

ICININFO

The Application of Organizational Learning Theory to Omani Academic Library Collaboration

Nabhan Al-Harrasi*

Assistant Professor, Department of Information Studies, Sultan Qaboos University, Muscat, Oman

Abstract

The primary aim of this research is to identify the changes required to the situation of Omani Academic libraries in order to initiate a collaborative program. The theory of organizational learning is used as a method to change the behaviour and attitudes of main actors and deal with issues related to resistance to change and lack of understanding. After a lengthy intervention process and three group interviews, actors from different participating libraries agreed to identify and determine activities for implementation within their system of mutual collaboration that would reflect the needs of academic libraries. They also agreed to be involved in a communication system, a collaborative professional development system, and in establishing partnership and strategic management systems.

© 2014 Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license

(<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>).

Selection and peer-review under responsibility of the 3rd International Conference on Integrated Information.

Keywords: Organizational Theory, Organizational Change, Omani academic library collaboration, Library collaboration, Oman

1. Introduction

Literature both in the public and business and economic fields has focused on organizational learning theory, resulting in various definitions and models of organizational learning according to the nature of the organization. In order to map the landscape of organizational learning, Beeby and Booth (2000: 81) defined it as a “change in behaviour and underlying mindsets, and in the redesign of organization practices”. Similarly, Garavan (1997) defined this concept as referring to the development of new knowledge and behavioral change. According to

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +96895076230; fax: +968 2441 3212.

E-mail address: nabhan55@gmail.com

Gieseck and McNeil (1999), organizational learning means the intentional use of new knowledge to foster continuous development and enhance an organization's services.

Organizational learning can be used as a method or technique to change the behaviour and attitudes of members or leaders by facilitating learning and developing new ways to manage change. Garavan (1997) and Castiglione (2006) assumed that learning usually has significant results and leads to professional growth. Castiglione (2006) added that organizational learning enhances communication and collaboration among work groups. In return, communication and collaboration improve and increase the development of staff learning, which leads to improvement in the performance of participants (Jalloh, 2000).

LIS literature on organizational learning highlights its importance for libraries intending to establish collaborative initiatives. For example, achieving communication skills by understanding different approaches to conflict management is required for successful negotiation and discussion between libraries and vendors or publishers (Edwards and Walton, 2000). The nature of electronic resources requires librarians, especially those responsible for facilitating interlibrary loans, to enhance their technology skills in order to improve access to e-content (Wood and Walther, 2000; Alem and Mclean, 2005).

In this research four Omani academic libraries were involved in a lengthy intervention process that included individual interviews, three group meetings, and a workshop. The participating libraries were Sultan Qaboos University Library, Nizwa University Library, Sohar University Library, and Dhofar University Library. This paper describes the learning that has been achieved through the different processes of the research.

2. Research Methodology

The early investigation of this research identified a lack of understanding of the significance of working collaboratively, inability to identify the collaborative activities that the situation of Omani academic libraries required, and lack of communication and coordination between the main actors of the situation. A workshop involving members from different participating libraries was used as learning method to enhance the understanding of organizational people about the significance of working collaboratively and explore and address the required changes related to attitude, structure, and procedures of the problem situation. It also assisted in understanding the reflections on learning and professional development. This method was found to be the most appropriate means of disseminating information, awareness raising and formulating an on-going plan.

During the workshop, the participants were divided into three groups, according to their roles, to discuss the action required for implementing collaboration activities among Omani academic libraries. The three groups comprised directors, technical services staff, and user services staff. The discussion focused on the learning process and achievement throughout the research stages. Moreover, the discussion covered the changes required to the current situation to enhance collaboration at the present time and in the future. The changes which had been agreed upon and defined as feasible and desirable during individual and group meetings were also discussed in terms of how these ideas could be turned into a system and implemented in the real world situation.

3. Attitude change

Libraries can be affected by obstacles and challenges that might impede attempts to establish collaborative activities. These problems include resistance to change, which can arise during the early stage of collaboration as a result of lack of understanding and inter-group conflict. It can originate from a number of sources, such as self-interest, mistrust, and different perceptions and goals (Wagner and Hollenbeck, 1995). Fear of loss of autonomy may lead to a decision not to take on a new role. Employees may see the change as not significantly impacting their organization (Balogun and Hailey, 2004). Mistrust can occur when participants feel unfairly treated because they believe that the developers of the proposed project are intent only on meeting their users' needs without focusing sufficiently on their needs (Ellis and Dick, 2000). Differences in perceptions and goals lead to a lack of shared vision (Edwards and Walton, 2000).

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1114729>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1114729>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)