Guest editorial: Contemporary approaches of learning organization in the Asia Pacific region

In this Special Section, we have endeavored to highlight contemporary approaches of learning organizations that focus on Vietnam and India. Four works are concerned with training effectiveness in the hospitality industry of Vietnam, the validation of Dimensions of the Learning Organization Questionnaire in a Vietnamese Context, Internationalization as a strategy to enhance higher education quality in Vietnam and a case examination of a response plan of a corporation against COVID-19 for a major Indian energy conglomerate.

In a Vietnamese context, three of the works have shown that impact can be gained from a validated survey instrument bringing a common vocabulary and tool for local business leaders and practitioners to promote learning organization and organizational learning closer to the international standard. Also, in terms of a managerial perspective, organizational learning could be vital to building sustainable competitive advantage in the context of a fast-growing economy. As such, organizations, particularly those in the hospitality sector in Vietnam, should design different policies emphasizing the extrinsic motivator as a bridging element to enhance intrinsic motivation that supports and inspires transferring knowledge. Finally, in this country’s context, there is an examination of internationalization as a strategy to enhance higher education quality. The key observations here were that limited resources and lack of English competence among educators and students were found to be the key obstacles and challenges for internationalized activities.

In an Indian context, there was an interesting dichotomy with respect to impact in that there was an inference that the company examined in the case study got close to green HRM practice through adopting IT-based virtual practices rather than execution of the job through physical availability. Adopting the work from practice, employees did not commute to workplace, thus contributing to reduce environment pollution. However, bringing such practice may cause apprehension due to “loss of human touch” at the workplace. People may feel “reduced face to face (physical) interaction”, which may have some negative consequences for interpersonal relationship at workplace. Similarly, working through online platform may also have bad implication for mental and physical health. As working online rigorously for long hours can negatively affect efficiency and productivity of employees (especially for an old-age workforce).

The Special Section comprises four academic papers. The first paper is by Phuong Tam et al. “Validation of Dimensions of the Learning Organization Questionnaire in a Vietnamese Context”, and in this piece, he and his team validate the Dimensions of Learning Organization Questionnaire (DLOQ) in a Vietnamese context, using the DLOQ as a research tool, this study also investigated the impact of demographic features on participants’ perceptions of learning organizations. Confirmatory factor analysis and inferential tests were employed to assess the differences produced by the characteristics of respondents and their enterprises. The key observations were that three versions of the DLOQ are applicable to a Vietnamese context, and several demographic features produced significant differences in respondents’ perceptions of organizational learning.
In the second paper Dr. Han et al. “Organizational learning through training effectiveness: Evidence from the hospitality industry in Vietnam”. The paper aims to understand the unique context forming organizational learning. An investigation of the antecedents of training practices as an indicator of effective organizational learning from the Vietnam hospitality sector is undertaken, and this, historically, has not been studied with any great rigor. The study adopts a mixed method, which consists of quantitative and qualitative data analysis, including a path analysis (SEM-PLS) to test various paths predicting training effectiveness while exploring contextual differences in the Vietnam hospitality sector. The team shows that among the variables investigated, extrinsic motivation, team support and job quality are significant to training and development, while intrinsic motivation had no significant predictive power. This points to motivations of employees in the hospitality sector, most of whom are young and have a limited length of service, which are highly rooted in the organization’s cultural context.

In the third paper, Dr. Luong Vinh Quoc Duy et al. “Internationalization as a strategy to enhance higher education quality in Vietnam – Reflections from university leaders”. The team investigates how individual institutions approach internationalization and what they gain from that process. This paper investigates the enhancement of teachers’ and students’ knowledge and skills using internationalization in Vietnam universities as a strategy. Through interviews with leaders from a range of universities, a qualitative thematic analysis was applied. In line with other previous studies, limited resources and lack of English competence among educators and students were found to be the key obstacles and challenges for internationalized activities. Also, a challenge for the sustainability of knowledge production via research and publications was observed.

In the fourth paper, an industry case from India, Dr. Alka Rai et al. “Understanding the Response Plan of Corporation against COVID 19: A Case of Indian Power Major”. This paper aims to bring insights on different approaches to deal with challenging situation such as COVID-19 through processes of business continuity, health and well-being of employees, abiding by regulation and guidelines and the handling of human resources. Here a case study approach was synthesized from a range of company internal documents, reports, circulars, guidelines and interviews of different group of decision-makers, which included top management, HR managers and heads at plant sites. The team’s work observed that HR staff performed significant roles, which were a combination of HRM processes and sustainability principles. HRM as units also played strategic roles and were highly involved in developing combat frameworks against COVID-19 and business continuity plans.

We hope that you will not only enjoy reading the contributions to the Special Section as we, the Guest Editors, did but will also find them thought-provoking and challenging enough to inform your research.

Robert James McClelland  
School of Business and Management, RMIT University Business, Melbourne, Australia

Seng Kok  
RMIT University Business, Melbourne, Australia, and

Duc Hoang  
School of Business and Management, RMIT University Business, Melbourne, Australia and EdLab Asia Educational Research and Development Centre, Hanoi, Vietnam