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*Vanmany Vannasy, Souksakhone Sengsouliya*

# KEY PREDICTORS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF WORKPLACE LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

## ABSTRACT

*This paper employed an integrative review approach to identify the key predictors of the implementation of workplace learning in higher education. The conceptual framework for this review stems mainly from the theoretical and empirical literature on workplace learning. Using the methods of integrative review, the authors of the present paper synthesized and integrated the findings from 38 included papers. The review suggests that there are seven key predictors that make workplace learning in higher education realistic, including individual learning, team learning, the organisational culture of learning, leadership, partnership, the employer-employee relationship, and the national policy system. Future inquiries would benefit from conducting a comparative study of theoretical perspectives and gathering empirical data within a particular context.*

**Keywords:** *higher education, predictors of workplace learning, workplace learning*

## KLJUČNI KAZALNIKI PRI IZVAJANJU UČENJA NA DELOVNEM MESTU V VISOKOŠOLSKEM IZOBRAŽEVANJU – POVZETEK

*Članek uporabi metodo integrativnega pregleda, s katerim opredeli ključne napovedovalne kazalnike pri izvajanju učenja na delovnem mestu v visokošolskem izobraževanju. Konceptualni okvir pregleda izhaja predvsem iz teoretične in empirične literature o učenju na delovnem mestu. Na podlagi analize 38 člankov je bilo identificiranih sedem ključnih kazalnikov, zaradi katerih je učenje na delovnem mestu v visokošolskem izobraževanju realistično: individualno učenje, skupinsko učenje, organizacijska kultura učenja, vodstvo, partnerstvo, odnos med delodajalcem in zaposlenim ter nacionalna sistemska politika. Članek se sklene s priporočili za prihodnje izvajanje primerjalne raziskave teoretičnih perspektiv in empiričnih podatkov.*

**Ključne besede:** *visokošolsko izobraževanje, kazalniki učenja na delovnem mestu, učenje na delovnem mestu*

***Vanmany Vannasy, lecturer,*** *Faculty of Education, National University of Laos, Lao PDR, vanmanyv@gmail.com*

***Souksakhone Sengsouliya, lecturer,*** *Faculty of Education, National University of Laos, Lao PDR, noysoukssly@yahoo.com*

## INTRODUCTION

In the competitive world, it is necessary for every workplace to develop in line with learning organisation concepts. In doing so, the workplace needs to increase its roles, responsibilities, and commitment (Jenner, 2020; Ovesni, 2020). However, workplace learning is a complicated area that consists of several dimensions. This paper reviews a wide range of literature, looking into theoretical perspectives on workplace learning such as definitions, activities, goals, as well as factors that influence the realisation of workplace learning. The present paper aims to investigate the key predictors of the implementation of workplace learning in the higher education context.

Investigations of workplace learning have been of great interest among educational researchers (e.g., Kerka, 1997; Lester & Costley, 2010; Maxwell, 2014; Mills & Whittaker, 2001). In previous literature, different terms are used interchangeably for "workplace learning", including learning on the job, learning at work, learning through work, work-based learning, organisational learning or learning within organisations. This begs the question: what is the full definition of the term "workplace learning"? According to Arygris (1964, as cited in Jones & Hendry, 1994), workplace learning is related to the characteristics of the learning of individuals. For Jones and Hendry (1994), "workplace learning" refers to training focusing on sharing knowledge and discussing the present conditions of work. Learning can be flexible and depends on its modes of conduct and assessment. Seagraves et al. (1996, as cited in Keeling et al., 1998) stated that workplace learning is "learning linked to the requirements of peoples' jobs… learning for work… learning at work… learning through work" (p. 6). Workplace learning practitioners define the term as a process of changing organisations as a collective by jointly creating knowledge for innovation and extending this pursuit to organisational routines (Fenwick, 2010), as well as a process of change within organisations at multiple levels, through social, psychological, and knowledge transfer aspects (Souza & Takahashi, 2019). In short, workplace learning discusses individuals' activities of learning about a job that prepare them and their organisation for the changing world.

The concept of workplace learning appeared in the 1980s. This type of learning has become very popular among studies of management, leadership, and business as a basis of better understanding how organisations can learn and initiate transformations in response to environmental factors (Wang & Ahmed, 2003, as cited in Cebrian et al., 2013). Shaffer (1992) wrote that "[t]he concept of organizational learning includes expectational learning and experiential learning. Organizations use expectations about future outcomes to select current alternatives, borrow ideas from other organizations, introduce incremental changes based on environmental feedback, and introduce original innovative variations" (p. 24). Furthermore, Shaffer (1992) reviewed and agreed with other studies (e.g., Duncan, 1992, as cited in Shaffer, 1992; Hedberg, 1981, as cited in Shaffer, 1992) that organisational learning constitutes a continuous process driven by the organisation's interactions with external networks. Several scholars see learning as a key driving force for growth and innovation in every organisation.

Workplace learning has some unique characteristics that might be different from traditional learning in school. Lester and Costley (2010) explained that workplace learning constitutes activities enhancing the employees' skills through professional development and problem-solving tactics in order to improve their work performance. Lester and Costley (2010) stated that workplace learning is sometimes referred to as informal or non-formal learning. Workplace learning can consist of low and high levels of academic knowledge, thus enabling multi-tiered learning. For Juceviciene and Edintaite (2012), workplace learning is most likely to occur in informal rather than formal environments; especially in a university context, faculty members are likely to learn and exchange ideas about work with colleagues in their own unit/department only. That means they are not likely to interact for learning with others in different units. Effective workplace learning has to be integrated with knowledge of pedagogical science which involves understanding how to educate adults as well as grasping students' learning realities and their existing experience (Costley, 2011). Costley (2011) further noted that workplace learning does not exclusively occur within a university campus but can also be conducted in other workplaces beside universities.

Recent studies (Jenner, 2020; Ovesni, 2020) have found that learning within the workplace is to occur if the workplace increases its roles, responsibilities, and commitment. According to Jenner (2020), developments in the workplace can be achieved as long as the workplace structure is supportive. Jenner further argued that learning within the workplace is influenced not only by active employees but also the workplace's qualified structures. Similarly, it is a key task for every workplace to establish an organisational climate that fosters positive perceptions and behaviours regarding continuous education/learning among employees (Ovesni, 2020). According to the existing literature, the development of organisational learning is linked to two learning patterns called "single loop learning" and "double loop learning" (Jones & Hendry, 1994). Explaining these concepts, Bateson (1972, as cited in Jones & Hendry, 1994) argued that "single loop learning" is about searching for errors and correcting them. "Double loop learning" is the process of identifying the causality and/or the consequences of a problem prior to solving the problem itself. In this way, "double loop learning" refers to learning that brings changes to an organisation's values which may cause "conflicts" and "power struggles". The concept of workplace learning is connected to the concept of adult learning. The learning mode of adults, as opposed to children, tends to be oriented towards autonomous learning, experiential learning, and learning in relation to different aspects of their work lives (Jones & Hendry, 1994). Jones and Hendry also referred to the works of authors such as Knowles (1980, as cited in Jones & Hendry, 1994), who argued that adults favour self-regulated learning, learning by doing, or actively participating in activities in the learning process. Kerka (1997) pointed out that what is taking place in workplace learning is constructivist. From the literature reviewed, workplace learning actually shares similar concepts with adult learning, in which adults prefer to learn about work and/or learn how to address some particular problems concerning their work.

Crossan et al. (1999, as cited in Chuen Huang & Shih, 2011) coined the 4I Model of organisational learning which identifies the four stages of implementing organisational learning: (1) Intuiting: learning or transfer of knowledge and experiences between individuals; (2) Interpreting: learners process ideas, actions, etc. stemming from interacting or discussing with other people. At this stage, learners develop their own cognitive map; (3) Integrating: learners translate these ideas from communication into practice; (4) Institution: the final stage refers to the process of shaping organisational learning in more structured, institutional, and strategic ways.

Mills and Whittaker (2001) wrote that workplace learning, in the context of higher education institutions, has three overall roles. Firstly, it fulfils the needs of employers and industries to upskill their respective workforces. Secondly, it analyses problems regarding work performance within organisations and strengthens the connection between industries and educational institutions. Thirdly, workplace learning meets the needs of individuals for personal growth and professional development. According to Andersen and Morch (2005, as cited in Gustafsson & Thang, 2017), "work-based learning", "work-integrated learning", or "problem-based learning" are called new learning processes that meet the demands of people's modern working lives, and they can be both self-regulated learners and problem solvers. Costley (2007) added that the aims of workplace learning are to enable employees to attain high levels of knowledge and to have the opportunity to participate in professional development activities, with businesses aiming to utilise this knowledge and these skills to the benefit of their organisations. Workplace learning is beneficial to workplace growth and productivity in many ways: it improves human capital, helps to reduce skills gaps, and increases employees' motivation (Basit et al., 2015). Guta (2018) agreed that workplace learning improves organisational performance as the aim of learning within an organisation is to increase the capacity of the organisation's employees. To underline this notion, Guta referred to two well-known theorists (Crossan et al., 1995, as cited in Guta, 2018; Fiol & Lyles, 1985, as cited in Guta, 2018), who proposed the assumption that learning influences, enhances, and leads to changes in performances.

Workplace learning is found to have a positive impact on teaching performance through improving lecturers' teaching skills (Hartono et al., 2017). Workplace learning serves as a framework that enhances young learners' abilities for employment; it also enables adult learners to be exposed to continuous learning opportunities for autonomous professional development (Garnett, 2016). Garnett further noted that workplace learning is crucial for all workplaces as its activities aim to improve overall performance. In the words of Durrant et al. (2009, as cited in Garnett, 2016), "Work-Based Learning programmes are designed to promote professional and personal development and intend to benefit both learners and the workplace" (p. 2).

The review of literature suggests that there are two key elements to workplace learning, namely individual learning and organisational learning; together, these two modes of learning lead to change (Rowley, 1998). Any organisational growth cannot be realistic without learning. Jones and Hendry (1994) noted that organisations usually depend

on "acceptable learning" that promotes the direction of the organisation and perpetuates how the employees ought to act. The organisation's ability to learn is recognised as a key characteristic of the "efficacious organization" (Cepic & Krstovic, 2011). Furthermore, Garnett (2016) argued that "individual knowledge" is even more important as it serves as a basis of communication with others in the workplace. In the same vein, Basit et al. (2015) stated that the success of workplace learning programs in higher education depends on how actively learners participate and how much learners take away from them. Most importantly, all of the relevant people, from executives to deans, should collaborate closely within these institutions, including putting efforts into and having positive attitudes towards the implementation of workplace learning. Moreover, it is necessary to have a good connection with employers. Close collaboration with employers is key for determining the learners', i.e., the employees', training needs, and for designing training content accordingly.

A model proposed by Watkins and Marsick (1993, 1996, as cited in Cepic & Krstovic, 2011), the "integrative model of learning organisations", aims to capture the development process and transformational revolution of organisations. Several organisations have utilised the model to turn themselves into learning organisations. This model focuses on the two main parts of an organisation, people and structure. It encompasses seven dimensions of making the learning process within organisations more realistic at each level (individual, team, organisation-wide). The seven dimensions include: (1) Providing opportunities for continuous learning; (2) Promoting research and dialogue; (3) Promoting collaboration and team learning; (4) Establishing a collective learning system; (5) Supporting a shared vision; (6) Linking the organisation to its partners; and (7) Enhancing strategic leadership for learning. Garnett et al. (2008, as cited in Garnett, 2016) proposed the key features of the structural capital of higher education institutions which make workplace learning more realistic: (1) Structures, regulations and procedures should enhance partnerships with other stakeholders; (2) Structures and procedures should encourage learning at work rather than classroom-based learning on campus; (3) Regulations and procedures should facilitate individual learning and trainings; (4) A system for evaluating learning outcomes should be established; and (5) The administrative system should be supportive of and flexible for learners who work full-time. What is mentioned above can be a useful model for developing a learning organisation, especially Watkins and Marsick's (1993, 1996) integrative model, as it serves as a framework for workplace learning practitioners and/or adult educators to further strengthen the activities of workplace learning in their own work environments.

Several scholars (e.g., Aminbeidokhti et al., 2016; Basit et al., 2015; Ponnuswamy & Manohar, 2016) agree that learning at work is important to many organisations, including higher education institutions. Simply put, workplace learning is recognised as a very valuable concept because its institutions serve as role models in developing and increasing knowledge and skills for human resources. Higher education organisations need to develop to become learning organisations and be committed to the world of learning within

the workplace to prepare its employees for the challenges of the 21st century (Cepic & Krstovic, 2011). Yet the literature reviewed pointed out that the higher education sector, especially universities, are not effectively engaged in workplace learning (Bauman, 2005). Universities face significant barriers to embrace workplace learning, e.g., in regard to many universities' more traditional learning modes which are different from the workplace learning approach (Johnson, 2001). Many faculties are also rather reluctant to change (Abbasi et al., 2015). The issue of workplace learning in higher education institutions is of great interest to educators yet few works have explored which factors influence or predict its likelihood. This paper, therefore, examines the theoretical perspectives of workplace learning in order to identify predictors for making workplace learning more realistic in higher education. The guiding research question for the present paper is: "What are the key predictors of the implementation of workplace learning in higher education?"

## METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

This paper is an integrative review of literature. According to Tavares de Souza et al. (2010), this type of research design involves analysing both theoretical and empirical studies and has several purposes, one of which is discussing a wide range of problems of a particular topic. There are five steps in the process of an integrative review. First, key guiding questions are established. Second, relevant literature is identified and in the third step evaluated according to a set of criteria. Fourth, the data is analysed in response to the research question. Finally, the findings are presented in a structured way (Whittemore & Knafl, 2005). This paper follows the five-step method to ensure a systematic, integrative review of the proposed topic, whilst also incorporating the approach of systematic review. Newman and Gough (2020) noted that the systematic review approach analyses secondary research together with the results of primary research to respond to a set research question.

**Figure 1**
*Search terms for the integrative review*

Search string 1: "workplace learning" OR "work-based learning" OR "organisational learning" OR "organizational learning" OR "on the job learning" OR "learning organization"

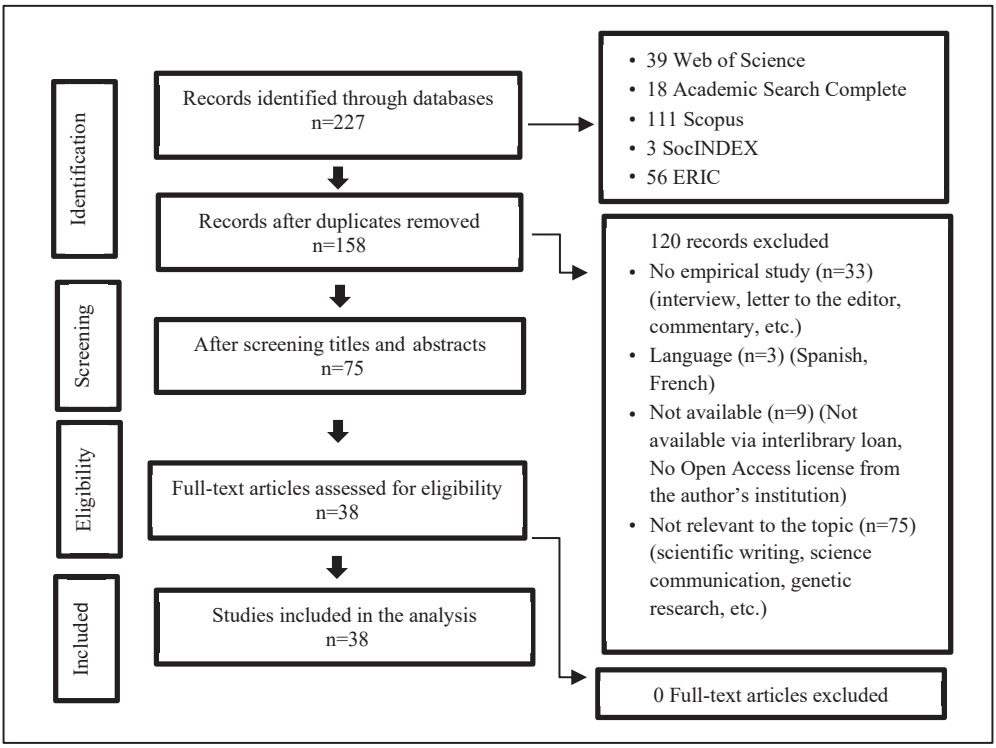
AND

Search string 2: "adult education" OR "adult learning" OR "lifelong learning" OR "lifelong education" OR "continuing education" OR "continuing study" OR "higher education" OR "further study" OR "vocational education"

The papers included in the review were downloaded from different electronic databases, such as ASC, ERIC, SCOPUS, SocINDEX, and Web of Sciences. According to the nature of systematic review, we developed the search terms (keywords) "workplace learning"

and "adult education", then developed two search strings from the determined keywords using the Boolean operators "AND" and "OR". That means this review searched for papers/studies from the databases with a combination of the two search strings. This is a type of keyword search. It functions well with searching and broadening results on the web and in databases because the search looks for items of studies in every record if the words used are present in article titles, abstracts or keywords tagged to the text (see Fig. 1 for details).

**Figure 2**
*Flow diagram of the search process according to the integrative review method*




Applying this strategy, 227 papers were initially identified. However, the criteria employed for including qualified papers in the review were: (a) relevant to the research topic, i.e., including keywords such as workplace learning, organisational learning, learning organisation, learning on the job, and continuing education; (b) empirical research on workplace learning; (c) theoretical literature on concepts of workplace learning; (d) papers published in English only; papers relevant to the university context; and (f) papers downloadable or accessible as a PDF file. In the present review, 38 papers met the set criteria and were used in the review. The remaining articles were excluded based on the following reasons: 33 were not empirical studies (e.g., reports, conference speeches), 3 were written in other

languages, such as Spanish and French, 9 were non-downloadable/accessible, and 75 were not relevant to the topic (see Fig. 2 for details). Regarding the synthesis process, we listed all the findings from the individual papers that were included with the goal of integrating all the information to produce a better response to the research question. Likewise, coding and making categories were also conducted in order to present the findings in a structured way, in particular regarding the key predictors of workplace learning.

## RESULTS

The review suggests that the implementation of workplace learning is predicted by seven factors (see Table 1): (1) Individual learning, which refers to the learning processes of individuals. Simply put, individuals are key drivers for workplace changes because individuals are the starting point of learning. Through workplace learning, they can further support workplace goals, be role models, and promote the interaction of work and learning. Individuals' readiness for change is a prerequisite for workplace change; (2) Team learning, which discusses the learning of and within the team. This factor is another powerful predictor for workplace learning to occur. Team learning constitutes an open space in which to exchange ideas and to learn together as workplace members. The literature review indicated that teams empower change, teams determine the quality of teamwork, and teams develop a culture of learning. In other words, people cannot learn without sharing; (3) Organisational culture of learning, which concerns learning behaviours within the workplace. To make learning at work possible, there needs to be a culture of learning within the organisation. The presence of such a culture can take shape in the form of systematic working methods, learning management systems, as well as the presence of working strategies; (4) Leadership, which refers to the abilities such as motivating all members at work to participate in learning activities, arranging or providing learning opportunities, planning and understanding benefits of workplace learning, as well as the leadership's active participation in and commitment to knowledge acquisition; (5) Partnership, which refers to the care for collaboration with others in promoting learning at work. Developing effective workplace learning is strongly associated with clearly understanding the context in which the learning process is to be established. This involves having good partners promoting the relevance of learning which also increases organisations' understanding of social trends; (6) Employer-employee relationship, which discusses the relationship between employer and employee. This factor has been found to be another influential predictor of workplace learning. Several organisations put great emphasis on strengthening the relationship between employer and employee as the congruency of their respective needs contributes to the betterment of workplace learning opportunities; and (7) National policy system, which describes the governmental support in policy. A guiding, central policy framework could be a starting point for workplace learning practitioners to consider when developing positive learning environments. Simply put, acknowledgement and comprehensive support for workplace learning from the government is necessary.

**Table 1**
*Key predictors of workplace learning*

| | |
|---|---|
| **Individual Learning:** | |
| Individuals with interest in and readiness for learning | Argyris and Schon (1978, as cited in Cebrian et al., 2013); Cepic and Krstovic (2011); Čierna et al. (2016), Garnett (2016); Gustafsson and Thang (2013); Keeling et al. (1998); Maxwell (2014); Shaffer (1992); Simon (1991, as cited in Ponnuswamy & Manohar, 2016); Hartono et al. (2017) |
| Individuals supporting workplace goals | Hartono et al. (2017) |
| Individuals as role models | Farmer et al. (1992, as cited in Kerka, 1997) |
| Individuals as key for team interaction | Johnson and Thomas (1994, as cited in Kerka, 1997); Juceviciene and Edintaite (2012) |
| Individuals having readiness for change | Reuter and Backer (2015) |
| **Team Learning:** | |
| Teams empowering and driving change at the workplace | Hartono et al. (2017); Khasawneh (2011); Toma (2012) |
| Teams as incubators of teamwork | Bauman (2005); Jones and Hendry (1994); Khasawneh (2011); Sessa et al. (2011, as cited in Hartono et al., 2011) |
| Teams developing cultures of learning | Bui and Baruch (2012); Fenwick (2010); Juceviciene and Edintaite (2012); Maxwell (2014) |
| **Organisational Culture of Learning:** | |
| Creating working values and practices | Cepic and Krstovic (2011); Čierna et al. (2016); Maxwell (2014); Rowley (1998); Ponnuswamy and Manohar (2016) |
| Giving roles and rights | Chueng Huang and Shih (2011); Maxwell (2014); Shaffer (1992) |
| Encouraging further learning | Aminbeidokhti et al. (2016); Voolaid and Ehrlich (2017) |
| Fostering self-reflection and learn to learn | Čierna et al. (2016); Costley (2007); Fenwick (2010); Jones and Hendry (1994); Habtoor et al. (2019); Rowley (1998); Salaman and Butler (1994, as cited in Rowley, 1998); Schmidt and Gibbs (2009); Souza and Takahashi (2019) |
| **Leadership:** | |
| Facilitating learning opportunities | Basit et al. (2015); Keeling et al. (1998); Jones and Hendry (1994), Shaffer (1992) |
| Developing structures and cultures of learning | Amenbeidokhti et al. (2016); Francis (2014); Knight and Trowler (2000, as cited in Ponnuswamy & Manohar, 2016); Popper and Lipshitz (2000, as cited in Khalifa & Ayoubi, 2015); Voolaid and Ehrlich (2017) |

| | |
|---|---|
| Caring for security, stability, and responding to the needs of employees | Reuter and Backer (2015) |
| Enhancing learning outcomes | Hartono et al. (2017) |
| Enhancing equity | Hartono et al. (2017) |
| Partnership: | |
| Promoting relevance in learning processes | Garnett (2016) |
| Understanding social trends | Schmidt and Gibbs (2009) |
| Employer-Employee Relationship: | |
| Fulfilling shared needs of learning | Keeling et al. (1998) |
| Facilitating interaction and reflection | Dernova and Perevozniuk (2017); Voolaid and Ehrlich (2017) |
| National Policy System: | |
| Receiving policy support | Cepic and Krstovic (2011); Costley (2007); Lauer and Wilkesmann (2017, as cited in Souza & Takahashi, 2019); Mills and Whittaker (2001) |

The detailed descriptions of key predictors of workplace leaning are reported below.

### *Individual Learning*

Individuals' learning is a key driver for workplace changes. This notion is supported by the literature reviewed (Cepic & Krstovic, 2011; Costley, 2011; Garnett, 2016; Hartono et al., 2017; Juceviciene & Edintaite, 2012; Maxwell, 2014). According to Cepic and Krstovic (2011), the core concept of a learning organisation is founded in the transformation of individual learning to workplace learning that is not merely concerned with every individual's learning process, but rather with the notion of collective learning. The learning processes of individuals are necessary for organisational change and development. An organisation, therefore, needs to develop learning experiences among its employees by providing a space for learning together, in which a substantial number of employees can participate, rather than only the managers (Cepic & Krstovic, 2011). Reuter and Backer (2015) stated that a main barrier for organisational change is individuals' resistance to change. These authors analysed theories of organisational change and pointed out that organisational change is firmly linked to the individualism of organisational members. Reuter and Backer (2015) noted that individuals' "readiness for change", i.e., their readiness to adapt their beliefs and attitudes, is a prerequisite for any organisational change. In addition, such readiness also includes the employees' understanding and acceptance of different cultures in the workplace, "motivation for change", "opportunity to change", and the "capacity to change" (Reuter & Backer, 2015), which are key for driving change within the workplace. A previous study on the capabilities of workplace learning in higher education confirmed that the faculty's acceptance and their attitudes towards workplace learning influence the transformation in the workplace (Abbasi et al., 2015). Moreover, individuals' readiness for learning new things matters. This may involve the individuals'

ability to learn as well as their existing knowledge. As Garnett (2016) put it, "individual knowledge" is important as it serves as a basis for the ability to communicate with others in the workplace. A study by Juceviciene and Edintaite (2012) pointed out that individual faculty members are more likely to exchange and share their experiences on work performance with their colleagues. This represents a form of learning which individuals typically conduct in the workplace. Furthermore, individual learning is influenced by individual characteristics such as learning experience, confidence levels, self-esteem, job intentions, and job position (Maxwell, 2014), self-perceived needs for achievement and existing professional knowledge (Hartono et al., 2017), as well as interests and benefits perceived by individuals and the organisation (Costley, 2011).

### *Team Learning*

Team learning matters. Several authors support this view (Dennis, 2007, as cited in Francis, 2014; Juceviciene & Edintaite, 2012; Khasawneh, 2011; Maxwell, 2012; Sessa et al., 2011, as cited in Hartono et al., 2017; Toma, 2012). As Khasawneh (2011) noted, in working as a team, its members can develop open spaces where dialogue and discussion are welcomed by individual members. The sustainability of learning within the workplace involves team learning and empowerment (Toma, 2012). A piece of work conducted by Khasawneh (2011) showed that two of Senge's (1990, as cited in Khasawneh, 2011) five aspects of a learning organisation are particularly crucial for team learning and having a shared vision. Khasawneh (2011) explored Jordanian faculty members' perceptions of Senge's (1990) five aspects and found that faculty members were more likely to be committed to a shared vision of the institution as they feel welcomed to share ideas with other colleagues in the university. In the same vein, Hartono et al. (2017) agreed with Sessa et al. (2011, as cited in Hartono et al. 2017) that organisational learning is strongly associated with the quality of teamwork. The culture at group level or at departmental level can also predict learners' experiences and their learning (Maxwell, 2014). Wenger (2000, as cited in Fenwick, 2010) argued that learning is facilitated by participation and structured actions of groups of practitioners where group members share aligned identities and tasks. Fenwick further saw such team learning to be concerned with real phenomena occurring at work, and it reflects the employees' daily communication at work.

### *Organisational Culture of Learning*

This paper suggests that for learning at work to be possible, there needs to be a culture of learning within the organisation. Several authors (Maxwell, 2014; Rowley, 1998; Shaffer, 1992; Voolaid & Ehrlich, 2017) agree with this argument. According to Rowley (1998), in developing a learning organisation there is no one correct model or recipe for success; every organisation needs to create its own values, practices, and systems in which to synthesize learning and working across the organisation. Rowley further noted that an organisation must be able to continuously learn from its own learning processes. If the organisation fails to do so, it may miss its chance to adapt and follow through with its transformation. Agreeing with this, Megginson and Pedler (1992, as cited in Rowley, 1998) argued that

an organisational learning strategy embodies the ways in which an organisation develops its learning processes. Recent studies pointed out that to sustain the practice of workplace learning, a culture of learning needs to be developed first (e.g., Habtoor et al., 2019; Ponnuswamy & Manohar, 2016). However, it can be challenging for organisations to develop a culture of learning as this requires strong leadership (Popper & Lipshitz, 2000, as cited in Khalifa & Ayoubi, 2015).

### *Leadership*

The feasibility of workplace learning is predicted by qualified leadership. Several authors confirmed this standpoint (Basit et al., 2015; Bui & Baruch, 2012; Hartono et al., 2017; Ponnuswamy & Manohar, 2016; Popper & Lipshitz, 2000, as cited in Khalifa & Ayoubi, 2015; Voolaid & Ehrlich, 2017). Popper and Lipshitz (2000, as cited in Khalifa and Ayoubi, 2015) argued that leadership serves as a key predictor of organisational learning through developing both the structure and the culture of an organisation. Good leadership may encompass the establishment of a supporting system or motivational factors to enhance the desired outcomes of organisational learning (Hartono et al., 2017). The workplace leader must care to respond to the needs, security, and stability of and among the organisation's employees (Reuter & Backer, 2015). Voolaid and Ehrlich (2017), who conducted research in the context of higher education, also noted that quality leadership may create feelings of belonging among members at work by developing institutional strategies, visions, and other action plans to further organisational learning. Ponnuswamy and Manohar (2016) articulated a similar view, stating that the organisational structure in higher education institutions influences staff work performance. Moreover, Basit et al. (2015) supported the view that deans' or leaders' close engagement matters as it promotes learning at work if leaders take part in every process related to organisational tasks.

### *Partnership*

Higher education institutions require partnerships and collaboration with others in promoting learning at work. Partnerships have been shown to be a key predictor of workplace learning (Akdere & Conceição, 2006; Dernova & Perevozniuk, 2017; Garnett, 2016; Schmidt & Gibbs, 2009). According to Dernova and Perevozniuk (2017), the core concept of workplace learning in higher education requires the involvement of several parties. Garnett (2016) explained that such collaborations are needed as partnerships promote learning that responds to the needs of both organisations and their individuals. As Garnett noted, flexibility is necessary in the context of workplace learning and higher education institutions. He argued that flexibility is crucial for higher education institutions to fulfil their function of upskilling labour to meet the ever changing demands of labour markets. To achieve this mission, it is very important for higher education institutions to work closely and collaboratively with partners in providing education, such as employers and other partner institutions. In the same vein, Akdere and Conceição (2006) regarded concepts such as human resource development and adult education as valuable strategies of implementing workplace learning which may help limit competency gaps at work. These two concepts

can be used in conjunction as they have several aims in common. Furthermore, Akdere and Conceição (2006) recommended that for an organisation to successfully achieve its workplace learning and organisational growth goals, human resources development and responsible professionals need to give priority to continuous learning activities. This requires the active collaboration of both practitioners and planners of adult education and human resource development. Schmidt and Gibbs (2009) agreed that partnerships matter and that the implementation of workplace learning may be realistic if organisations nominate their human resources departments to oversee workplace learning as well as of collaborations with industry partners, and with people who joined recent learning activities.

### *Employer-Employee Relationship*

The relationship between employer and employee matters. The literature review (Dernova & Perevozniuk, 2017; Keeling et al., 1998; Voolaid & Ehrlich, 2017) showed that alignment between employer and employee strongly contributes to the implementation of workplace learning. For instance, Keeling et al. (1998) argued that a form of mismatch between the two parties may lead to negative feelings towards resource development, particularly approaches to skills and knowledge development and other capacity building affairs. Such a situation may be caused by a type of top-down management. For instance, employees who have served an organisation for years tend to feel neglected if opportunities for personal or professional development needs are ignored (Keeling et al., 1998). Other authors (e.g., Dernova & Perevozniuk, 2017) agreed with this standpoint, arguing that successful learning can be facilitated through close reflection on the relationship between the employer and the employee.

### *National Policy System*

The present paper suggests that government policy serves as a significant predictor for making workplace learning realistic. Several authors agreed with this point of view (Cepic & Krstovic, 2011; Costley, 2007; Lauer & Wilkesmann, 2017, as cited in Souza & Takahashi, 2019; Mills & Whittaker, 2001; Souza & Takahashi, 2019). According to Mills and Whittaker (2001), the government's acknowledgement and understanding are necessary to implement workplace learning as a government policy and incentives can contribute to the creation of an organisation's strategies for workplace learning. Government policies act as key drivers at the macro level. Mills and Whittaker further noted that appropriate policies from the government may involve practical support, such as increased access to workplace learning resources, increased competitiveness, and innovative pedagogy. Costley (2007) agreed and stated that appropriate policies facilitate workplace learning. In addition, it is crucial to consider the effective implementation of workplace learning and developing an effective assessment approach. In public higher education institutions, the transformation of standard practices is dependent on government policies and systems. Therefore, the establishment of appropriate policies is necessary, including the requirements and the principles of the implementation of workplace learning at each level: individual, team, and organisation-wide (Cepic & Krstovic, 2011).

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

One main role of higher education institutions is to transfer knowledge to people. Yet recent literature identified several barriers for the implementation of workplace learning in universities. The present paper examined key predictors enabling workplace learning in higher education. Through an integrative review of literature, the present paper identified seven predictors, including individual learning (individuals with interest in and readiness for learning; supporting workplace goals; role models; team interaction; readiness for change), team learning (empowering and driving change; incubators of teamwork; developing cultures of learning), organisational culture of learning (organisational working values; roles and rights; encouragement; self-reflection and learning to learn), leadership (facilitating learning opportunities; developing structures of learning; caring for security, stability, responding to the needs of employees; enhancing learning outcomes and equity), partnership (promoting relevance of learning; understanding social trends), employer-employee relationship (fulfilling needs and close interaction), and national policy system (central policy support).

The findings of the present paper were discussed referring to theoretical perspectives of workplace learning in higher education. The paper's findings aim to be practical for addressing issues of implementing workplace learning. The findings may also be helpful in promoting or encouraging institutions to integrate the concept of workplace learning into their professional development activities. The identified predictors are key factors for universities to consider in their transformations to become learning organisations. However, we recommend carefully considering each organisation's context as the factors identified and analysed in this paper might not represent the realities of some countries. Bearing this in mind, Rowley (1998) noted that in developing a learning organisation there is no one correct model or recipe for success. Readers should pay close attention to the differences between countries' and organisations' environments, demographic aspects, and contextual factors. This paper and its authors are open to exchanging views and sharing experiences with researchers, adult educators, as well as workplace learning practitioners.

This piece of work conducted an integrative review of literature. The papers included in the review were selected based on a set of criteria. However, the final number of papers, i.e., the sources of data for this review, was limited. This issue might concern the fact that the present paper did not use a search filter in its search strategy. Using an appropriate filter helps to narrow the search, so that the results are more relevant to the research question. Future research on the related area/topic might consider using a search filter in the searching process (e.g., article/publication type, publication dates). Moreover, some predictors identified in this paper need to be verified by more empirical evidence. This applies particularly to the factors of the employer-employee relationship and the national policy system. These two predictors have not been researched deeply and they are firmly linked to local cultures, political conditions, and socio-economic situations in a particular country where workplace learning may take place. In conclusion, further enquiries are necessary, including taking into account different contexts, to gain a more comprehensive

picture. A mixed-method approach would be suitable for such further studies, particularly a comparative study of theoretical perspectives and empirical data within a specific context.

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