations must constantly seek ways to learn more, keep up with the most recent changes and innovations, satisfy their stakeholders' expectations and renew themselves.

That is why the idea of 'continuous learning and being a learning organization' has recently gained considerable popularity among most organizations today. As it is very well known, change and adaptation to change can only be achieved within a systematic integrity where all the members of an organization are willing to learn and implement what they have learnt.

As for actualizing that, it is required to have an organizational culture that supports 'continuous learning', a concept that is completed with a series of supportive organizational values; in other words, 'continuous learning' calls for becoming a 'learning organization' (Senge, 1990). Learning Organizations (LO) are described as institutions where individuals continuously develop themselves to achieve the results they desire as well as places where they

learn to learn together all the time. For an institution to reach the level of a "learning organization", it has to pass through three other levels respectively; becoming a "knowing organization", "understanding organization" and "thinking organization". As learning organizations are more likely to acquire knowledge and then share that, implement the change and use the workforce much more efficiently and productively, especially large institutions and big companies are increasingly adopting this concept (McGowan & Madey, 1998).

Since the first time the idea of a 'learning organization' was introduced, a big effort has been made to conceptualize the structure of a learning organization and it has always been considered important if this concept is applicable to different types of organizations or not. However, it is alarming that although much is known about the learning organizations in the private sector (Akova, Yıldırım, & Bayram, 2018; Budak, 2000; Öneren, 2012; Watkins & Kim, 2018) this concept is much less under researched among both government institutions and higher education institutions (Bilir & Arslan, 2016; Kalkan, 2017). Public institutions are generally considered as places where individuals are allowed to learn in line with the government's education policies or the

organization's own goals (Bui & Baruch, 2012). To tell the truth, principally the educational organizations, which are totally people-oriented institutions, must attach great importance to the concept of 'learning organization', too (Celep, 2004; Khamis Ali, 2012).Universities are regarded as learning organizations where people have adopted the notion of continuous learning. Most of them come up with new ideas and then implement those ideas.

Thus, they think that they have accomplished their task. Today, the development and survival of universities depend on to what extents they have adopted change, how they improve their studies in line with their implementations, and in what way they develop competitive strategies. Like the other organizations, universities also employ many methods to improve their practices, services and their competitive advantages. Those methods, which can also be used to perfect administrative implementations like Total Quality Management, are procedures that universities and other government institutions as learning organizations use to improve their services and their competitive advantages (Khamis Ali, 2012). Moreover, universities are already educational institutions that would facilitate the promotion of a 'learning organization culture' and its adoption among their members (Kılıç & Çiftçi, 2010).Developing a critical look – a 'learning organization framework' approach – at the availability of the organizational or structural conditions at the Schools of Tourism and Hotel Management that are going through a fast transformation in their journey to become faculties is essential for drawing attention to the transformation itself as well as the factors that would facilitate this process. The Schools of Tourism and Hotel Management that provide education service must also improve their organizational structure once they become faculties. These schools, which are going through a very fast transformational process to become faculties, also have to have the structural features required to act as learning organizations. In this sense, we have accepted the 'dimensions of the learning organization' as a model and aimed to examine the Schools of Tourism and Hotel Management within this scope.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on Learning Organization

In different fields of tourism industry, various studies have been conducted on 'learning organization'. In a study about tourism and

hospitality management, (Bayraktaroğlu & Kutanış, 2003)identified some factors that contribute to being a learning organization, and they are respectively 'mental transformation', 'being open to new ideas', 'developing an organizational culture' and 'create a suitable learning environment for self-development'. (Kozak, 2004), who did research on efforts to become a 'learning organization', explained that mental models find an area of implementation much more easily in organizations where 'organizational culture' is strong. Furthermore, he added that there is correlation between personal mastery and mental models, and also that it is easier to renew the mental models in organizations where personal mastery is higher.

In another study that questions the relationships between personal learning and organizational culture, it was observed that 'personal learning' relies on being a 'learning organization'(Aksu & Özdemir, 2005). In this study, the parameters of becoming a 'learning organization' have been specified as 'the managers' behaviours', 'co-workers' behaviours', 'having an awareness of the vision and mission', 'acting together as a team', 'accessibility to information', 'seeing the big picture', 'practising what has been learnt', and 'being open to innovation'.

Besides, (Arslantaş & Dikmenli, 2007)identified a strong correlation between the 'learning organization' variable and 'leadership style', 'communication system', 'participative management', 'empowerment of the workforce' and 'information sharing'. In addition to those, Avcı and Küçükusta (2009)inquired the influence of 'organizational learning' on 'organizational commitment' and 'employee turnover' at hospitality institutions.

The findings of the study showed a positive correlation between 'learning at an organizational level' and 'organizational commitment' while a negative correlation was spotted between 'organizational learning' and 'employee turnover'. In another research examining the levels of learning at hospitality institutions, the most significant variable that explains the correlation between 'personal learning' and 'organizational learning' has been identified as 'education and development' dimension (Avcı, Kılınç, & Okumuş 2010).

In another study carried out on the sample of hotels selected from Ankara and Istanbul, it was observed that the hotels had reached the level of a 'learning organization'(Pelit, Keleş, & Çakır, 2015). Saldamlı and Bayar(2016)observed the

relationship between 'being a learning organization' and 'productivity', and they found out that there is a significant correlation between the two. When it comes to universities, Balay (2004)claimed that learning organizations actualized sustainable education reforms. In this regard, it was argued that the organizations that learn right always encouraged their educators to obtain whatever information they needed both from internal and external sources (Bui & Baruch, 2012).

In learning organizations, individuals share their knowledge and competencies with the other members of the organization, because they are aware that everyone is working to achieve the same individual and organizational goals (Marsick & Watkins, 2003).

Learning universities are the creation of a teaching and management staff who always work hard to access new information and who have formed a habit of self-development and continuous learning (Fındıkçı, 1996, p. 15). Garvin (1993) finds most private and state universities unsuccessful as learning organizations.

As is known to everyone, the fundamental functions of a university are to produce new knowledge by doing research, develop new technologies and finally to educate skilled and qualified workforce. Being a learning organization holds a great significance for universities as their creativity to generate new knowledge depends on whether they are an LO or not(Celep, 2004). As a learning organization, universities are institutions where they teach others while they are learning.

Başaran (2000), who considers universities as 'learning universities' since they are educational institutions, specified their characteristics like this: they have a vision, they have embraced a 'continuous improvement culture', they have a high tendency for personnel development, they frequently restructure their organizations, they are always open to correction and revision. As is seen, the subject of becoming a LO in the field of education; that is universities, has been discussed. Yet, the problem is that it has not been researched among the Faculties of Tourism and Hospitality Management.

The Concept of Learning Organization

Argyris and Schön, who invented the term 'learning organization', define it as 'the process of identifying the mistakes and correcting them'(Kılıç & Çiftçi, 2010). The term 'learning organization' found a place for itself in the management literature after Peter M. Senge, a professor at MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), published his book entitled 'The Fifth Discipline' in 1990. Senge (1990) characterized LOs – learning organizations – as institutions where individuals continuously improve their intellectual capacity so as to achieve the desired results, places where people develop ideas that are brand new and that sometimes push the limits, and organizations where all the workforce get familiar with the practice of continuously learning together.

'Understanding organizations', on the other hand, are institutions emphasizing that there is no 'one best' perspective but rather various 'good perspectives' that emerge as a result of different circumstances as well as diversified personal values(Koçel, 2001). The next level after 'knowing organizations' understands organizations'. 'Knowing organizations' have understood over time that they must carry out their activities in a different way.

The facts that competition has become fierce, consumers' demands keep changing and that technology is in a continuous change have urged organizations to come up with alternative solutions rather than looking for one best solution(Çam, 2001). 'Thinking organizations'; on the other hand, consider management techniques as corrective instruments used for rehabilitating the weaknesses of organizations. If an organization is suffering from a critical failure, thinking organizations first fix the problem and then take corrective action, develop the most appropriate models and systems as a precaution(Çam, 2001).

At that stage, the best thing to do is to diagnose the problem and then cure that. 'Thinking organizations' are the ones that try to spot the mistakes in a system, produce brand new solutions and the ones that can forecast a potential problem before it comes up and suggest a solution for that beforehand. The basic philosophy of a 'learning organization' is learning the best and the most from their stakeholders (their employees, customers, suppliers, sellers and also from their competitors).

When 'learning organizations' are compared to 'knowing organizations' and 'thinking organizations', the most striking difference between them is their approach to change (Koçel, 2001, p. 134). An organization should seek for every opportunity to learn and develop

a learning relationship by constantly tracing and assessing both the internal and external conditions (McGill & Slocum, 1993, pp. 71-73).(Senge, 1990, pp. 7-11), who added the 'LO concept' to the literature, has conceptualized it depending on a five-factor framework:

- Systems thinking are made up of a conceptual framework, primacy of the whole and tools. It is the functioning of an organization with all of its units and as one.

- Personal Mastery is the discipline that encourages an individual to continuously clarify and deepen his/her vision, focus his/her energy on learning, improve his/her patience and notice the reality. This dimension is the spiritual foundation of an LO.

- Mental Models are the assumptions, generalizations and even images and signs that are always at the back of an individual's mind. The working principle in mental models requires first revealing all the knowledge on earth, and then studying and learning that.

- Shared Vision is the ability to think like an organization. This ability urges individuals to consider that the objectives, values and tasks that they will create will be shared with the whole organization later.

- Teams; this discipline starts with dialogue. This is about an organization's suspending their individuals' assumptions and its capability of rather starting a 'thinking together' activity. Once an individual starts practising this discipline, it means that he has already become a 'learning individual'.

- In the following years, Marsick and Watkins (2003)added two more dimensions to this model. Those are

- Connecting the Organization to Its Environment; this dimension enables individuals to see the effects of the task they have accomplished on the whole organization. Thus, an individual can differentiate his/her implementations depending on the feedback s/he has collected from the environment. That is, the organization also has an organic bond with its environment.

- Providing Strategic Leadership for Learning; according to this dimension, leaders develop learning models, encourage learning and

regard 'learning' when setting business strategies.

On the other hand, many scholars have also defined the term in accordance with their own discipline. To exemplify, Garvin (1993) defines 'learning organization' as 'discovering the knowledge and sharing it', Koçel (2001) describes that as 'the process that increases efficiency and productivity of the experience or restructures it', Braham (1995)see it as 'an enterprise that prioritizes and facilitates learning', Beck (1990)thinks of it as 'an institution that aims personal development for all the workforce' while Ulrich, Jick and Glinow (1993)underlines that learning organizations must really have the ability to learn. McGill and Slocum (1993)specified the stages of the evolution of organizational models as 'knowing organization', 'understanding organization', 'thinking organization' and 'learning organization'.

'Knowing organizations' are the oldest of all the organizational models. Such organizations can be successful only if market circumstances are stable. In other words, 'knowing organizations' can be successful as long as they do not need to learn something new (McGill & Slocum, 1993, p. 68). The high levels of control, pressure about adaptation, routine behaviours and tendency to avoid taking risks at knowing organizations unfortunately prevent learning (Mocan, 1998, p. 10).

METHODOLOGY

This is a netnography study throughout which we studied and analyzed the websites of some universities qualitatively. This study has been conducted to evaluate the Faculties of Tourism as well as the Schools of Tourism in Turkey within the scope of the 'LO Concept'. The study is significant in the sense that it gives us an idea about how much those Faculties of Tourism and Schools of Tourism are ready to change, and also about how adequate their organizational structures (education, management, etc.) are. When conceptualizing LO, Senge's (1990)The Fifth Discipline and Marsick and Watkins's (2003)two dimensions have been taken into consideration.Those dimensions are:(1) Creating continuous learning opportunities, (2) Promoting inquiry and dialogue,(3) Encouraging collaboration and team learning, (4) Creating systems to capture and share learning, (5) Empowering people toward a collective vision, (6) Connecting the organization to its environment, (7) Providing strategic leadership for learning.

These headings have been taken from Marsick and Watkins's(2003) study entitled 'The Dimensions of the Learning Organization' (Table 1). However, since this is a netnography study, which is the qualitative analysis of the websites of some universities, the original questionnaire has not been used. It has been converted into a 'data collection form' with three options.

Table1. *The Dimensions of the Learning Organization*

Statements
'*Being implemented' 'Partly implemented' 'Not implemented'*
1. Create Continuous Learning Opportunities
The time allocated for learning is sufficient.
Every new learning is rewarded.
2. Promote Inquiry and Dialogue
The environment encourages the employees to speak their minds freely.
An environment that promotes mutual trust is highly valued.
3. Encourage collaboration and team learning
Departments and teams are free to set their own needs.
Departments and teams revise their views in line with the newly acquired knowledge or group discussions.
Departments and teams are positive that the organization will value their suggestions.
4. Create Systems to Capture and Share Learning
The organization sets up evaluation systems that would spot the difference between the current and expected performance.
The organization makes sure that everyone in the organization knows about the lessons they have learnt from the previous problems.
The organization evaluates the resources and time spent on learning.
5. Empower People Toward a Collective Vision
The organization approves of employees' taking the initiative.
The organization enables the employee in charge of a duty to have control over the resources.
The organization is supportive.
6. Connect the Organization to Its Environment
The organization encourages their employees to think outside the box.
The organization cooperates with various other institutions to meet the common needs of the organization.
The organization encourages their employees to produce solutions for problems.
7. Provide Strategic Leadership for Learning
Leaders/Managers act as an advisor to the individuals working at the organization
Leaders/Managers constantly seek for new learning opportunities.
Leaders/Managers make sure that the activities of the organization are consistent with its values.

Source: *It has been adapted from a study by Marsick and Watkins (2003).*

Appendix1. *Faculties of Tourism*

	Dimensions of a 'Learning Organization'						
Faculties	**1. Creat. Cont. Lrng.**	**2. Prom. Inq. &Dial.**	**3. Encrg. Collab.& Team Lrng.**	**4. Creat. Syst. to Shr. Lrng.**	**5. Empwr. Peop. For coll. Visn.**	**6. Cnnct. Org. To Envir.**	**7. Prov. Strtgc. Ldrshp. For Lrng.**
Adana Science and Technology University	✓	✓	✓	✓	×	✓	×
Adıyaman University	✓	✓	✓	✓	×	✓	×
Adnan Menderes University	✓	×	×	×	×	✓	×
Afyon Kocatepe University	✓	✓	✓	✓	×	✓	×
Akdeniz University	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Aksaray University	✓	✓	✓	×	✓	×	×
Anadolu University	✓	✓	✓	✓	×	×	×
Atatürk University	✓	×	×	×	×	×	×
Balıkesir University	✓	×	×	×	✓	×	✓
Çanakkale O.M. University	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	×
Dokuz Eylül University	✓	✓	✓	×	✓	✓	✓
Erciyes University	✓	✓	✓	✓	×	✓	✓
Eskişehir Osmangazi	✓	✓	✓	✓	×	✓	×

University							
Gazi University	✓	✓	✓	✓	×	×	✓
Gümüşhane University	✓	×	×	×	×	✓	×
Kâtip Çelebi University	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Karabük University	✓	×	×	×	×	✓	✓
Kastamonu University	✓	✓	✓	✓	×	✓	×
Kırklareli University	✓	×	×	×	×	×	×
Mersin University	✓	×	×	×	✓	×	✓
Muğla S.K. University	✓	✓	✓	✓	×	✓	×
Necmettin Erbakan University	✓	×	×	×	×	×	×
Nevşehir H.B. University	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ondokuz Mayıs University	✓	×	×	×	×	×	×
Pamukkale University	✓	✓	✓	✓	×	×	×
Selçuk University	✓	×	×	×	×	✓	×

✓ = Meets the dimension. x = Does not meet the dimension.

First, the websites of those universities were analysed. Later, inferences were made depending on the data that were collected from those websites. The websites were studied to find out about the following: activity reports; strategic plan; external and internal assessment reports; syllabi; educational seminars; activities; information about the lecturers, heads of departments and deans; projects, the number of laboratories and R&D units; students' clubs; trips; internship regulations; social media accounts; their relationships among the departments within the same university as well their relationships with other universities and tourism establishments; social responsibility projects; meetings organized to support students and staff and the awards given. The scope of this study includes some of the Faculties of Tourism and Schools of Tourism in Turkey that have been accepting students for a year. Our concern that a 'learning organization culture' cannot have been established at a school that has not started its education service yet has been influential in our decision to keep the sample to a limited number. At the data collection stage, because we could not access reliable information on the websites of private universities, we decided to exclude them all. In addition, the Schools of Tourism whose websites were under construction were excluded as we could not access the required information for the study on their websites. As of 2015-2016 Academic Years, the websites of 38 universities have been identified overall to include in this study 26 Faculties of Tourism and 12 Schools of Tourism. Their websites were studied and the data were collected between 1 May 2016 and 10 July 2016 after a thorough analysis of those websites. See Table 2 at the end of the article, please.

Table2. *The Current Situation of the Dimensions of the Learning Organization at the Schools of Tourism and Hotel Management*

Dimensions	Faculties (TFN=26)			Schools of Tourism and Hotel Management (TSTHMN =12)			References from the Websites
	Implementations			Implementations			
	Available	Limited	Unavailable	Available	Limited	Unavailable	
1. Create continuous learning opportunities	26	-	-	12	-	-	Updated curriculum, activity reports, educational seminars, the importance attached to continuous learning and lifelong learning in the strategic plan, social and art activities organized for students and

						employees' personal development purposes, etc.
2. Promote inquiry and dialogue	16	2	8	3	3	6	Educational programs, students' clubs, university business incubators, workshops, familiarization trips, etc.
3. Encourage collaboration and team learning	16	3	7	3	1	8	Participations in sectoral implementations, university-business integration, attending classes at different schools and different departments, use of social media, assignment &research-focused curriculum, etc.
4. Create systems to capture and share learning	14	-	12	7	3	2	Social responsibility projects, student support programs, R&D Units, use of new technologies, information about the academicians, etc.
5. Empower people toward a collective vision	8	2	16	3	3	6	Strategic plan, seminars, fairs and other similar activities, support training programs, overseas programs, awards, briefings, etc.
6. Connect the organization to its environment	16	6	4	8	2	2	Relationships with businesses, faculties, universities, local communities, foundations and similar cooperations, visits.

7. Provide strategic leadership for learning	9	8	9	1	1	10	Information about the expertise of the deans and department heads, awards given to the students and employees, academicians' learner-centered practices, etc.

TFN=Total Number of Faculties TSTHMN=Total Number of Schools of Tourism and Hotel Management

Appendix2. *Schools of Tourism*

Schools	Dimensions of a 'Learning Organization'						
	1.Creat. Cont. Lrng.	2.Prom.Inq .&Dial.	3.Encrg.Coll ab.&Team Lrng.	4.Creat.S yst. to Shr. Lrng.	5.Empwr.P eop. For coll. Visn.	6.Cnnct.O rg. To Envir.	7.Prov.St rtgc. Ldrshp. For Lrng.
Abant İ.B. University	✓	×	×	×	×	×	×
Batman University	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	×
Cumhuriyet University	✓	×	×	×	×	✓	×
Çukurova University	✓	×	×	×	×	×	×
Düzce University	✓	✓	✓	✓	×	✓	×
Ege University	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Gaziosmanpaşa University	✓	×	×	✓	×	✓	×
Kocaeli University	✓	×	×	✓	×	✓	×
Mardin Artuklu University	✓	×	×	✓	✓	✓	×
Mustafa Kemal University	✓	×	×	×	×	×	×
Sinop University	✓	×	×	✓	×	✓	×
Süleyman Demirel University	✓	×	×	×	×	×	×

✓　　　= Meets the dimension.　　x = Does not meet the dimension.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

In this section, we have evaluated the information about 'learning organizations', which we have collected from the websites of the universities. The first dimension of a 'learning organization', which is creating continuous learning opportunities, has been met by all the partakers: the faculties (n=26) and schools (n=12).

After a comprehensive analysis of the documents regarding the syllabi, activity reports, seminars, activities and strategic plans, it has been observed that learning organizations create continuous learning opportunities both for their students and employees. That the first dimension of a learning organization has been met at educational institutions is an expected result and that is even a defacto standard, especially at an undergraduate school. When it comes to promoting inquiry and dialogue; on the other hand, it has been revealed that the faculties are more adequate than schools in that sense. While 61 percent of the faculties - 16/26 - have met that dimension, the result at the schools is only 25 percent: 3/12. This finding can also be interpreted as a proof that being a faculty nurtures that dimension. The percentages and ratios for meeting the encouraging collaboration and team learning dimension is exactly the same as the results of the previous dimension: 61 percent at the faculties and with a ratio of 16/26, and 25 percent at the schools with a ratio of 3/12. These findings have been discovered as a result of an extensive analysis of the documents concerning those institutions' relationships with

other businesses, other departments and faculties; their use of social media; their use of communication instruments. Regarding the creating systems to capture and share learning dimension, the Schools of Tourism got a better ratio 7/12 higher than the Faculties of Tourism. While the former scored 58 percent, the latter did 53 percent with a ratio of 14/26. These findings have been revealed following a thorough examination of the institutions' documents about social responsibility projects; student support programs; information about the academicians; educational projects.

When it comes to the fifth dimension, empowering people toward a collective vision, the faculties could meet that dimension only with a ratio of 8/26 when the schools were quite noncompeting in that area with quite a low ratio of 3/12. We find this result very shocking when we consider the fact that all universities in Turkey have been ordered to implement a strategic plan at their organizations.

About connecting the organization to its environment dimension, the faculties have met that by 61 percent and with a ratio of 16/26 while the schools have met that by 66 percent and with a ratio of 8/12. These findings have been uncovered when the papers regarding those institutions' relationships with other businesses, faculties, universities, foundations, local authorities, and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism were studied carefully. Here, the figure of 6 in the 'limited implementations' column is also noteworthy.

It signifies that this problem can be overcome at some places. Relying on that result, we can say that the integration of the Schools of Tourism with the industry has been successful and we must also add that the participation of the stakeholders is considered important. And the last dimension—providing strategic leadership for learning—the faculties have met that dimension by 34 percent and with a ratio of 9/26; whereas, the schools have met that dimension by only 8 percent and with a ratio of 1/12.

The result of 8/26 in the 'limited implementations' column shows us that there has been a foundation at the faculties concerning that dimension, so they can make a progress. However, the finding of 10/12 in the 'unavailable implementations' column proves that the Schools of Tourism are having serious issues about leadership. This finding might have resulted from the fact that the heads of departments and also deans do not have a background in tourism, and also that they cannot act in a student-centred way.

When the findings are interpreted in general, one can say that all of the participant faculties have met the first dimension of a 'learning organization' completely while their results of the second, third and fourth dimensions reflect some of the characteristics of being a 'learning organization' in a limited way. It has also been observed that the fifth and seventh dimensions of becoming a 'learning organization', empowering people toward a collective vision and providing strategic leadership for learning, are not practiced at the faculties very often. On the other hand, all the participant Schools of Tourism have met the first dimension, yet unfortunately, they could meet the fourth and sixth dimensions partially. Concerning the second, third, fifth and seventh dimensions, those schools are expected to improve the 'learning organization structure' at their institutions.

These findings demonstrate that the dimensions of being a 'learning organization' are met at those participant Faculties of Tourism and Schools of Tourism to a certain degree, yet not completely. What is more, it is clear that some of those institutions have not been able to reach the level of a perfect 'learning organization' due to their deficiencies and in competencies in preparing strategic plans, other activity reports and also their failure in implementing student-centered strategies. Yet, depending on the fact that they have met some of the dimensions to a certain extent, we can infer that those institutions can make up for those deficiencies of theirs if they work harder.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Today, in addition to being institutions that educate people, universities are also expected to become organizations that have adopted continuous learning and that always support their students and employees throughout their learning processes. This philosophy must also be supported and embraced wholeheartedly by both the faculties and schools that are managed within the body of a university. It is very essential that those institutions must renew and develop themselves and compete with other world-class institutions. To be able to do that, they must comprehend the 'learning organization' concept and put that into effect, which is only one of the strategies for an institution to upgrade itself.

In this study, the dimensions of a 'learning organization' have been considered to reveal the facts about the competency level of the higher education institutions in the field of tourism. The results have demonstrated that the performance of both the Schools of Tourism and Faculties of Tourism are inadequate to meet those dimensions. That the faculties are more successful than the schools can be explained by the fact that faculties have just completed the process of facultization, which already supports becoming a 'learning organization'.

The results of the study show that the managers at the participant Schools of Tourism are too weak to set a role model to their employees empower them and inspire them with a vision, which means that they lack fundamental leadership skills.

It is also attention-grabbing to see that the department heads and deans who are successful in effective leadership have a solid background in tourism. In fact, we expected to find that those schools that are on their way to facultization would be at the level of a 'learning organization' and that they had already put a significant number of the dimensions of a learning organization into effect. This saddening reality is the biggest challenge for a School of Tourism to transform into a Faculty. To improve the situation, those institutions must prepare strategic plans in which they must involve their stakeholders' ideas, too. Also, those strategic plans must be checked annually. It holds critical importance to do the quality certification work as well as the accreditation.

This kind of work will enable such organizations to collect the missing information and gain the experience they need to become a 'learning organization'. It may also be a good suggestion to select the managers to work at higher education institutions from among the ones with a background and experience in the field of tourism. So that they would make effective leaders and contribute to their institutions' development and transformation into learning organizations

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