

# Dimensions of Learning Organisations and the Predictors to Organisational Performance among Universities in Zamboanga City

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Universities as learning organisations work to embed learning into their culture to adapt to changes and gain the competitive advantage over others. This descriptive study described the extent to which the seven dimensions of a learning organisation by Watkins and Marsick is practiced among the Universities in Zamboanga City. This study also established the statistically significant difference among the universities of Zamboanga City, Philippines based on the dimensions of a learning organisation. Data were obtained through a survey among 194 faculty members, interview of key informants such as deans and middle managers and focus group discussions among faculty and student leaders of the three Universities. Results of the study showed that the Universities in Zamboanga City were very satisfactory Learning Organisations and there is a statistically significant difference among the Universities in all dimensions except Team Learning and Collaboration as established by the Kruskal Wallis Test. Likewise, the organisational performance of each University is described to be very satisfactory. This study further determined through regression analysis and stepwise method that the dimensions System to Capture and Share Learning as well as Team Learning and Collaboration as the predictors of an organisational performance. This study proposed a Learning Organisation Framework as a guide for the Universities to help improve organisational performance. Through qualitative data, three elements were identified to contribute to the practice of the dimensions of learning organisation: (a) Organisational Characteristics which cover the type of University, leadership and leadership structures, financial resources, population and size; (b) Organisational Thrusts which include vision and mission, quality education, community service and values; and (c) the Organisational Learning Process which takes into account accreditation, research and faculty expertise. The three elements along with the practice of the

dimensions and maximising the predictors were recommended to improve organisational structure.

**Key words:** *Dimensions of learning organisation, learning organisation, organisational performance, regression, stepwise method, universities in Zamboanga City, Philippines.*

## Introduction

The world today is characterised by change that is accelerating exponentially. Strategies to resist change remain insufficient hence the different organisations of society are compelled to adapt and embrace change to keep up with the fast pace. Change as well as globalisation creates new demands on organisations and catalyses the fierce pressure upon an organisation (Muscalu, 2014). Because of the demands brought upon by advancement in technology and the fast development of knowledge-based economy to the various organisations including educational institutions, the competition is aggressive and each organisation is forced to keep its head up among others. An organisation is believed to successfully deal with a changing environment when it does to not only process information efficiently, but create knowledge and information.

Notwithstanding the need to change are higher education institutions. Higher education institutions are required to fundamentally enhance learning and strive to intensify learning and make it scalable. The need to develop new mechanisms for continuous learning and innovation is greater today than ever before. This requires learning institutions to match the speed and degree of change happening around today. Hence, organisations strive to practice learning organisation and embed it in their culture.

Culture is said to be a way of life – the behaviours, beliefs, values, assumptions and symbols that a group of people internalise and practice. For education institutions to intensify learning, it has to be rooted in the culture of the organisation. A learning organisation is a term coined through the work of Peter Senge and his colleagues to describe an organisation that facilitates the learning of its members and continuously transforms itself to meet the goals of the organisation. An organisation strives to develop itself to become a learning organisation and remain competitive in the face of pressures from within and outside of the organisation (Mason, 2016).

Educational institutions around the world endeavour to become an ideal learning organisation. Universities are putting tremendous attention and effort to the quality of education offered, more so with the advent of instituting differentiated academic systems to address the needs of a growing diverse student body. Moreover, universities are working on



their standing and the image that the university portrays locally and internationally. Because of the strong competition among universities, school leaders are sharpening and highlighting what is most important and what the university is best at. How a particular university ranks both in the national and global markets serves as a stimulus to set the education landscape. The university's status provides pertinent information to prospective students and the universities themselves. Furthermore, the status of a particular university may serve as the basis for awarding grants to fund institutional projects or research. It also allows universities to benchmark themselves against others since prestigious universities are emulated by other institutions aiming to go up the informal hierarchy (Altbach, 2010).

The competition is not only among universities but it is equally a central reality for the faculty. As universities are convincing intellectual students everywhere else, the market for academic talent is high. Professors are being lured by universities offering healthier working conditions, higher salaries, and enticing reward systems and better opportunities for professional growth and development. All the same, competition keeps institutions and faculty on their toes. Competition empowers institutions and faculty to create and design new ideas, promote quality education with high-calibre teaching force, evaluate what and how things are managed and benchmark or compare themselves against other institutions (Altbach, 2010). The need to become a highly applauded learning organisation remains high.

Zamboanga City is a highly urbanised city located in Mindanao, Philippines. Currently, Zamboanga City has three universities. A private sectarian university which is accredited by the Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities (PAASCU); one private non-sectarian university which is accredited by the Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities Commission on Accreditation (PACUCOA); and a government/state university accredited by the Accrediting Agency of Chartered Colleges and Universities in the Philippines (AACUP). All three universities are actively and continuously improving their educational standards. The principal investigator aims to explore the universities as learning organisations and how it impacts organisational performance.

Leaders may think that making the organisation learn is merely articulating the organisation's vision, providing the employees with incentives and numerous trainings. Garvin, Edmonson and Gino (2008) deliberate that this assumption is uncertain in the face of intensifying competition and advances in technology. There is a pressing need for organisations to learn more on how to confront the mounting forces of change by becoming a learning organisation. It is essentially compelling for employees to be skilled at creating, acquiring and transferring knowledge (Garvin, et al., 2008).

It is reflected in related studies of various research conducted on learning organisations which focused mainly on an organisation's financial performance with very limited studies focusing primarily on higher education institutions. In the Philippines, there is no study yet on universities as learning organisations based on the theory of Watkins and Marsick. This study is markedly different from the studies conducted in foreign countries because this study targeted universities for the very reason that universities are theoretically the significant key that will equip the future of the general populace.

Moreover, this study is also significantly different because organisational performance is established in terms of the indicators based on the areas of concerns of the different accrediting agencies. Predictors to organisational performance based on the seven dimensions of learning organisations is likewise concluded in this study. Equally important, is the fact that this study is able to contribute to contest the argument of Garvin (2008) that universities do not fit the criteria of learning organisation because of what Garvin identified as obstacles to collaboration. This is one study which proves that universities can manifest the dimensions of learning organisations very satisfactorily.

The results of this study will add to the growing literature on learning organisations which will be made useful for future research. Moreover, the results add to the empirical evidence validating the reliability of the *DLOQ: Dimensions of Learning Organisation Questionnaire* (Mbassana, 2014).

### **Frameworks for Learning Organisations**

What would guide an organisation to become a learning organisation? Organisations do not organically develop into learning organisations; they are guided by models, frameworks or blueprints to prompt change. Organisations need to maintain processes to help understand the environment and come up with creative solutions to effect overall organisational performance (Argyris & Schon, 2013). The models or frameworks form the basis of subsequent interventions to develop a learning organisation (Tarrini, 2004).

In addition, the collaboration learning initiatives of four highly collaborative campuses was investigated by Kezar (2006) and the author highlighted a model for university collaboration as an initiative for learning organisation. The model includes 10 recommendations: (1) review the university mission and communicate it across campuses; (2) build networks for collaboration; (3) build formal structures; (4) revamp campus computing and accounting systems to promote collaboration; (5) revise rewards structures; (6) senior staff model collaboration; (7) disseminate collaborative values; (8) capitalise on external pressure; (9) promote collaborative values and (10) faculty to lead sessions on the benefit of collaboration (Kezar, 2006).



Furthermore, the idea that universities can become learning organisations is based on the assumption that education institutions are analogous to businesses. However, it is important to consider the conservative nature of universities and the need to change in response to increasing competition. Senge (2000) emphasises the need to change from traditional structures to flexible ones based on collaboration at various levels. The model as suggested by Senge is structured around collaboration within and between teams as well as between organisations. By and large, it is imperative for institutions of higher learning which include department chairs, faculty and students to play central roles as change agents (Senge, 2000).

Equally emphasising the importance of collaboration along with transparency, capacity building and pro-activity is the essence of the recommendations made by Watkins (2005). The author further suggested nine practical applications, these are: (1) goals for change would be explicit from the start; (2) the “right people” to lead the change; (3) to include many voluntary elements as possible; (4) change is participatory and managed from the top; (5) change leaders to work collaboratively; (6) change leaders should maintain momentum; (7) change leaders expect and manage turbulence; (8) change leaders expect and manage resistance; (9) change leaders provide the support necessary to bring about change (Watkins, 2005).

Most of the literature covering studies done in other countries were focused on business and financial firms and because of the call to come up with studies on universities as learning organisations, the principal investigator would like to respond to the recommendations made by other researchers.

Despite the fact that there were studies conducted on universities as learning organisations, the studies were piloted in foreign countries, making the concept of learning organisation remote for the Philippine setting, even more for Zamboanga City. There are no studies published yet on learning organisations in Zamboanga City. The principal investigator is intensely interested in exploring the respondent universities in Zamboanga City as learning organisations.

The Universities in Zamboanga City are distinctly different from one another. Private and public, sectarian and nonsectarian have different ways of managing their systems and processes. However, all Universities aim to excel in terms of organisational performance. Universities need to equip students with the knowledge and skills to succeed in the face of an ever changing world. There is the need to provide students with the proper education.

Studies proved that becoming a learning organisation significantly improve organisational performance. Hence, there is indeed a need to study the extent of practice of the seven



dimensions of learning organisation among Universities. Studies further proved that hindrances or obstacles to collaboration (Garvin, 2008) and teachers who are not developing the right pedagogical practices cause Universities to fall short of its aim to become a learning organisation.

Because of this dilemma, educators and policy makers call for schools to reconceptualise their processes to become learning organisations, ones that embrace innovation and improve organisational performance. Therefore, this study sees fit to determine the extent to which the dimensions are practiced to provide baseline data for the formulation of a sound learning organisation framework to be proposed to the Universities.

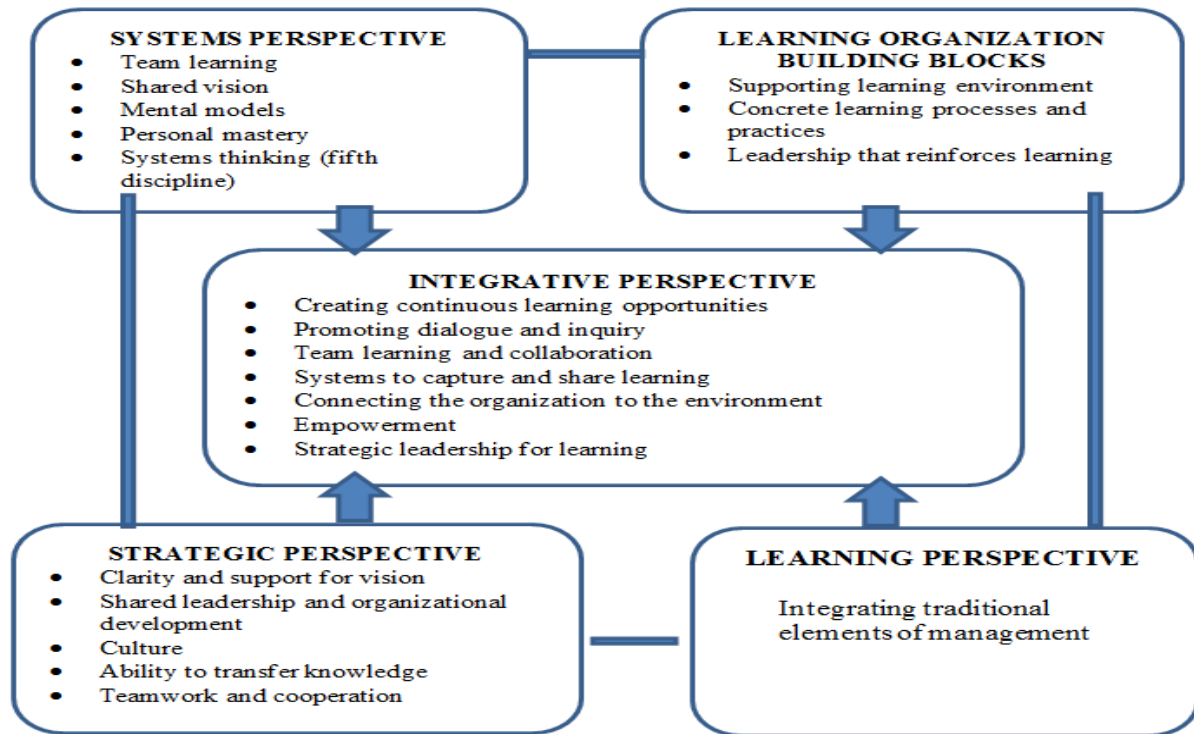
In this research, the three Universities in Zamboanga City are highly recognised by the different accrediting bodies. Through the years, these universities have shown excellent performance locally and internationally. However, there is a need to determine whether these universities are performing as learning organisations based on the seven dimensions of learning organisation by Watkins and Marsick, or are there attempts to become one? Are the efforts of becoming a learning organisation magnified across levels of the organisation and practiced by all members? Self-perceptual it maybe, it is likewise essential to determine which dimension is dominantly practiced or otherwise. And also, identify the strengths of the university as a learning organisation as well as the challenges encountered in their journey as a learning organisation at the individual, team and organisational level.

This study will likewise assess and determine the impact of the seven dimensions of learning organisation to organisational performance improvement. It will not measure organisational performance per se utilising any measurement tool but is keen on determining whether there is a positive or negative correlation between the seven dimensions and organisational performance.

Related literatures and studies did not venture on identifying the predictors to organisational performance which this study ascertained. Finally, based on the results of this study, the principal investigator proposes a learning organisation framework to the Universities to aid in improving organisational performance.

## Theoretical Framework

**Figure 1.** Theoretical Framework



The different theoretical frameworks covering learning organisation can be grouped into five perspectives: Systems Perspective, Learning Perspective, Strategic Perspective, LO Building Blocks and Integrative Perspective. The Integrative Perspective will be the theoretical ground for this study.



## Conceptual Framework

Figure 2. Conceptual Framework

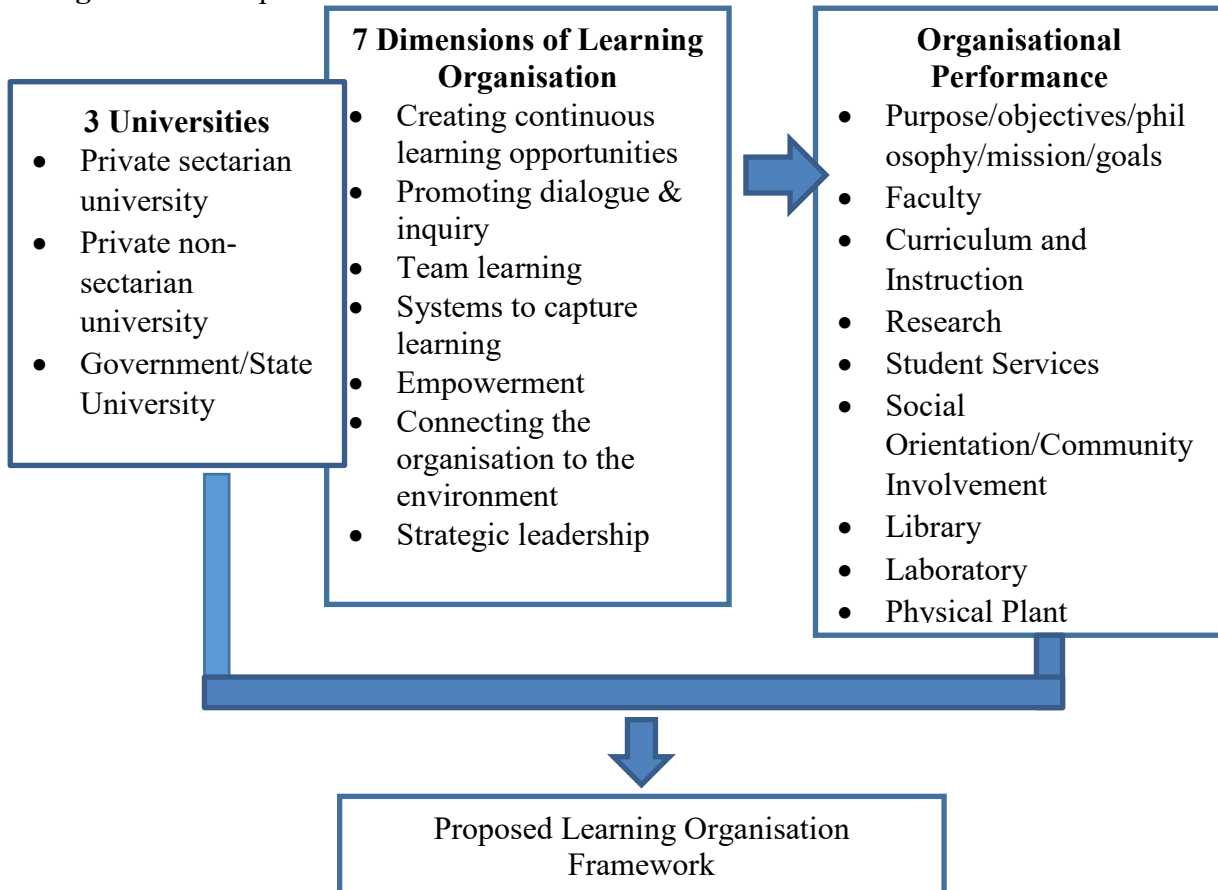


Figure 2 shows the conceptual framework of this study. It shows that the three Universities of Zamboanga City are presumed to practice and manifest the seven dimensions of learning organisation, namely: creating continuous learning opportunities, promoting dialogue and inquiry, team learning and collaboration, systems to capture and share learning, connecting the organisation to the environment, empowerment and strategic leadership for learning.

It further illustrates that the practice of the seven dimensions improves organisational performance in terms of the University's purpose/vision and mission, faculty, curriculum and instruction, research, student services, social involvement, library, laboratory, physical plant and administration.

The framework likewise determines the predictors to organisational performance based on the seven dimensions as well as the best practices and challenges experienced by the



members of the Universities to come up with the proposed learning organisation framework for the Universities.

### **Objectives of the Study**

This study sought to extensively describe the three Universities of Zamboanga City as learning organisations on the basis of Watkins and Marsick's seven dimensions of learning organisation.

Specifically, this study aimed to determine the extent to which the three Universities of Zamboanga City practice the seven dimensions of learning organisation such as creating continuous learning opportunities, promoting dialogue and inquiry, team learning and collaboration, systems to capture and share learning, empowering people toward a collective vision, connecting the organisation to its environment, and providing strategic leadership for learning; (b) the significant difference among the learning organisations in terms of the seven dimensions; (c) the performance of the universities as learning organisations in terms of the purpose/objectives/mission/goals/philosophy, Faculty, Curriculum and Instruction, Research, Student Services, Laboratory, Library, Physical Plant, Social Involvement, and Administration; (d) the seven dimensions of learning organisation are predictors of organisational performance; (e) the best practices and challenges of the universities as a learning organisation; and (f) the learning organisation framework that can be proposed to the Universities.

### **Methodology**

This study used descriptive research design in gathering both quantitative and qualitative data to comprehensively describe the Universities as learning organisations based on the theory of Watkins and Marsick. Also, a survey was conducted among the participants, key informants were interviewed and focus group discussions with faculty and students and respectively.

The study was conducted in the three universities in Zamboanga City. Each university is presented without mentioning the names of the universities. Also, the participants of this study were the permanent or regular faculty of universities with at least 5 years teaching service. There were a total of 194 participants. The sample for each university was selected using stratified random sampling. Key informants for interview include the Vice Presidents for Academic Affairs and the Deans of each university. All participants/participants were informed of their right to withdraw from participating in the study at any point during the data gathering procedure.



The *DLOQ: Dimensions of Learning Organisation Questionnaire* was developed by Watkins and Marsick and was used as an instrument in the study. It measures the value of learning culture and explores the relationship between learning culture and performance in an organisation (Yu, 2014). The tool has been used in several studies conducted in various countries and is found to be a suitable measurement to assess learning, organisational climate and organisational learning processes (Song, 2009).

The study was submitted for ethics review and clearance at the Western Mindanao State University Research Oversight Evaluation Committee (REOC). It underwent review by a panel of research reviewers and was granted Initial Clearance to conduct data collection. A Final Ethics Clearance certificate will be issued upon completion of the study.

Data gathering process commenced with a letter addressed to the President of the University through the Academic Vice President seeking permission to conduct the study in each of the university. When permission was granted, the researcher set the first appointment with the AVP for a face to face interview. The AVP was asked to sign an informed consent. The semi-structured interview was conducted upon the convenient time and place of the AVP. Likewise, the researcher identified the best practices and the challenges encountered by the university in becoming a learning organisation. In the same way, the Deans of the different colleges were invited for a face-to-face interview.

For the faculty as participants, the researcher also set an appointment with the Human Resource personnel to obtain the list of tenured or permanent faculty per College with at least five years teaching experience in the University. From the list of faculty per College, a simple random sampling technique was used to determine the number of faculty to be part of the survey.

The adapted DLOQ which was formulated and developed by Watkins and Marsick was answered by the college faculty per university. The participants were informed of the nature and purpose of the study as well as their participation in the study. Participants were assured that personal information will not be divulged and their responses will not in any way be used against them nor their work. The participants were asked to sign the informed consent signifying their understanding and approval to participate in the study as participants. The questionnaires were placed in sealed brown envelopes to help ensure confidentiality of responses.

Upon retrieval of the questionnaires, all responses per group and per institution were tallied accordingly and descriptive statistics was used to determine the extent to which the seven dimensions of learning organisation is practiced or manifested in the universities. The dominant and least dimensions were likewise identified.

The FGDs or carefully planned discussions were conducted so as to document the perceptions of the participants on a learning organisation and how their own university works to become a learning organisation. The purpose of the FGDs were to collect qualitative data and to determine not only perceptions but equally important are the feelings and the manner of responding to the questions asked.

## Results and Discussion

To answer research question number 1: How are the 3 universities of Zamboanga City as learning organisations in terms of the 7 dimensions of learning organisation? University A as a higher education institution for 70 years is perceived to be a *Very Satisfactory* learning organisation based on the 7 dimensions. All 7 dimensions are frequently evident or frequently practiced in the university as perceived by the participants. Likewise, the interviews with key informants and discussions among faculty and students revealed the reasons for University A to be perceived as a learning organisation.

It is clearly evident that all dimensions are practiced which parallels the statement of the VPAF that the 7 dimensions are part of the university's operational values and are mandated to be practiced, although the dimensions are not specifically identified as the 7 dimensions of learning organisation. The VPAF further explained there is no single dimension over the others but all are practiced.

*Team Learning and Collaboration* are identified as the dimensions with the highest average mean score, however, it cannot be strictly considered the most dominant dimension, nor is it *Creating Continuous Learning Opportunities* with the lowest mean score as the least dominant, because the difference in the mean scores among the 7 dimensions is minimally small and all the dimensions are generally described equally. All dimensions are described to be frequently evident or frequently practiced.

University B as an autonomous and a sectarian private university is perceived to be a *Satisfactory* learning organisation on the basis of the 7 dimensions. Participants described all the dimensions as evident, yet need emphasis. Similarly, interviews with key informants and the discussions among faculty and students generated related responses. Participants do not discount the fact that all dimensions are evident and practiced, yet, participants verbalised the need to maximise the manifestations of the dimensions.

For University B, *Team Learning and Collaboration* is identified as the dimension with the highest mean score and *Empowerment* as the dimension with the lowest mean score. However, both cannot be firmly identified as the dominant and least dominant dimensions

respectively, because the difference of the mean scores among the 7 dimensions is slightly insignificant. All dimensions are thereby described as frequently evident or frequently practiced within the university.

It is striking to note that University B as a high standard higher education institution and acknowledged as a high performing university is described by the participants as a *Satisfactory* learning organisation, significantly lower than the other 2 universities.

Furthermore, University C, the only government or state university in this study is a non-sectarian university. University C is perceived to be a *Very Satisfactory* learning organisation. All 7 dimensions of learning organisation are described to be frequently evident or frequently practiced. The result is greatly reflected in the statements of the VPAF that the governance of the university is holistic in its approach that it demonstrates all the dimensions of a learning organisation to achieve the goals of the university.

For University C, the dimension with the highest average mean score is *Strategic Leadership for Learning* and the dimension with the lowest mean score is *Systems to Capture and Share Learning*. However, it is far from considering the former as the dominant dimension and the latter as the least dominant because the difference of the mean scores is slim and is slightly insignificant. All dimensions have the same descriptions as perceived by the participants.

To answer research question number 2: Is there a significant difference among the 3 universities as learning organisations? Kruskal Wallis H test was employed to determine the significant difference among the Universities as learning organisations. Six of the 7 dimensions showed no significant difference among the 3 Universities, these are: *Creating continuous learning opportunities, promoting dialogue and inquiry, empowerment, connecting the organisation to the environment, strategic leadership for learning and systems to capture and share learning*. Only in team learning and collaboration did the 3 Universities show significant difference.

The following are the responses in answer to research question number 3, *What is the organisational performance of the 3 universities as learning organisations?* University A's organisational performance is perceived to be *Very Satisfactory* with all the 10 indicators described as frequently evident or frequently practiced. Likewise, University B's organisational performance as *Very Satisfactory* on the basis of the 10 indicators. Looking at each indicator, it is noteworthy to mention that *Library* as an indicator is perceived to be almost always evident or practiced. Among the 10 indicators though, only *Physical Plant* as an indicator is perceived to be evident yet needs emphasis, which is low as compared to the other indicators. Moreover, it is evident that University C's organisational performance is perceived to be *Very Satisfactory*. Remarkably for University C, *Purpose/Vision and Mission*

as an indicator is the highest which ought to be because the vision and the mission of the university serve as the guiding light of the university. Very much alike with University B, Physical Plant as an indicator is also the lowest for University C. As a whole, the organisational performance of the 3 universities on the basis of the 10 indicators used in this study is *Very Satisfactory*. A *Very Satisfactory* learning organisation means that the indicators are frequently evident or frequently practiced in the university as perceived by the participants.

The following are the responses in answer to research question number 4, *Which of the 7 dimensions of a learning organisation are predictors to organisational performance?* For University A, there is a significant correlation between the dimensions of learning organisation and organisational performance. Specifically, the dimension *Systems for Capturing and Sharing Learning* as an independent variable contributes the most important information on the dependent variable, hence, it is the predictor to organisational performance. For University B, the dimensions of a learning organisation are significantly correlated to organisational performance of the university. Through statistical treatment, the dimension identified as predictor to organisational performance is *Team Learning and Collaboration*. Moreover, taking the dimensions collectively shows a high correlation between the dimensions and organisational performance. The dimension *Systems to Capture and Share Learning* has the most important information for the dependent variable, organisational performance of University C, therefore, it is the predictor to organisational performance. Each university is unique in its own way. The 3 universities are not the same and equal in what it stands for and how it operates as an education institution. It has varied programs offered for the students. Hence, the predictors are best identified for each university.

The results for research question number 5, *What are the best practices and challenges of the universities as learning organisations?* will be presented in a table form to clearly illustrate the similarities and differences in the experiences of the participants in each university.

Best practices are the perceived practices of the universities which brought about better overall performance of the institution.

**Table 1:** Summary of the Best Practices of the 3 Universities

UNIVERSITY A	UNIVERSITY B	UNIVERSITY C
Strong leadership		Strong leader
Faculty development	Culture of supporting learning	Staff development
Instruction		
Accreditation	Accreditation (autonomous)	
Upgraded systems		
Expansion (infrastructures)		
Name of the school (brand)		
	Faculty as experts	Pool of experts
	Open for new devt (interdisciplinary approach)	
	library	
	Culture of collaborative work	Oneness; unity of employees to work
	Ignatian values/value integration	
	Harmonizing the diff religions	Harmonizing different cultures/tribes
	Community service	Extension services

The best practices of the 3 universities are relatively similar. The area of faculty development is one which is common to all 3 universities, however, faculty of the universities present several issues surrounding continuous learning opportunities. Leadership is similarly seen as a best practice of Universities A and C, whose faculty laud the strong leadership of the universities. The faculty of 2 universities are regarded as pool of experts who are often invited to be resource speakers or trainers in specific areas of expertise.

The culture of collaborative work among employees is perceived to be common to 2 universities as well as the efforts of the universities to harmonise a very diverse employee and student population. The area of extension services or community services is likewise common to 2 universities where universities engage in numerous activities. Partnerships are maintained to facilitate activities targeted at making the communities resilient and productive to become better citizens of the society.



Other best practices identified, though not common to the 3 universities, include instruction and the enhancement of teaching methodologies. The name of the institution serves as the “brand name” of the university which attracts more students to enrol. One of the university’s openness for new developments is perceived as best practice, because this openness does not limit what the university is able to acquire from its environment.

Catholic value integration is perceived as a best practice in only one university. Integration of Catholic values into the curriculum and in the activities of faculty and students is only practiced in the sectarian university. The Catholic values are “*doing more*” and “*care for the entire person*”, social involvement, excellence, discernment, and animo. Like what faculty and students verbalised in the discussions, the integration of Catholic values made both faculty and students become better individuals.

The best practices of the universities reflect the dimensions of learning organisation. Faculty development as well as the faculty who are regarded as experts in their fields of expertise are reflective of the continuous learning opportunities created by the university administration for the faculty. The university creates the learning opportunities to develop faculty professionally so other faculty may learn what they have learned.

Harmonising a diverse faculty and student population through collaborative work is indicative of team learning and collaboration which allows different faculty to work as groups and learn from each other. The same is true for students. Partnering with various communities significantly suggests connecting the organisation to its environment. The university’s openness to new developments is similarly perceived to reflect systems to capture and share learning. Striking though, is the integration of Catholic values or values by itself as a best practice. Value integration is not included in the dimensions of learning organisation. However, this is perceived by the participants as a practice that made the university to what it is known for today. The researcher acknowledges there may be other best practices not mentioned by the participants, that may contribute to the performance of the universities. On the other hand, the challenges experienced by the faculty and students as perceived by the participants occur in spite of the universities being learning organisations. These challenges are regarded by some of the faculty as opportunities which have to be overcome to achieve the goals of the universities. Table 2 shows a summary of the challenges.



**Table 2:** Summary of the Challenges Experienced by the 3 Universities

UNIVERSITY A	UNIVERSITY B	UNIVERSITY C
ASEAN integration; K12 transition		
Disinterest of faculty/unmotivated faculty		Diverse/unmotivated faculty
Finances to support all plans and programs	Finances of the school	Finances of the school
Board ratings of board courses		
Improving teaching methodologies and instruction		
Fast turnover of faculty		
To be an autonomous school/accreditation		Accreditation
Research	research	Increasing research outputs
Maintain what the university started	Live to the expectations of the university/make the institution comparable with others	
	Faculty development (breach of contracts)	Faculty development (provide more); how to best use the potentials of faculty
	empowerment	
	Ignatian values	
	More appreciation for faculty who are working hard	
		Competition among higher education institutions
		Improve facilities
		Academic freedom of faculty and blanket grades

The ASEAN integration and the K12 transition was verbalised as a challenge in only one university. Yet, this challenge or concern is experienced by most institutions, not only of the respondent institutions of this study. Universities are challenged to develop students to become globally competitive and are accepted in other countries based on the set



international standards. The K12 transition's issue is focused to the potential displacement of faculty brought by the 2 years zero enrolment as junior high school graduates enter 2 years of senior high.

The unmotivated or disinterested faculty for faculty development were verbalised mostly by Deans, however, faculty stressed the need for more opportunities rather than losing interest in professional development. This issue may be seen as a gap in communicating properly the guidelines for faculty development so the administration appreciates the interest of the faculty as well as faculty understand how faculty development is managed and implemented.

Financial constraints or difficulties are experience by most organisations including higher education institutions. Key informants and faculty during discussions reiterated the universities are faced with numerous projects and plans to improve the universities, and all these entail large amounts of finances. Participants perceive these difficulties as challenges, yet, are confident the universities will be able to acquire the needed amount through other sources. Universities are working on generating income and not depend solely on the tuition fees of students to manage all financial needs of the institutions.

Board exam results, improving teaching methodologies and the fast turn out of faculty are challenges for one university. Attempts to raise board rating results are being studied as the university aims to be one of the autonomous institutions in the country. This aim of the university is cascaded down to improving teaching methodologies and instruction and retaining credible faculty.

University A aims to become an autonomous institution, hence, the university is pursuing to improve board rating results. In a like manner, University A is working to accredit other programs of the university. Moreover, common to the 2 universities is the aim of the participants to live up to what the universities believe in and stand for, and to verbalise to uphold the integrity of the institutions.

Research is one challenge common to 3 universities. Universities are challenged to entice more faculty to engage in research works. Attractive research packages are offered to faculty along with trainings and mentoring, yet, the response is low. Similarly, the competition among higher education institutions remain a challenge, hence, universities are working doubly hard so as to remain on top among others.

If faculty development is perceived as a best practice of the universities, it is seen as well as a challenge for the reason that there are faculty who are sent for continuing education or for professional advancement, but do not finish on time or breach the contracts set with the universities. Similarly, faculty perceived the university is challenged to empower faculty



more and to institute better non-monetary ways to appreciate hard working faculty who decide to stay with the university despite the low salary or benefits as compared to other universities.

Moreover, facilities are perceived as a challenge by the participants in one university. The facilities and amenities of the university are not proportionate to the number of students. The academic freedom of faculty in one university is a great challenge as perceived by the students which has to be looked into to avoid dissatisfaction among students and eventually leave the institution for another.

University B participants appreciate the Catholic values being integrated in the curriculum and the activities of the university, however, it is also perceived as a challenge for the values to be extended to the faculty and not only selected stakeholders of the university.

The challenges as perceived by the participants are viewed as opportunities to improve and make the universities better and at par with universities of high national ranking. Participants verbalised that despite these areas are perceived to be challenges, yet, the faculty expressed the desire to help the university overcome the challenges.

## **Conclusion**

This study therefore concluded that overall, the universities of Zamboanga City had *Very Satisfactory* learning organisations based on the perceptions of the participants. This is clearly evident in the perception of the participants as shown in the results of the survey. A *Very satisfactory* learning organisation illustrates the dimensions are frequently evident or frequently practiced. In general, there is no single dimension superbly dominant than the others. The Universities of Zamboanga City proved to be *Very Satisfactory* learning organisations.

On the other hand, in terms of organisational performance on the basis of the 10 indicators or areas of concerns as evaluated by the 3 accrediting agencies, namely, PAASCU, PACUCOA and AACCU, the universities are generally *Very Satisfactory* as perceived by the participants. A *Very Satisfactory* organisational performance shows the indicators of performance are frequently evident or frequently practiced. Furthermore, among the 7 dimensions of learning organisation, the dimensions that strongly predict organisational performance of the Universities were *Systems to Capture and Share Learning* and *Team Learning and Collaboration*. The practice of these 2 dimensions must be maximised to improve organisational performance.



*Systems to Capture and Share Learning* need to be strategically enhanced to improve organisational performance. As a predictor to organisational performance, *Team Learning and Collaboration* should be strengthened. Team learning and team work in organisations have shown to be unstoppable as there is a scientific evidence that team learning can help organisations deal with more complex tasks and learn from changing environment.



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