

# VALUES OF SCHOOL ORGANIZATION IN THE CONTEXT OF LEARNING ORGANIZATION (Experience of the LangOERproject)

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## Abstract

This study was aimed at identification of the values, grounding educational practices in the school as an organization in the context of a learning organization, and how employees perceive them. For the research of organizational values 170 teachers of Kaunas city schools were interviewed. Questionnaire was based on dimensions of organizational values determined by Glomseth, R., Gottschalk, P. & Hole A. S. (2010), who constitute a scale of 21 bipolar values with the additional statements reflecting learning organization issues. The project LangOER 2013 – 4107 / 001 – 001; (No. 543239-LLP1-1-2013-LV-KA2-KA2NW (the Faculty of Public Security at Mykolas Romeris University is the partner in a Consortium led by the Fryske Academy in the Netherlands) enabled approaching Lithuanian teachers with the question about the relation between learning in organizations and the values behind learning. The research data allow to conclude that teachers perceived their organizations as potentially learning organizations, but also the barriers for the development of the school into a learning organization can be identified.

**Keywords:** values, organizational values, school, organization, knowledge organization, learning organization; educational practices, open educational resources (OER).

**Classification JEL:** M12 – Personnel Management.

## 1. Introduction

In modern world, striving for development of knowledge society, creation of global knowledge base economics are one of the most important goals of policy of informational and knowledge society, the factor determining evolution of the most developed countries' economy. It is the condition of state's progress, prosperity and welfare. Knowledge society is a society living in the age of information, capable to use efficiently information available, using modern technologies and constantly developing one's own competence. Therefore, at school, as one of the major actors for innovations in society, with the advancement in IT technologies, the educational practices must change. One of the examples: the application of open educational resources (further on OER) may serve as a rich source for enhancement of educational practices in a contemporary school. However, this enhancement is related to certain prerequisites; as, e.g., A. Bennet & D. Bennet (2005) state that future organizations will be characterized by three characteristics: 1) constant learning; 2) creation, protection, application and transfer of knowledge, the main resource of the organization; 3) organization's wisdom that is expressed by its capability to realize, explain and respond to challenges of environment. The fourth characteristic should be added to the previous three – organizational culture and professional values.

Since exact ration of knowledge organization and learning organization is not clear, however, it is obvious that they are closely related. At the moment, organization is described as part of information and knowledge community in which all activity is based on learning, intercommunication, and common problems solving. These activity features describe the learning organization. N. Blanchard & J. Thaker (2012) state that the following main elements are typical to learning organizations: personal mastery, developing of common vision, team learning, systemic thinking, systemic problems solving, experimentation, learning from experience as well as spread of other knowledge.

According to the Law of Education of the Republic of Lithuania (2007), education performs its mission best when its development coincides and prevails development of the society. For this reason, re-orientation of education system according to concept of learning organization is very important (Chapman, 1996). Learning now must take place regularly and it is the goal and the existence state of everybody: individual and organization (Senge, 2000, 1994; Flood, 1993; Fullan, 1993; Drucker, 1993; Fink, Stoll, 1996 and others). Pace of developments in technologies (which in many cases today is directly related to enhancement of IT components in technologies, or IT enhancements per se) and social changes now are so fast that ability of pupils to achieve better results in a changing surrounding will depend on ability of schools to adapt teaching content, methods and behavior norms to new needs (Everard & Morris, 1997). Therefore teachers in some instances are simply compelled to rely on the information on the web; in an e-book, rather than on information in a traditional book. Traditional printing is giving way to e-books and other web-based resources, therefore, competence in using web-resources: filtering; checking information, modifying informational entries is becoming of utmost importance for a contemporary teacher. But in many cases that is not easy, because of several reasons: teachers' competence in IT should be enhanced, also, the competence on legal issues for using materials 'out there on the web' should be strengthened. That is, teachers have to learn faster than ever; and the pace of learning is directly related to the environment, to the atmosphere at a school. In other words, the researchers were interested on a question whether a school supports learning of all its members, especially teachers (does a school have characteristics attributed to a learning organization?).

School, as learning organization, is in different aspects analyzed by Fullan (1993), Drucker (1993), Dalin, Rolf & Kleekamp (1993), Hargreaves (1995), Fink & Stoli (1996), Chapman (1996), Everard & Morris (1997), Hargreaves (1999), and others. The following Lithuanian authors can be mentioned: Jucevičienė (1994) who explored university as a learning organization, V. Targamadzė (1998) who analyzed assumptions and conditions of Lithuanian secondary education schools becoming learning organization. Having generalized to learning organization attributed characteristics, it can be stated that the following main components are typical to it: learning as central value of learning organization culture; learning expediency and result (changes in organization – as learning outcome); learning activity and processes (work with information, its gather and treatment, learning promotion mechanism, development of learning abilities, etc.), (Simonaitienė, 2001). As it can be seen, we can add to previous list especially a culture and values of organization condition, if organization, in this case, school, will become learning organization.

Organizational values are the essence of organizational culture, and united acknowledgement of these values makes it strong. Values are long-term belief, connecting members of the organization for common activity and striving for goal. Every member of the organization has to realize them, sustain them, and follow them. That's why the values are the main element of organizational culture.

Values are important in the organization because the resemblance in perception of the same organizational values makes an organizational culture effective and functioning (Weiss, 2001). Perceived organizational values refer to employees' beliefs about what practice are acceptable or appropriate in their organization. Organizational values are a long-term belief that connects members of the organization for co-operation and for implementation of the goals of organization. Values also serve as standards for evaluating employees' behavior and organizational success. Different studies show relationship between organizational values and individual values (Ros, Schwartz & Surkiss, 1999; Adamonienė & Ruibyte, 2013), self-esteem (Naus, Vaniterson & Roe, 2007), ethical behavior (Jin, Drozdenko & Bassett, 2007), organizational commitment (Finelgan, 2000), and other important organizational factors.

However, also the significance of teacher's competence should be mentioned in the context of how values and competencies are interrelated. With an emphasis on values, the competencies in some instances may remain on margins and vice versa. The intersection and synergy of both may lead to a successful organization for education and for children. As K. Pukelis (2004) notes, the competencies of teachers are the main and – still – even today – the primary resource of any educational organization.

From the viewpoint of *defining research problem*, typical to learning organizations are: personal mastery, developing of common vision, team learning, systemic thinking, systemic problems solving, experimentation, learning from experience as well as dissemination of most recent knowledge, competencies and practices (in our case: introduction of open educational resources as the tool for enhancement of both teaching and learning experiences). Reorientation of education system according to concept of learning organization is very important. Contemporary school is expected to act as a change agent, and therefore expectations for teaching and learning experiences are ever increasing. That is, the learning in schools (as organizations) has to be faster than ever. The project LangOER 2013–4107/001–001); (No. 543239-LLP1-1-2013-LV-KA2-KA2NW (the Faculty of Public Security at Mykolas Romeris University is the partner in a Consortium led by the Fryske Academy in the Netherlands) enabled approaching Lithuanian teachers with the question about the relation between learning in organizations and the values behind learning. According to R. L. Daft (2010), term of learning organization can be defined as philosophy or attitude to organization and role of employees in it. There are no such philosophies or common visions, reflecting the culture and values of school organization in the context of constant learning systemic exploration in Lithuania, thus, this study is striving to find out the values existing in the school organization in the context of learning organization, and how employees perceive them, because only clearly defined and named values become a management tool, helping in purposeful formation of wanted attitudes and behavior of employees.

*Purpose of the investigation* is to analyze the organizational values of teachers and determine peculiarities of school organizational values system in the context of learning organization. The tasks are:

- To research peculiarities of school organizational values and their hierarchy;
- To determine which values of school organization are mostly related to values of a learning organization, and – therefore – most favorable for enhancement of application of open educational resources.

The research was performed by using methods of analysis of scientific literature and questionnaire. Characteristics of school organizations' employees values system determined during the research allow evaluation of the present situation, predicting of needs for changes of value system and recommendations for their implementation.

## 2. Research method

To achieve research objective the questionnaire to investigate the values of the school organization, the questionnaire of Glomseth, R., Gottschalk, P. & Hole A. S. (2010), who had classified police organizational values dimensions, forming the scale of 21 bipolar values, was used. We find it suitable for study of school organizational values and used is purposely to get data which could be comparable with data from different kind of organizations. Making the scale of values, we added 5 statements reflecting learning organization issues. Organization values' dimensions meanings:

1. *Time firm/Time floats*. Scale indicates whether the organization effectively plans working time and outlines clear deadlines of tasks.
2. *Changes/Traditions*. Employees are open to change and new activities or on the contrary traditional and time tested methods are important in their work.
3. *Individualism/Group orientation*. Supported initiative and personal contribution, or it is seeking collaboration with others to achieve common goals.
4. *Freedom/Control*. People are given autonomy in their work or there are many restrictions and controls.
5. *Privacy/Openness*. People do not show their real thoughts and feelings or openly share personal information.
6. *Informality/Formality*. Employees have a clear definition of what needs to be done; communication is rather formal and defined by rules.
7. *Individual competition/Co-operation*. Different groups of people collaborate, or anyone is trying to achieve or exceed personal results.
8. *Equality and Empowerment/Hierarchy*. Leaders are open to employees of all levels, or power and management is in hands of a few individuals or groups.
9. *Short-term objectives/Long term objectives*. Long-term performance goals and measures for achieving them are formulated and explained, or employees are interested in short-term objectives and do not see prospects.
10. *Work/Balance*. People need to devote more of their time for work in the organization than other activities or it is more important to take care of your health, family, leisure time than to indulge job.
11. *Task/Relationship*. The most important at work – to achieve good performance and improve your professional skills or you focus on there in the team would be good friendly relations.
12. *Direct/Indirect*. Conflicts are analyzed and constructively dealt with or communication is formal and businesslike.
13. *Practical/Philosophical*. Individuals deal with work situations and problems solely on the basis of practical experience and knowledge or in order to improve performance use and assimilate new theoretical knowledge and techniques.
14. *Safety/Challenges*. To ensure the safety of employees the organization analyses situations, plans, develops skills or organization applies constant changes in order to overcome the challenges posed by the continuous nature of the crime transitions.
15. *Security and Integrity/Effectiveness and Productivity*. In performance of their duties staff complies with laws and ethical standards or in order to achieve greater efficiency and productivity they are allowed discretion.
16. *Firm leadership/individual creativity*. People obey leaders unconditionally or creative thinking is encouraged in the organization or workplace.
17. *Openness/closeness*. Deny or conceal adverse information from the public or nothing bears no responsibility for errors, so they keep recurring.
18. *Craft organization/Knowledge organization*. Focus on practical skills and standard methods of operation or tends to respond to citizens' expectations and to make the change in work.
19. *Stability/Instability*. Organization observes a clear vision and priorities or strategy objectives and priorities are changed regularly.
20. *A learning organization/Non-learning organization*. Employees in different departments exchange information, knowledge and experience in the organization it is cared for staff development or vice versa.

21. *Recognition (rating)/Repudiation*. Employees are objectively, fairly and adequately evaluated according to the results, all receive financial or other compensation for the results (and the managers and staff) or the opposite.

For each group of values two propositions were formulated. To the learning organizational value five additional propositions was added in. Subjects had to evaluate in a 5-point scale (1 – strongly disagree, 5 – strongly agree) the extent to which the statements about the values inherent in their organization. Internal consistency for scale is Cronbach alpha 0.90.

The study involved 170 Kaunas school's personnel. The number of female respondents was 151 (88.8%), male – 19 (11.2%). The respondents according to the age were distributed as follows: 25–35 year (6.5%); 36–45 year (21.1%); 46–55 year (46.5%); 56–65 year (24.7%); and more than 66 year (11.2%). The distribution of seniority shows that dominant part of respondents (71%) works at school more than 20 years and 20% from 11 to 20 years. 64.7% works as teachers and 35.3% – as principals.

The survey took place in February – March 2016. Invitations with the reference to web-based questionnaire were distributed via Kaunas schools institutions email, 170 have received filled questionnaire. Anonymity of the respondents was also stressed. Empirical data was treated by methods of mathematical statistics (using SPSS 22).

### 3. Results

According to the data, for school teachers the most important in their work is striving for good work results and development of own professional skills (4.26), terms for task performance are clearly determined in their organizations (4.14). The results (Figure 1) reveal that, in teachers' opinion, it is aimed at school to perform work aims while collaborating with the others (4.06), besides, staff development is considered (3.98) as well as abilities of employees to use modern e-technologies are assessed (4.05).

According to the statements of the respondents questioned, following clear vision and priorities determined are prevailing in the teachers activity (3.97) and there is long-term activity goals and the measures to reach them are formulated (3.94), while performing their duties the employees are following the requirements of the law and ethics (3.94) and in striving for activity improvement new theoretical knowledge and methods are used and implemented (3.93). Effectively planned work time (3.92) traditional verified work methods are important in the work (3.82), stimulated creative thinking in the organization (3.92), clear definition of what should be done is formulated by organization (3.84), supported initiative and personal contribution (3.81).

The data suggests that prerequisites for learning in Lithuanian schools for teachers exist, therefore there is a foundation for enhancement of educational practices by application of OER.

There is some dis-balance between the work and personal matters in the organization: employees consider that work in school requires more time than other activity (3.74) and are not sure if it is the most important to care about own health, family, leisure than indulge in work. Table 1 presents the average score of evaluation of professional values composing every group of values. In evaluating values opposite to each other, it can be seen which organizational values for employees seems more typical to their organization. Few most important values of the researched organization can be distinguished (represented values averages significantly differ (by Paired Samples Test) from opposite values):

- *Task prior to relationship* (4.26 points) – the most important in the work is striving for good work results and development of own professional skills. Thus, the organization is more oriented towards tasks than to micro-climate and relationship.



Figure 1: The hierarchy of teachers values (in average score), (own study)

- Time firm prior to time floats (4.14 points) – the organization regards a purposeful use of time and punctuality.
- Group orientation prior to Individualism (4.06 points). The organization is seeking collaboration with others to achieve common goals (Note: this one is especially important for a successful and effective application of open educational resources).
- *Learning organization prior to non-learning organization* (4.05 points) – employees of different subdivisions are sharing information, knowledge and experience, organization value the teachers' capacity to use modern e-technology.
- *Stability prior to instability* (3.97 points). Organization observes clear vision and priorities.
- *Long-term goals prior to short-term goals* (3.94 points). Long-term performance goals and measures for achieving them are formulated and explained.
- *Security and integrality prior to effectiveness and efficiency* (3.94 points). Employees while performing duties are following the requirements of the law and ethics. In the organization it is more important to follow the law, rules, and instructions. Important to note that differences between those values are not significant.
- *Philosophical prior to practical* (3.93 points). Individuals or group in order to improve performance use and assimilate new theoretical knowledge and techniques in striving for activity improvement new theoretical knowledge and methods are used and implemented (differences are not significant).
- *Individual creativity prior to firm leadership* (3.92 points). Creative thinking is encouraged in the organization or workplace.
- *Formality prior to informality* (3.84 points). In the organization, it is clearly described what should be done. Organization is controlled and predicted.
- *Traditions prior to changes* (3.82 points). Traditional, verified work methods are important in the work of teachers (differences are not significant). (Note: this one is especially important for a successful and effective application of open educational resources).
- *Freedom prior to control* (3.79 points). People are given autonomy in their work.

Table 1: Average of organization's values evaluation (own study)

No.	Values of the organizations	Statements describing the values	Evaluation in average points
1	Time firm/ time floats	...effectively planned work time.	3.92
		...clear terms for tasks performance outlined.	4.14
2	Changes/tradition	...people are open o changes and new activity.	3.57
		...traditional verified work methods are important in the work	3.82
3	Individualism/ group orientation	...striving for achievement of work goals in cooperation with others.	4.06
		...supported initiative and personal contribution.	3.81
4	Freedom/control	...people are given freedom in their work.	3.79
		...there are many restrictions and control in activity as well.	2.77
5	Privacy/openness	...people are not expressing their true thoughts and feelings.	2.85
		...people are sharing personal information frankly.	3.46
6	Informality/ formality	...clear definition of what should be done.	3.84
		...communication is formal enough and described by rules.	2.76
7	Individual competition/ cooperation	...different groups of people are collaborating.	3.76
		...everyone is trying to reach or exceed personal results.	3.58
8	Equality and	...leaders are open to employees of all levels.	3.64

	empowerment/ hierarchy	...power and management are in hand of few individuals or groups.	3.02
9	Short-term goals/long-term goals	...long-term activity goals and the measures to reach them are formulated.	3.94
		...people are interested in short-term goals and don't see perspective.	2.76
10	Work/balance	...work in the organization requires more time than other activity.	3.74
		...it is more important to care about own health, family, leisure than indulge in work.	3.07
11	Task/relationship	...the most important at work is striving for good work results and development of own professional skills.	4.26
		...care for good friendly relationship in the collective.	3.78
12	Direct/indirect	...conflicts are analyzed and solved positively.	3.46
		...communication is formal and objective.	2.76
13	Practical/ philosophical	...people are solving working situations and problems with reference to practical experience and acquired knowledge only.	3.30
		...in striving for activity improvement new theoretical knowledge and methods are used and implemented.	3.93
14	Safety/challenges	...situation analysis, planning, development of skills are performed for employees' safety.	3.48
		...performance of different changes in order to overcome challenges caused by constant change of crime character.	3.03
15	Security and integrality/ effectiveness and productivity	...while performing their duties the employees are following the requirements of the law and ethics.	3.94
		...in striving for more effectiveness and efficiency it is allowed acting at discretion.	3.36
16	Firm leadership/ individual creativity	...leaders are obeyed unconditionally.	2.90
		...stimulated creative thinking in the organization or work place.	3.92
17	Openness/closeness	...denies or hides negative information from society.	2.55
		...nobody takes responsibility for mistakes, therefore they are reoccurring.	2.39
18	Craft organization/ knowledge organization	...is oriented towards practical skills and standard methods of activity.	3.28
		...tends to consider the expectations of citizens and make changes in the activity.	3.62
19	Stability/instability	...constantly changing strategic goals and priorities in the organization.	2.63
		...following clear vision and priorities determined.	3.97
20	Learning organization/ nonlearning organization	...employees of different subdivisions are sharing information, knowledge and experience.	3.74
		...the organization cares about employees' development.	3.98
		...evaluates use of modern e-technologies abilities by pedagogues.	4.05
		...takes care of constant improvement of employees' qualification in a field of computer literacy	3.74
		...those employees are noticed and encouraged who use open education resources or other digital media for their pedagogic activity	3.55
		...share of experience with colleagues of innovative teaching methodology use is organized	3.74
21	Recognition (appreciation)/ repudiation	...employees are evaluated straight, right and properly in accordance with the results.	3.43
		...everyone receives financial/or another reward for the results achieved (both managers and employees).	3.18



#### 4. Discussion and conclusion

Learning organization defined as organization where people can always expand their competence to achieve desired results, new and open thinking patterns and collective aspirations can be developed freely to see the whole (Šedžiuviene & Vveinhardt, 2009). According to the results of this research it can be concluded that teachers in researched school organizations perceived their organizations as learning organizations that care about employees' development. Sharing innovative teaching methods and experiences with colleagues is permanently organized and valued constant improvement of employees' qualification in a field of computer literacy. This is especially important with the focus of this study and paper: what are the values behind successful and effective enhancement of educational practices by applying open educational resources (as stipulated by activities in the project LangOER 2013–4107/001–001); (No. 543239-LLP1-1-2013-LV-KA2-KA2NW). Educators' skills to use modern e-technologies are assessed. The employees who use open educational resources or other digital material are promoted. In organization people are given freedom in their work and stimulated creative thinking. As is clear from the evaluations there is still room for improvement, but the trend is encouraging. The dominant trend values show that at schools orientation to results, time structuring, long-term objectives and compliance with the rules and regulations is dominating. However, the values which reflect that school organization is relatively modern, flexible and focused on the freedom and creativity are also very important. However, the stumbling blocks to the development of the school into a learning organization can be tendency to use traditional verified work methods in the work or attachment to the requirements or traditional verified work methods.

What should be particularly emphasized is the overall moderate positive assessments that teachers gave to their organizational culture. And however, the 'moderate' assessments, even if positive, also raise some concerns. Firstly, note that value *task prior to relationship* was given almost the highest point: 4.26 points. It would seem that in school also relationships must be important, but with the pressures for competitiveness that even young children are exposed to, even a school culture becomes task orientated. Secondly, teachers evaluated highly the statement *employment of e-technologies being evaluated* (received 4.05). Positive and potentially negative aspects should be mentioned here. It is positive that e-technologies seem to have gained credibility as one of major parts of competencies of teachers. Negative (and that was especially evident in other studies that the Lang OER team performed), (Zuzeviciute et al, 2016) is the fact that sometimes teachers may feel assessed according to this particular criterion (do they use e-technologies). But – the question remains – do teachers receive the support in the process or in building their competence in this respect.

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