Abstract

The term "learning organisation" is used to describe organisations which are learning quickly and become more effective thanks to this concept. In these organisations learning is a motivational force which heightens short and long–term efficiency. Learning organisations are highly innovating and flexible.

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore different definitions of learning organisation and to investigate the description of culture endorsing learning in those organisations.

Velkoobchod papírem LIPA was chosen as an example of a small but rapidly developing company which tries to apply the concept of learning organisation. As a case study, this company was examined, in an attempt to determine the degree to which it might be described as a learning organisation and if the culture endorsing learning is present in this organisation or not. The research was conducted in the Czech Republic through questionnaires in December 2006.

The research data collected provides insights into the nature of learning organisations and specifically provides evidence which suggests that Velkoobchod papírem LIPA can be considered as a learning organisation. The main evidence for this assertion is the balanced evaluation which meets the minimal limit of 4 points or more of each of the characteristics. The research data also showed that in LIPA Velkoobchod papírem is appropriate culture supporting learning. This statement is corroborated by the results of the analysis of the collected data.

The recommendations for Velkoobchod papírem LIPA in connection with collected data are to focus on information technology, the sharing of information and inter-organisational learning.

Abstrakt

Termín "učící se organizace" je používán k popisu takových organizací, které se rychle učí a stávají se díky tomuto konceptu více efektivní. V takových organizacích je učení motivační silou, díky které se organizace stává více výkonnou. Učící se organizace jsou vysoce flexibilní a inovativní.

Cílem této disertace je vymezit různé definice konceptu učící se organizace a popsat kulturu podporující učení v takových organizacích.

Velkoobchod papírem LIPA byl vybrán jako příklad malé, ale rychle se rozvíjející firmy, která se snaží aplikovat koncept učící se organizace. Výzkum byl prováděn jako případová studie a ve firmě bylo zjišťováno do jaké míry může být považována za učící se organizaci a do jaké míry je zde přítomná kultura podporující učení. Výzkum byl proveden v České republice v prosinci 2006.

Data získaná v dotazníkovém výzkumu naznačují, že Velkoobchod papírem LIPA může být považován za učící se organizaci a že kultura podporující učení je v podniku přítomná. Hlavním důvodem tohoto výsledku je splnění minimálního limitu 4 bodů u každé ze zadaných charakteristik a podmínek.

Doporučení, která pro firmu LIPA vyplývají z výsledku výzkumu je především zaměření se na informační technologie, sdílení informací a učení uvnitř organizace.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Learning organisation

Šusta (2007) says that many companies spend money on employees´ development. New managerial methods are focused on the skills of the employees as crucial factor of success of the strategy. Šusta (2007) points out that managerial literature mentions that the management should be focused in the building of the concept of learning organisation.

The concept of learning organisation is characterised by the learning on individual, team and organisational level (Watkins and Marsick, 1993). It is continuous, strategically used, process – integrated and parallel to work processes. The concept of learning organisation develops the organisational skills and abilities and it develops the ability to innovate and grow (Watkins and Marsick, 1993). Learning organisation is characterised by systems which support learning and enable its sharing (Watkins and Marsick, 1993).

1.2 General Aim of the Study

The general aim of this paper is to describe learning organisation and show how it is recognised. Since the research takes the form of a case study the intention of the current research is not to attempt to generalise to a wider level but to add to what we know about learning organisations and to put forward its characteristics in the particular context of the case itself.

1.3 The specific objectives:

The specific objectives of this study are directed towards the firm which is the focus of the current research; namely LIPA Velkoobchod papírem. These objectives are now listed:

find out if the company is a learning organisation;
decide if there is an appropriate culture to support learning in the company.

For the purpose of the current research a Czech company; LIPA Velkoobchod papírem was approached. The company agreed that 20 questionnaires could be administered in their company. This was one for each employee.

1.4 Outline of the chapters

The dissertation is divided in 8 further chapters.

In the chapter 2, the theory related to the definition of concept of learning organisation is discussed. Firstly different definitions of learning organisation are given. The definitions of Senge, Pedler et al., and Mintzberg are described. In the next section the specific conditions which support learning in the learning organisation are described. Finally there is a conclusion of literature review.

Chapter 3. relates to the description of the company where research was conducted. The brief description of company is given. Than the organisational structure is described and finally the market where the company operates is briefly described.

In chapter 4. the methodology of whole research is written. Firstly the aims and objectives are set. Subsequently the research methods are discussed – why the questionnaire was used. In the next section, the method of the research is described. There is given the description of whole process of research – starting by pilot study, continuing with structure of questionnaire, description of participants and ending by system of data evaluation. As the last section in methodology is the discussion of limitations of the study.

Chapter 5. Analysis and Discussion describes the results gained from the research. It tries to find possible reasons of the current results.

The chapter 6. Recommendations is focused on the giving personal advices to the company where research conducted.

The chapter 7. is conclusion of the dissertation. The whole work is summarised and concluded.

The final chapter 8. is Appendix where the Czech version of the questionnaire is given.

2 Literature review

2.1 Introduction

At the beginning of 20th century, decisive factor of economy was production and mass-manufacturing. The most important aspect for producing was wealth and capital (Truneček, 2002). Presently, there is a change of priorities: the most significant is not the volume and the rate but the knowledge. Company strategies transfer from economy of scale to knowledge economy. In this sense we speak sometimes about "new economy" (Truneček, 2002).

Truneček (2002) continues that the old trend was aimed at fabrication of large number of products. Decisive was volume and rate – produce the most possible in the shortest time. However Truneček (2002) affirms that the new way suggests that the company must prefer changing needs of customer (flexibility of production). The company should be able to conform to all the time changing needs of client. And this strategy could not be achieved by mass-manufacturing on the contrary, new strategy of managing should be found (Truneček, 2002). This new philosophy responds to changed conditions of environment on one side and on the second side knows how to use knowledge of human resources. Matlay (1998) cited in Matlay (2000) continues that the first mentions about learning organisations can be found in late 1960s and early 1970s. Truneček (2002) adds that those organisation are based on knowledge with focus on development of human capital: preparedness of employee to give top performance (qualification, competences), rise of company intelligence or organisation of permanent learning. Decisive criterions for the employee are exactly responsibility (coming up from skills and knowledge), excellent performance and capability and willingness to long-term learning. (Truneček, 2002)

Drucker (1999) cited in Škerlavaj et al. (2006) says that nowadays existence of organisations is menaced by technological and business progress and there are still many challenges which management of the organisations has to face to. Míka (2004) continues that the concept of learning organisation represents the perfect or the highest level of organisational culture. This concept is contribution for organisations where traditional methods of management are insufficient because of "turbulent" environment (Míka, 2004). Participation of management, decision making, improvement and learning is not only privilege of management – all members of organisation must be involved (Míka, 2004,).

2.2 Why ever learning organisation?

Pedler et al. (1977) writes that at the time when managers are confronted with unpredictable and unprecedented situations the focus turns to the model of so – called ´learning organisation´. It proposes the form of organisation which is flexible, adaptable and with quick reactions on the changes. Pedler et al. (1977) says that learning, as the trade conditions of present companies are becoming more and more confusing, makes the basis for existence of companies. Learning – of individuals, groups and organisation as whole – proposes, on condition that it will be in accord with strategic intention, way ahead. Pedler et al. (1977) states that learning organisation is organisation, which supports learning of each of its members and which, on the basis of learning, is transforming its self.

Tichá (1999) observes that very often the concept of learning organisation is mistook for various systems of interdepartmental education. Tichá (1999) points out that education and learning is not the same. Learning organisation insists on learning of all its members, but it takes the risk that efforts given on learning can be thrown away if this learning is not used at each level of the organisation, in terms of the condition that the unifying viewpoint is not organisational strategic focus (Pedler et al., 1977)

Tichá (1999) confirms that managers at the head of organisations must calculate with new challenge: how to learn enough quickly and consecutively with the aim of managing fast changes. This challenge is concerned not only with schools, hospitals or municipalities but also with commercially based organisations. For commercial organisations learning is a resource of sustainable competitive advantage (Ticha, 1999).

Tichá (1999) finds principle factors of changes within the organisations. Those factors are mentioned in the Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Principle factors of changes within the organisations

(Taken from Tichá, 1999)

Factors mentioned in the Figure 1 above indicate some limitations of bureaucratic or autocratic styles of management:

Kiechel (1990) affirms that old bureaucratic model which is based on command and control (even in its decentralised form) is not able to cope with actual challenges. This model is not quick, eager, elegant and sensitive enough. Kiechel (1990) continues that recent society needs new model of organisation which would be able to cope with radical changes.

Revans (1998) in this context mentions following reference. $L \geq C$ where L is learning and C means tempo of changes. This reference demonstrates the need that the learning in the organisation is equal or quicker than the tempo of changes in external environment. If the learning within the organisation is slower than the tempo of changes, it indicates that the organisation is in decline or it is bankrupt.

So, on what does the ability of the organisation to survive depend? De Geus (1997) shows in his study of long-term existing organisations that those organisations passed during their evolution through fundamental transformations. Apart from the above, those organisations are characterised by other important features:

- financial conservatism
- sensitiveness to external environment
- strong cohesion on the basis of corporate identity
- tolerance of experimenting

Those characteristics of so – called ´alive organisation´ change the view on organisation: from the perception of organisation as lifeless mechanism the view is verged to living organism perspective (Pedler et al., 1977). Pedler et al. (1977) continues that if the organisations are living organisms, they have its biography (stage of childhood, development, adulthood and finally death). Pedler et al. (1977) add that organisations are formed by incidence of 3 basic powers:

- Cogitations, ideas – visions, which are realised by founders and passed on to the continuators
- Phases – stages of lifecycle of organisation
- Era – economic, technological, societal, political and cultural context

In the above mentioned, in ´era´ unprecedented changes and rising competition are included, ´Cogitations and ideas´ are the main source of organisational diversification (Pedler et al. 1977). E.g. companies providing the same service are based on different conviction and different principles. Generally organisations are described as human is – the characteristics are the same; they can be strong, week, young or old, informal or formal. With the application

of concept of learning organisation is purposeful to reflect the organisation as living organism with its own needs of development (Pedler, 1977).

2.3 Definitions of learning organisation

Matlay (2000) affirms that there are two kinds of definitions of learning organisation – normative and descriptive. According to Pearn et al. (1995) Dixon (1994), Senge, (1990), Bomers (1989), Hayes *et al.*, (1988) cited in Matlay (2000) normative definition describes specific characteristics or conditions which should be fulfilled by learning organisation. On the other hand descriptive definitions confirm the fact that every organisations learn – wittingly or unwittingly (Kim, 1993, Levinthal and March, 1993 cited in Matlay, 2000).

Curado (2006) says that many authors try to define the term ´learning organisation´ however there is not any common definition of the term ´learning organisation´. In following text, some different definitions of characteristics of learning organisation will be given. In the next sections characteristics according to Senge, Pedler et al. and Mintzberg will be described.

2.3.1 Peter Senge and The Fifth Discipline

Senge (1990) identified five spheres which must be managed in order to apply the model of learning organisation. Senge (1990) affirms that in those spheres must be achieved mastery. Senge (1990) calls those spheres ´disciplines´.

1. **´Personal mastery´.** Personnel perfection is the development of proper personality – it is lifetime effort to achieve development of own personality, aims and endeavours, life in unremitting learning how to become better.

2. **´Sharing of mental models´.** Each individual has his own prejudices, experienced models, manners by which this individual perceives and understands the world. Learning organisation is based on collective thinking, on the dialog and on the debate, which enable sharing of various perception of world. This helps the creation of common vision of the company.

3. **´Shared vision´**. Creation of common picture of future. This common picture supports the identifications of individuals within organisation. People learn not because they were forced, but because they want to.

4. **´Team learning´**. Some teams are so integrated, that in retrospective point of view is impossible to identify what product is whose. Those teams are the basic units of learning organisation. The part of team learning makes dialog that means the ability of creatively develop the ideas and avoid away from own opinions in process of creation the team points of view.

5. **´System approach´**. The system approach integrates all disciplines above. System approach is methodology of perception of complex and its parts and deduction of formulas of behaviour from the structure in which individual parts are matched up. System approach represents the requirement that learning organisation is living organism, with its internal connections and manner of behaviour. In practice, it is not very easy to achieve this requirement. Very often those efforts are crossed in the beginnings by inability perceive things as complex.

2.3.2 Definition of learning organisation by Pedler et al.

Pedler et al. (1994) defined learning organisation by eleven basic characteristics below:

1. **Learning as the part of formulation of strategy**

Strategy of the company is wittingly structured that it enables learning. Learning is a part of feedback which is used for the development of the company.

2. **Participative approach**

All or majority of members of organisation have the occasion to assist or cooperate on the formulation of strategy. In ideal case it is provided in cooperation with other groups so that strategy respects and supports various interests.

3. **Informatics**

Information technologies in learning organisation are used not only for automatisation of processing of data but mainly for equalization and sharing of important information so each employees have the possibility and occasion to share it.

4. **Formative accountancy**

Systems of accounting, budgeting and audit are structured so that members of organisation enable learning about s functioning of finances within the company.

5. Internal exchange

Learning organisation is characterised by high level of interchange of information and experience within the organisation. This sharing of the information and experience passes through departments, functions, units, etc. Employees from different organisational units account oneself as partners within the process of learning.

6. Flexible system of remuneration

Higher level of autonomy and higher rate of delegating requires flexible system of remuneration. It means in the sphere of monetary and non-monetary remuneration with the consideration of individual needs of each employee.

7. Supporting structures

Wide concept, which includes the creation of nets and other aspects such as roles, processes and procedures, which are perceived as temporary and can change in dependency on requirements of the work or customer needs.

8. Collection of information about external environment

Employees, who have contacts on information resources fom external environment, ensure continuous collection of information about the development in external environment. The same importance has the process of elaboration and distribution of that information to the users of it.

9. Inter-organisational learning

Learning organisation uses experience of other organisations for its own learning – by benchmarking, joint ventures, strategic alliances, etc.

10. Atmosphere supporting learning

Good presumption for the creation of this atmosphere is supporting of experimenting and obtaining experiences through posing questions, feedback, etc.

11. Occasion for personal development to everyone

Possibility to learn, obtain experience and professionally grow must be offered to each member of the organisation, not only to the desirables.

Allan (1998) organised the eleven characteristics of Pedler et al. in the figure 2 below:

Figure 2: Pedler´s characteristics of learning organisations

Strategy	Learning opportunities	Structures	Looking in	Looking out
•Learning approach to strategy •Participative policy making •Informating •Formative accounting and control	•Learning climate •Self-development opportunities for all	•Enabling structures	•Reward flexibility •Internal exchange	•Boundary workers as environmental scanners •Inter-company learning

(Taken from Pedler, Burgoyone and Boydell (1991) in Allan (1998))

The characteristics mentioned above give the idea what can be expected from the organisation which aspires to be learning organisation. Tichá (1999) theorises that if the organisation wants to be considered as learning organisation, those characteristics should be fulfilled for 80%.

Palán (2004) continues that 11 characteristics are very often isolated in non-learning organisation – the development of individual areas (characteristics) is independent on the others. Palán (2004) affirms that learning organisation provides incessant process of communication between the managers and employees on all levels within the organisation. This ensures permanent feedback of innovations and thoughts which develop mutual interactions.

2.3.3 Mintzberg´s definition

Swieringa and Wierdsma (1992) say that it is not sure how the learning organisation looks like but there are some several characteristics which should be met. They find as one way how to define the learning organisation by using Mintzberg´s definition.

Mintzberg (1979) cited in Swieringa and Wierdsma (1992) describes the learning organisation by following characteristics:

Figure 3: The distinctive features of the learning organisation

Strategy - Continued development
- mission directed
- short and medium term
- rational and intuitive
- active and provocative
- various focuses

Culture - Task-oriented culture
- flexible
- problem oriented
- creative

Structure - Organic network
- loosely combined units and teams based around product and market combinations
- decentralisation
- mixing of thinkers (staff) and doers (line)
- coordination through discussion

Systems - Supportive
- information for reflection, ´on the system´
- information for action, ´in the system´
- dealing with complexity

(Taken from Mintzberg, 1979, cited in Swieringa and Wierdsma, 1992)

Those characteristics are by Mintzberg (1979) cited in Swieringa and Wierdsma (1992) the distinctive features of learning organisation.

2.4 How organisation can learn

Tichá (1999) states that learning is an integral part of living beings. However there is not any universal definition of term ´learning´. In this part of this work two different points of view will be given. Firstly, there is theory described by Tichá (1999) which is mainly focused on the individual point of view. On the other side, Garratt (2000) points out the learning from the organisational point of view.

Tichá (1999) suggests this definition - there are 4 distinct kinds of learning:

1. Obtaining knowledge (learn *what*)
2. Obtaining skills (learn *how*)
3. Personal development (learn *how to be one's own man, how to use personal potential as much as possible*)
4. Collective research (learn *how to achieve the aims collectively*)

Tichá (1999) notes that first two kinds are the most known and they are mostly used with the connection of theory and practice. Tichá (1999) points out that it is not very useful to divide them. Tichá (1999) continues that there is no learning without action and no action without learning.

Tichá (1999) describes personal development as the tool to enable the individual can become one's own man. Except knowledge and skills personal development is linked to purpose, reason, and identity of the individual. This kind of learning is provided incrementally, in the terms of separate phases, or by leap between particular phases. Tichá (1999) affirms that personal development was always in the focus of good teachers and nowadays it becomes very important in working environment. Tichá (1999) announces that the significance of personal development arises with the relation between personal development of individual and change within organisation. Revans (1998) adds that those who are not able to change them selves, cannot change the things around them.

Tichá (1999) says that collective research is key principle to organisational learning. Tichá (1999) continues that learning is very often perceived as something that the individual does on his own. However learning also takes place between people, in the relations between them, (Tichá, 1999). Tichá (1999) says that individuals can cooperate in so-called collective learning – to this is directed action and team learning. Results are not measurable in the sense of what the individual learnt but in the sense what the team achieve collectively. Tichá (1999) points out that collective research is a sort of bridge between learning of individuals and learning organisation.

Organisations are very often focused on individuals – recruiting, selection, education, trainings, assessment, career growth and the retirement – and this all includes forms of

individual learning. Learning organisation creates better atmosphere for learning because learning is one of the basic pillars of an organisation.

Garratt (2000) finds three levels of organisational learning:

Policy learning
Strategic learning
Operational learning

Theses forms of interactive and conscious learning are necessary to create an efficient learning organisation. Policy Learning, Operational Learning and Strategic Learning create together The Three cycles of Learning (Garratt, 2000)

Figure 4: The Learning Organisation Model

Policy learning
(External effectiveness)

Strategy learning
(Integration)

Operational learning
(Internal efficiency)
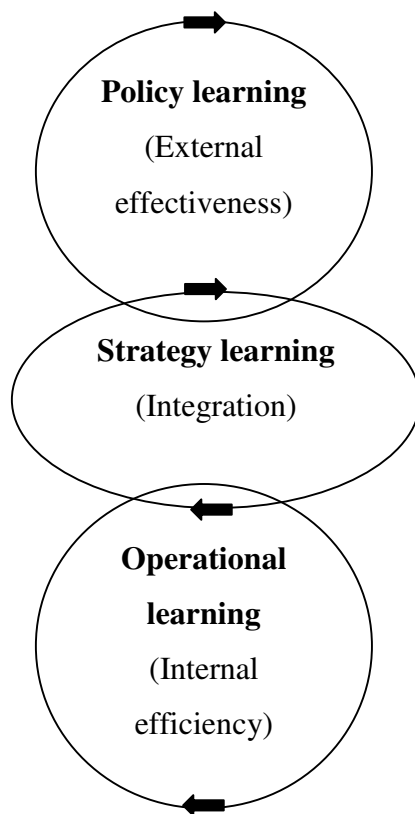
(Taken from Garratt, 2000)

Policy learning

Garratt (2000: 4) defines the Policy Learning as "the organisation's relation ship with the external word, as the focus of ´organisational effectiveness´". He says that consumer is influenced a lot by his perception of an organisation's effectiveness. This perception of that organisation can damage or it can help it. Garratt (2000) finds two main benefits. Firstly, if the customer is satisfied, he comes back to repeat his purchases. Customer who repeats his purchases is more likely to be a profitable customer to an organisation. Secondly, repeat customer who is satisfied is more compliant to pay little bit more for goods as he believes that he buys better quality. And this satisfied repeat customer is a dream of an organisation. This customer can attract his friends, so more people come to make a profit to an organisation. Both of these benefits depend on the customer's perception of the organisation. Garratt (2000) adds that "any system for continuously reinforcing the customer's perception through the Policy Learning cycle is likely to pay big dividends".

Garratt (2000) explains that PPESTT analysis focuses on political, physical, economic, social, technological and trade environments. In the fast-changing external environment this analysis can be very useful. It can help the managers and the directors achieve organisation's strategic purposes. If everything within the organisation is clear, everyone can be able to create a sustainable advantage in Policy Learning over its competitors. Every one can reflect on the changes in customer needs.

Garrat adds that Policy Learning makes only one part of whole complex of organisational learning and this part cannot be handled in isolation.

Operational Learning

Garrat describes Operational Learning as everyday learning which is practised all of the time. The members of an organisation can learn consciously and unconsciously – good or bad things. But problem of the unconsciously learning is that there is often a barrier in communication, so unconscious learning is not effective.

Incessant process of learning and enabling people on the way to conscious competence within their organisation is the simplest level of Operational Learning. Garratt (2000) points out a traditional quadrant with ´competece´ and ´consciousness´. He finds four possible combinations:

Unconscious Incompetence – people within the organisation do not have necessary skills, attitudes and knowledge to be competent

Unconscious Competence – people do the work well but unconsciously, they do not need to impart their knowledge to the others

Conscious Competence – people know that they are not skilled enough but they do anything to better the situation

Conscious Competence – people are working well and they have such skills, attitudes and knowledge to be competent for this work, these employees are able to share their knowledge with others members of the organisation - they make effort to provide any learning individual or Learning Organisation

Figure 5: Towards conscious and competent learning

High

C O M P E T E N C E	Unconscious Competence	Conscious Competence
	Unconscious Incompetence	Conscious Incompetence

Low   C O N S C I O U S N E S S   High
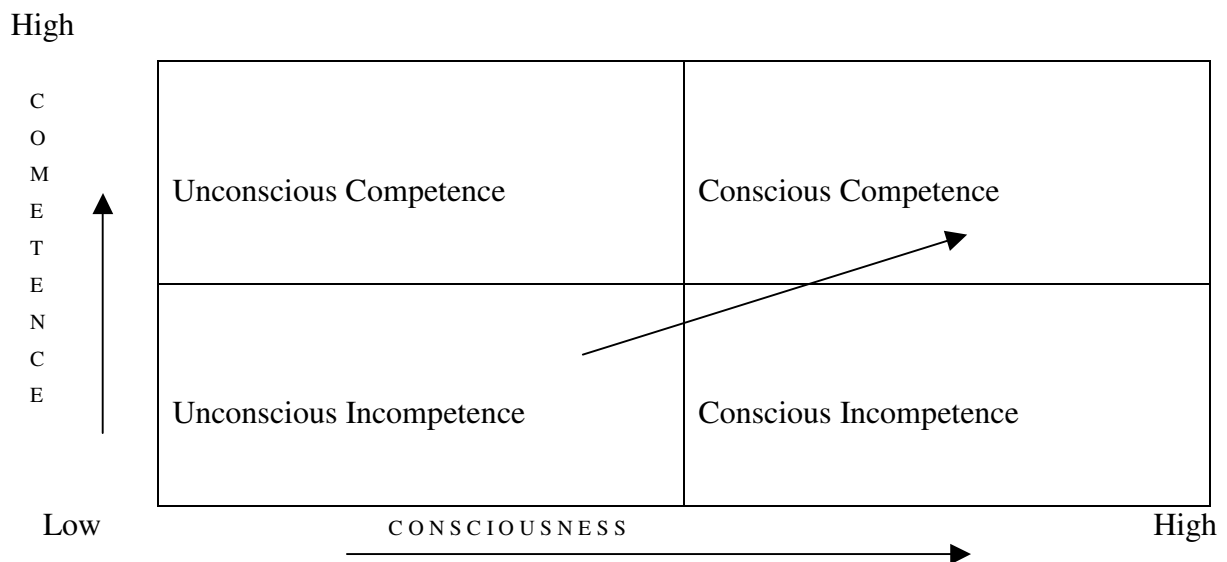
(Taken from Garratt, 2000)

Garratt (2000: 6) notes that "encouraging learning in the ´organisational efficiency´ cycle (day-to-day manager and staff Operational Learning) is important – but not at expense of organisational effectiveness because one then enters, often unwittingly, the vicious spiral of

´downsize, rightsize and capsize˝". It is this place where we met the "operational level obstacle"– superabundant application of pecuniary logic and rationality at the expense of client's sensation of and "emotional attachments to a product, service or brand" (Garratt 2000: 6).

When these conditions are not met, Policy learning suffers from it.

Strategic learning

Garratt (2000) declares that analysing and evaluate changes in external environment is the aim of Strategic Learning. Strategic Learning assess the position of the organisation in these turbulent entourage and implement new strategies for achieve the purposes of this organisation. Garrat (2000:8) comments that "learning at the strategic level must always be set in the context of agreed policies".

The main focus is on the integration, risk-assessment, and well decision-making in order to prudently control. Strategic learning is in the centre of organisation's learning (Garratt 2000), it combines, assess and balance information flow from external environment of Policy learning and internal environment of Operational Learning.

2.5 Culture supporting learning

The concept of learning organisation cannot be established only through orders. There are some conditions which must be met. In the next section of this paper two different points of view will be given. Firstly Tichá (1999) and than Garratt (1990) conditions are described.

Tichá (1999) finds 16 important principles which should be met if the concept of learning organisation is introduced. Those 16 principles are described below.

1. **Leading people to independent cogitation.** The outcome of formal education is quiet often 'disabused quandary'. However the people should be led to the ability to be self-sufficient and help their colleagues in process of unceasing learning.

2. **Consider mistakes as part of learning and use them for the development of the organisation and its members.** Some of the most important discoveries of world are

caused by mistakes. A normal rate of questioning is the source of success because it is evidence of searching and creation of new opportunities. Those who make mistakes learn to be responsible for them and do not repeat them.

3. **Be willing to remodel organisational system and structures.** System and structures must adapt to new needs – so as the needs change, the systems and structures must change.

4. **Adjust the corporate culture so that it supports learning of individuals.** With rising self-respect of employees rises their work ethic and fellowship with the organisation.

5. **Support process of learning on its own, not only its outcomes and results.** The learning in its self is important; the results can be unplanned or unexpected. Process of learning increases the adaptability and the readiness to change.

6. **Keep the equality between those who learn.** Hierarchal managers are unpleasant. Although not everyone knows the same as somebody else and not everyone learns as fast as somebody else, every one's learning is unique and has its value and that is why everybody merit the same evaluation.

7. **Support the highest level of exchange of knowledge and skills between people.** Each time when two people meet, they have the opportunity to exchange the information. In the environment of learning organisation, this feature will appear constantly.

8. **Support people and teach them to structure their learning instead of offering them structured learning.** Every opportunity to learn should be used for obtaining new knowledge or skills and for the development of the ability learning.

9. **Teach people objective self-evaluation.** As the people see themselves in the real world, their ability to ameliorate their work permanently grows.

10. **Support the freedom of cognition.** All destruction of barrier to learning ameliorates the process of learning.

11. **Respect different preferences in the learning process as alternative and combinable approaches to learning.** The advantage of combining learning is that it develops own styles of learning and activates learning.

12. **Support cognition of own style of learning and thinking of people and pass their knowledge onto the other people.** The highest level of sharing own style of learning, the largest base for communication.

13. **Develop the knowledge of people in different areas.** The knowledge or the skills from one area can be useful in another area.

14. **In order to people learn quickly and easily, learning must be logical, pleasant and motivating for them.**

15. **Ideas and thoughts are developed the best through discussion.** The learning is processed in the atmosphere where people together, often informally, develop their ideas. The people consider those discussions as normal part of corporate culture.

16. **Everything makes part of following revisions and questioning.** All information is repeatedly examined on the basis of new obtained information, data and experience.

Tichá (1999) continues that on those 16 principles 10 basic continuous conditions for the implementation of the culture supporting learning are given. Those conditions should be met in order to culture within the organisation is considered as supporting learning:

1. **Evaluation of the culture endorsing learning in the organisation.**
2. **Support of everything which is positive.**
3. **Strengthening the sense of safety in people.**
4. **Remuneration of the willingness to risk.**
5. **Help the people cooperate.**
6. **Introduction of learning in real life.**

7. **Formulation of vision.**
8. **Introduction of vision in life.**
9. **Connection of the systems.**
10. **Realisation of the concept.**

Tichá (1999) says that each of those conditions which indicate the culture supporting learning within the organisation must be met step by step. In addition Tichá (1999) thinks that if the culture is considered as supporting learning, those conditions should be fulfilled for 80%.

On the other hand Garratt (1990) explains that if the organisation would establish effective learning strategy, five conditions should be realised.

1. Learning as a cyclic process

For the learning organisation one of the most important aspects is that every member of the organisation is included in the learning process. Then benefits from sharing of information arise (Garratt 1990). It is the central course of action which has for one's object better know-how and thanks of the information better decisions are made. In order to the sharing of information is more efficient, the company tries to provide operational learning which means that employee is learning all the time (Garratt 1990). The operational learning will be described in next chapter.

2. Different roles of strategy, policy and operations inside the company

For the foundation of climate for learning in the organisation, it is the one of the most important aspects that every one on each level within the organisation understands his role – his privileges and obligations. So that the employees are able to integrate in the learning cycle and work effectively with the information stream. (Garratt, 1990)

3. A free flow of reliable information

If the information is not authentic no one can create a correct image about the organisation. The information should not be damaged. The right imagination of the company helps create learning climate. If the company fulfil the conditions of free flow or reliable information, the management of the company is called true management. (Garratt, 1990)

4. Importance of stuff as the key benefit for organisational learning

Garratt (1990) says that many directors do not praise their employees enough. Directors should develop in learning leaders and be exemplar for their employees.

5. First and second order change processes

In the organisation, some problems can appear. And it is very important the employees are able to rise oneself above the problem and start to solve it from this point of view, not only as part within the problem (Garratt, 1990).

To conclude Pemberton and Stonehouse (2000) summarize that culture within the learning organisations focuses on learning and getting skills and supports individuals in experimenting which could result in discovery of new core competence.

2.6 Common problems in implementation of concept of learning organisation

Argyris (1990) cited in Tichá (1999) deduces, in his study of six large companies which significantly invested in programmes which supported changes, general conclusions about wrong routines which depreciate those investments:

- inflexible and inadaptable rules
- managers and workers are not in the contact with customers and their needs
- managers do not believe the success of the change, they are not able cooperate and they are not qualified enough for the realisation of change
- bad relations between functional groups
- Top managers refuse to believe that lower profit and lower market share are more then only temporary deviation
- Insufficiency of strategic thinking
- Poor awareness of employees on lower levels of organisational structure
- Low mutual confidence

Argyris (1990) cited in Tichá (1999) points out that all programmes, which were festively introduced, step by step disappeared.

Senge (1990) argues that the incapability ´learn´ of an organisation is expressed by next seven points:

- *´my position is me´* - narrow view on own position instead of perception of the sense of the complex
- *´they are the enemies´* - tendency to search the enemy elsewhere when the things are not going the right way, regardless of the fact, that ´here´ and ´there´ are the members of the same system
- *´illusion of looking for somebody responsible´* - It is quiet often reaction on the previous. Real pro-active approach means to see own contribution to own problems
- *´fire extinguishing´* - tendency to orientation on short-term matters and neglecting of slow step by step made processes of change
- *´parable of cooked frog´* - it comes from the fact, that frog's signal system is not able to recognise sequential changes. If the frog is put in the pot with hot water, it goes out. However if the frog is put in the pot with cold water and it is heated, frog recognises the high temperature in the moment when it is not able to react. On the organisational level it means that small changes can lead to unexpected consequences.
- *'Self-delusion of learning with experience'* – The decisions of individuals have the impact on another people and their actions have unexpected consequences about which they do not know.
- *'Myth of manager team'* – If some conditions are met, teams can work very well. However, when the stress pushes on them, the internal conflicts arise and the teams decompose them selves.

In the theory mentioned in this chapter was described common mistakes made when the concept of learning organisation is applied. The organisation should remain away from them.

2.7 Conclusion

In this literature review the main focus was put on the definition of learning organisation. The definitions of Senge, Pedler et al. and Mintzberg were given in order to have different points of view.

The literature review did not aimed only to describe what the learning organisation is but also what are the conditions endorsing the learning within the corporate culture.

Finally some common mistakes which can be made during applying the concept of learning organisation were described.

3 Industry review

In this chapter general description of company LIPA Velkoobchod papírem will be given. Firstly the profile of the company will be suggested, secondly the organisational structure will be discussed and finally the market in which it operates will be described.

3.1 Profile of the company

LIPA Velkoobchod papírem is a Czech company. This company was founded in 1995 and it operates on the market with school and office facilities. During quiet short time LIPA Velkoobchod papírem became significant supplier of many prestigious firms and institutes in their region. (LIPA Velkoobchod papírem, 2007)

The name LIPA Velkoobchod papírem means LIPA Wholesale with stationary. The name LIPA is an abbreviation of the name of the city where it operates and of the commodity with which it operates – LI as Liberec and PA as Papír (paper) – LIPA. In the Figure 6 below is the logo of the company. (LIPA Velkoobchod papírem, 2007)

Figure 6: The logo of Velkoobchod papírem LIPA

(Taken from LIPA Velkoobchod papírem, 2007)

In current time LIPA Velkoobchod papírem dispose with more than 5000 items in their assortment. And because the aim of this company is to offer better and better services to their clients, also internet shop was opened (www.lipalbc.cz).

3.2 Organisational structure

LIPA Velkoobchod papírem is small company, there work 20 employees including the managing director and his partner. In terms of organisational structure, LIPA Velkoobchod papírem is divided in 5 sections.

1. Purchasing department

2. Accounting department

3. Marketing department

4. Sales department

5. Stock

In the Figure 6 below is shown the organisational structure of this company.

Figure 7: Organisational structure of LIPA Velkoobchod papírem
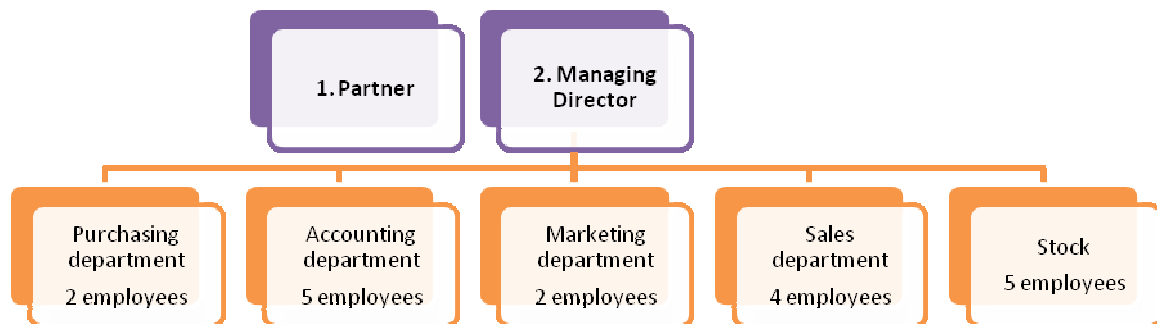
(Adapted from Knížek, J., personal communication, 20th December 2006)

This organisational structure can be considered as functional structure. Johnson and Scholes (2002) and Magretta and Stone (2004) say that this kind of structure is traditionally found in smaller companies. Even there are found some disadvantages (such as inability to adapt to

new situations and requirements) this organisational structure seems to be the best choice for LIPA Velkoobchod papírem. The main advantages of this structure are: transparency of responsibilities, reduction / simplification of control mechanism and the managing director is in touch with all operation (Johnson and Scholes, 2002).

3.3 Market

LIPA Velkoobchod papírem is focused on the purchase and sale of the stationary goods for wholesale values. It is one of the most significant suppliers in the region of Northern Bohemia. Nowadays LIPA Velkoobchod papírem has more than 2000 customers.

LIPA Velkoobchod papírem buys its goods in majority from Czech suppliers.

In terms of competition, in the region where LIPA Velkoobchod papírem operates, there is small number of other companies with this commodity focus for wholesale prices. So LIPA Velkoobchod papírem does not have so urgent need to find its competitive advantage. However the managing director takes in account new firm can be founded so he tries to develop the firm's competitive advantages and maintain current clients by perfect services.

4 Methodology

4.1 Outline of the chapter

This chapter will detail the methodology used in the current study. Firstly, aims and objectives of the study will be described. In the next part of this chapter, the research methods will be discussed. Following that the description of the method will be given – pilot study, structure of questionnaire, participants, process of data collection and the system of data evaluation will be described. Finally the limitations of the study will be given.

4.2 Aims and objectives of the study

As the aim of this study posed two research questions as mentioned below:

- **Is LIPA Velkoobchod papírem a learning organisation?**

- **Does LIPA Velkoobchod papírem have the appropriate culture to support learning?**

For this purpose the distinctive features of learning organisation and conditions of applying this model in literature review were used.

The first question ´ Is LIPA Velkoobchod papírem a learning organisation?´ was analysed according to the description of learning organisation of Pedler et al. (1994) in the chapter 2.3.2. In this section 11 basic characteristics of learning organisation are recognised. They are:

1. Learning as the part of formulation of strategy
2. Participative approach
3. Informatics
4. Formative accountancy
5. Internal exchange
6. Flexible system of remuneration
7. Supporting structures
8. Collection of information about external environment
9. Inter-organisational learning

10. Atmosphere supporting learning

11. Occasion for personal development to everyone

Those 11 characteristics were examined in the questionnaire as it will be described in the sections 3.4.2 and 3.4.4.

- The second question ´ Does LIPA Velkoobchod papírem have the appropriate culture to support learning?' was analysed according to the 10 conditions of Tichá (1999) mentioned in the chapter 2.5. The conditions are:

1. Evaluation of the culture endorsing learning in the organisation.

2. Support of everything what is positive.

3. Strengthening in people the sense of safety.

4. Remuneration of the willingness to risk.

5. Help to the people to cooperate.

6. Introduction of learning in real life.

7. Formulation of vision.

8. Introduction of vision in life.

9. Connection of the systems.

10. Realisation of the concept.

Those 10 characteristics were also examined in the questionnaire as it will be also described in the sections 3.4.2 and 3.4.4.

The general aim of this study is, as was mentioned above, state if LIPA Velkoobchod papírem is or is not learning organisation and if in this company the appropriate culture to support learning is present. For this purpose the most appropriate method of collection of data was chosen – data were collected by questionnaire.

4.3 Research methods

As the chapter above suggests, for the purposes of this study, a questionnaire was used.

Denscombe (1998) points out important advantages of questionnaire – for which this method was chosen. Denscombe (1998) says that questionnaire saves time, money and others

materials, it is economical. The collection of data through questionnaires is easier in terms of organisation. It may require the contact of respondent before the filling in however it is easier then e.g. arrangement of personal interviews (Denscombe, 1998). Also filling in the questionnaire is easier for the respondent, the respondent does not have to think how to express, describe, tell his ideas. In addition all respondents are posed the same questions so there is little probability that the posed question will differ in each case (Denscombe, 1998). Robson (2002) adds that the use of questionnaires is applicable on any sample, participants.

The reasons why interview was not used as appropriate method are described in the next text. The main reason is that collection of data through interviews is very time-consuming (Robson, 2002, Densombe, 1998). In addition, interview requires careful preparation and as it was mentioned above it takes a lot of time, not only because of preparation but also the result and answers have to be written up or transcripted (Robson, 2002). Denscombe (1998) says that interview do not produce standard answers so it is hard to analyse it. Also if the interviewer uses video or tape recorder the respondent can feel self-conscious (Denscombe, 1998). In addition in such small company as LIPA Velkoobchod papírem is, the people could be afraid, that their voice and ideas could be recognised, even they are assured it is anonymous.

And for the advantages of the use of questionnaire and disadvantages of use of interview, the questionnaire as the most appropriate method for the research was chosen.

4.4 Method

4.4.1 Pilot study

In order for the research to be processed well and the respondent is not confused pilot study was provided. The questionnaire was discussed with two individuals who were able to give appropriate feedback on the layout and the comprehensibility of the questionnaire. In the questionnaire only few mistakes were found and some questions were changed – the meaning was conserved but it was explained more clearly in order for respondent to be sure what the question is about.

The data received from the pilot study was not used in the final survey because two pilot respondents were not employees of the company where the survey was finally provided.

4.4.2 Structure of questionnaire

In this section, the design of the questionnaire will be given. Also the reason why each question is in the questionnaire and which of the criterions mentioned in the section 3.2 is examined by each question will be stated.

All questions in the questionnaire were created to obtain relevant data and accurate information in order to help answer the hypotheses which were posed. The questionnaire was designed according to questionnaire in Tichá (1999). Some questions were modified for the survey in LIPA Velkoobchod papírem.

Figure 8: The questionnaire

Hypothesis	Question	Characteristic or condition
-	1. You are: Male or Female	-
-	2. Please indicate your age: 18 - 24; 25 - 34; 35 - 44; 45 - 54; 55 - 64; 64 - more	-
-	3. How long have you worked for LIPA Velkoobchod papírem? Less than 1 year; 1 – 5 years; 6 years and more.	-
Is LIPA Velkoobchod papírem learning organisation?	4. We regularly evaluate trends in social, economic, politic and trade sphere.	Learning as the part of formulation of strategy
	5. Each employee participates in the strategy planning.	Participative approach
	6. Each member of the organisation has access to company's information and databases.	Informatics
	7. Information about financial activities is available to appropriate employees promptly (in the moment it is known).	Formative accounting
	8. Organisation units have clear vision about its own purpose and about the purpose of other organisation's units.	Internal change

	9. In the company, work that is well-done is remunerated in a number of different ways, financially and not financially.	Flexible system of remuneration
	10. Corporate structures are flexible and they conform to different needs and tasks fast.	Supporting structures
	11. Employees bring information about external environment, competitors, costumers and others into the organisation naturally.	The collection of information about external environment
	12. We engage in common business activities in order to create new services and learn new methods from our partners.	Inter-organisational learning
	13. Employees are not blamed for bad news.	Atmosphere supporting learning
	14. Each member of the organisation is supported in the efforts to learn new things and gain new skills.	Possibility for personnel development for everybody
	15. We look for new directions of development by experimenting and by realisation of pilot projects.	Learning as the part of formulation of strategy
	16. Important plans are firstly discussed with all interested staff and then realised.	Participative approach
	17. Information technologies are not only tools of automatization of processes but they help us realise new things together.	Informatics
	18. Employees understand the significance of corporate resources and the way of using them, very well.	Formative accounting
	19. Various organisation units share the information and if it is necessary they help through offering their skills.	Internal change
	20. The majority of employees influence the system of remuneration.	Flexible system of remuneration

	21. The company supports the employees in presenting proposals for change linked to the organisation of work.	Supporting structures
	22. The company builds up effective communication channels for the collection, elaboration and distribution of information of external environment.	The collection of information about external environment
	23. We meet with employees from other companies often in order to exchange experience and information	Inter-organisational learning
	24. The main purpose of assessment of employees is in order to recognize of employee's needs for personnel and professional development.	Atmosphere supporting learning
	25. The company proposes enough opportunities and resources for professional development of employees (the employees have open access to the education and qualified growth).	Possibility for personnel development for everybody
Is in LIPA Velkoobchod papírem appropriate culture endorsing learning?	26. The employees are not anxious about expressing their opinion; there is no fear of repressions or some danger coming from the expression of dissent or different opinion.	See Figure 10
	27. The mistakes of individuals or organisation units are used to learn from it.	See Figure 10
	28. Within organisation is generally acknowledging opinion that there is always a some better way how to doing things.	See Figure 10
	29. In the organisation open discussions and variability of opinions are supported and cultivated.	See Figure 10

	30. Experimenting is well supported – it is part of internal culture.	See Figure 10
	31. Mistakes are taken as the possibility to development.	See Figure 10
	32. There is willingness to break old habits with the aim of the testing new ways of managing and performing the work.	See Figure 10
	33. Management is innovative, creative, and willing to take risks.	See Figure 10
	34. Quality of life at work is ameliorating.	See Figure 10
	35. In our organisation formal and informal structures which support exchange of experience and of the skills exists which employees acquire during cooperation with other employees.	See Figure 10
	36. Our organisation is conceived as an environment for solving problems and learning.	See Figure 10
	37. Learning is expected and supported on all levels and in all units within the organisation: in management, various special groups including customers.	See Figure 10
	38. Employees are informed about all organisation and they adapt their specialisations, functions within the organisation and their professional behaviour to it.	See Figure 10
	39. In our organisation sessions are organised, where progresses in learning are analysed; this information is used for specific, clear and permanent structural and organisational changes.	See Figure 10

	40. Procedures applied in process of old management are eliminated and replaced by new ones.	See Figure 10
	41. Long-term amelioration is expected and taken with respect.	See Figure 10
	42. Each employee has specified area and relevant of training and of following education which this employee passes during the year.	See Figure 10
	43. Employees on each level are directed to valuable and relevant resources for continuous education – within and outside the organisation.	See Figure 10
	44. Occasions to learn go through the organisation and they are developed so the employees understand the differences of the work of the others and the connection with their own work.	See Figure 10
	45. Managers play the key role in the establishing the process of learning in the company.	See Figure 10
	46. Even unexpected events are perceived as opportunities to learn.	See Figure 10
	47. People in our organisation look forward to occasions when they can develop their competences and competences of the company.	See Figure 10
	48. Systems, structures and procedures in our organisation are flexible, adaptable and react well to external stimulus.	See Figure 10
	49. Altought the environment in our company is complicated, chaotic and developing quickly, it does not seem like overstressed.	See Figure 10
	50. In our organisation, there is a level of stress which encourages and supports learning.	See Figure 10

	51. Permanent amelioration is practiced in our company and advertised in public.	See Figure 10
	52. All employees in our company are familiarized with the difference between training, practice and learning. (Training and practice can be provided without the presence of learning).	See Figure 10
	53. People in our company are led to individual learning and they have enough resources for it.	See Figure 10
	54. In our organisation, formal program of education of managers is provided in order for them to be couches and leaders.	See Figure 10
	55. The recognition of differences between own style of learning and styles of learning of other people is used to ameliorate communication and also the process of organisational learning.	See Figure 10
	56. Managers take in account the differences in styles of learning and the differences of self-development.	See Figure 10
	57. In our organisation, employees sometimes have the possibility to stand back from the day to day worries and reflect what happens in the organisation.	See Figure 10
	58. In order for learning is purposeful to be a plan elaborated and adequate resources are allocated.	See Figure 10
	59. Teams are remunerated for innovative solutions.	See Figure 10
	60. Managers have necessary skills for the collection of information and for development of their skills which are necessary to meet the needs of changing environment.	See Figure 10

	61. Managers in our organisation help the employees with their self-development and with the amelioration of their performance.	See Figure 10

4.4.3 Participants and Process of Data Collection

The participants of the survey were all employees from the company LIPA Velkoobchod papírem. In this company work 20 employees including the head manager.

The survey was provided the 20th December 2006. Participants were ensured that the questionnaire is absolutely anonymous and the received data will be used only for purposes of this dissertation. Each employee received the questionnaire personally and had enough of time to fill in. In order to receive precise data each respondent was ensured that all equivocalness can be explained. However during the survey no technical problems occurred and there were no problems linked to the length of the questionnaire.

Figure 9: The response rate of questionnaires in LIPA Velkoobchod papírem

Department	Number of handed over questionnaires	Number of returned questionnaires	Coefficient of participation
Stock	5	5	100%
Accounting department	5	5	100%
Sales department	4	4	100%
Marketing department	2	2	100%
Purchasing department	2	2	100%
Managing director and his partner	2	2	100%
In sum the company	**20**	**20**	**100%**

4.4.4 System of Data Evaluation

As was described above, the questionnaire examines two hypotheses. Question 1, 2 and 3 describe the sex, age and length of work in the company of the employee. So the first part of the questionnaire belongs to the first hypothesis, from question number 4 to question number 25. The rest of the questionnaire belongs to the second hypothesis.

As it is shown in the chapter 3.4.2 Structure of questionnaire, the questions examine each of the characteristics of learning organisation according to Pedler et al. (1994)

1. and 12. – Learning as the part of formulation of strategy

2. and 13. – Participative approach

3. and 14. – Informatics

4. and 15. – Formative accounting

5. and 16. – Internal change

6. and 17. – Flexible system of remuneration

7. and 18. – Supporting structures

8. and 19. – The collection of information about external environment

9. and 20. – Inter-organisational learning

10. and 21. – Atmosphere supporting learning

11. and 22. – Possibility for personnel development for everybody

The results coming from the answers of respondents indicate the areas in the company where the company can find its strong and weak sides. The results can be shown graphically, as will be shown in the chapter 4. Analysis and Discussion.

As mentioned in literature review, according to Tichá (1999) the company LIPA Velkoobchod papírem will be considered as 'learning organisation' if each of the 11 characteristics of the company will have an average point evaluation of employees between 4 and 5 (minimally 80% from 5 points). If any of the characteristics will have an average of less than 4 points, LIPA Velkoobchod papírem cannot be considered as learning organisation.

The second part of the questionnaire examines each of condition of culture endorsing learning according to Ticha (1999).

Because each question examines different conditions, Tichá (1999) puts it in table for clarity. This refers back to the section 4.2.

Figure 10: Table of allocation of conditions for appropriate culture supporting learning in the questionnaire

Question number:	1. condition	2. condition	3. condition	4. condition	5. condition	6. condition	7. condition	8. condition	9. condition	10. condition
26										
27										
28										
29										
30										
31										
32										
33										
34										
35										
36										
37										
38										
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54										
55										
56										
57										
58										
59										
60										
61										
Sum										
Divide	/10/	/9/	/15/	/15/	/15/	/16/	/6/	/9/	/9/	/7/
Average										

Legend:

The question does not relates to any of conditions

The question relates to the condition in the column

This table is matrix which gives more clarified view of the strengths and weaknesses within the organisation linked to the culture endorsing learning.

The white fields in the matrix will be filled in by the sum of the result of each employee. This value is filled in in each of the white fields in the row to which it belongs. Finally, the average is counted. It is made by the sum of each column and divided by the value which is in the field 'Divide'.

As mentioned in literature review, according to Tichá (1999) the culture in LIPA Velkoobchod papírem will be considered as endorsing learning if each condition has an average of 4 or more (80% from 5 points).

4.5 Limitations

As with every study, also this one has some limitations. Those limitations should be mentioned before the presentation of the results of the study and the analysis of these results.

One limitation of the current survey is that in the company where the research was conducted there are only 20 employees and therefore only 20 responses to the questionnaire. Nevertheless, since the current study is not seeking to generalise but merely investigate the state of this firm then this need not be considered a major drawback.

It is important too to mention that several problems were expected linked to the size (length) of the questionnaire. However after e-mail communication with the head manager of the company no problem was noticed. The manger was prepared that it will take quiet long time for fill in and gave the employees enough time to fill in. Also the employees who filled in the questionnaire did not have any objections. They were quiet satisfied and delighted to be asked to express their opinion.

5 Analysis and Discussion

In this chapter the analysis and discussion of the results will be given. Because the survey was provided as case study, there is no requirement to do statistical analysis and results will be discussed using the graphs.

5.1 Analysis of general data

In this section, first three questions of the questionnaire will be analysed.

5.1.1 Gender of participants

Graph 1: Proportion of gender amongst participants
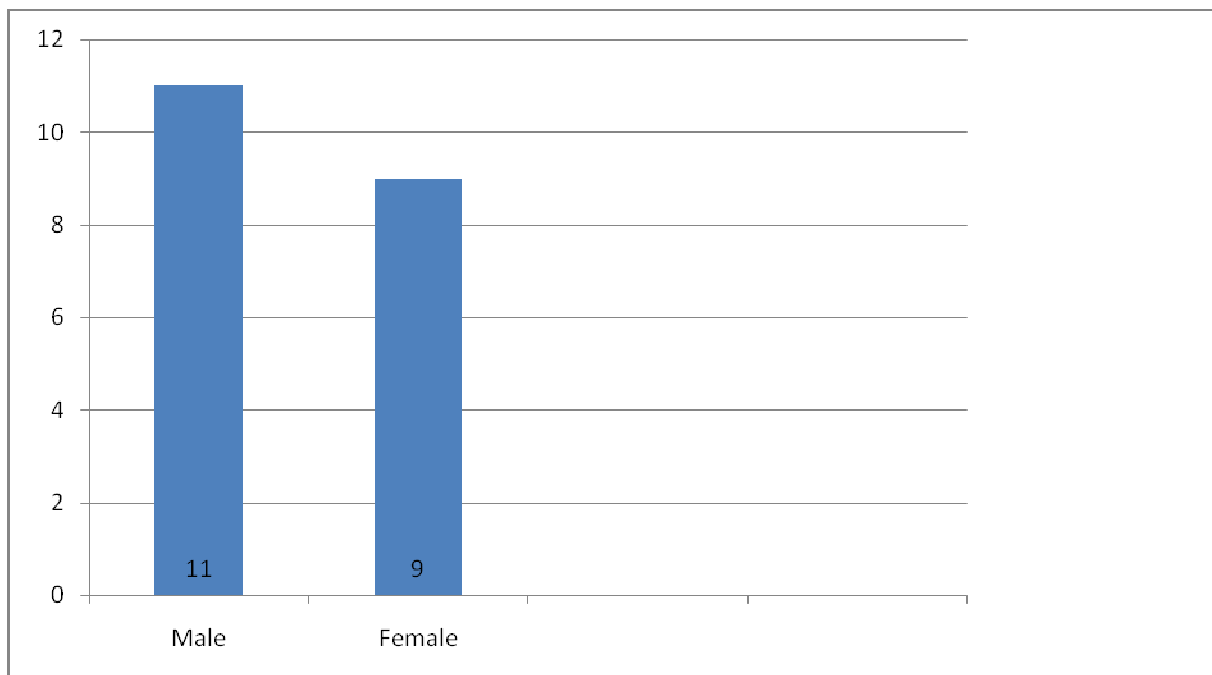
Finally, the total number of participants was 20. In the Graph 1 above is shown the proportion of males vs. females.

5.1.2 Age proportion
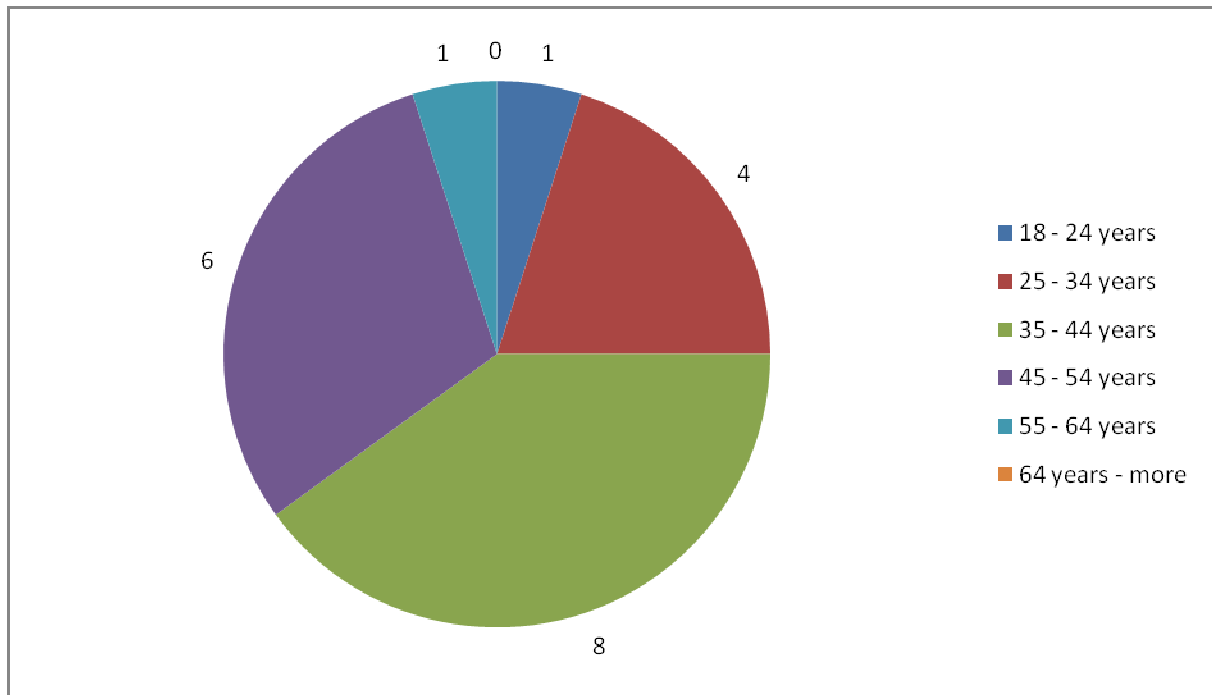
In the Graph 2 above is shown the age proportion of participants of the research. In LIPA Velkoobchod papírem the most frequent age group of employees is age group 35 – 44 years (8 employees – it represents 40% of employees in the company). In the company works only 1 employee who belongs to the age group 18 – 24.

5.1.3 Length of employment

Graph 3: Length of employment of employees in LIPA Velkoobchod papírem
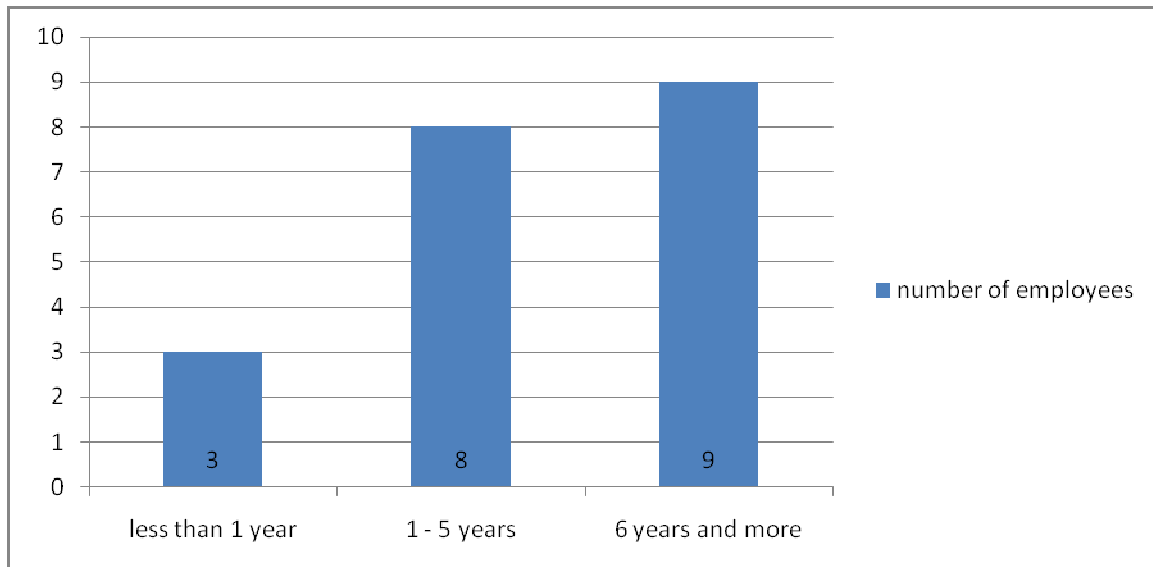

Graph 3 above shows the length of employment of employees in LIPA Velkoobchod papírem. 3 employees work in the company less than 1 year. 8 employees work in the company from 1 to 5 years. 9 employees work in the company 6 years and more. So the majority of the employees know the systems and processes within the company very well.

5.2 Analysis and discussion of first research question

The first research question ´Is LIPA Velkoobchod papírem a learning organisation? ´ was examined in the first part of the questionnaire (question 4 – 25). The results can be arranged in the Graph 4 below.

Graph 4: Results from the first part of the questionnaire (question 4 - 25)
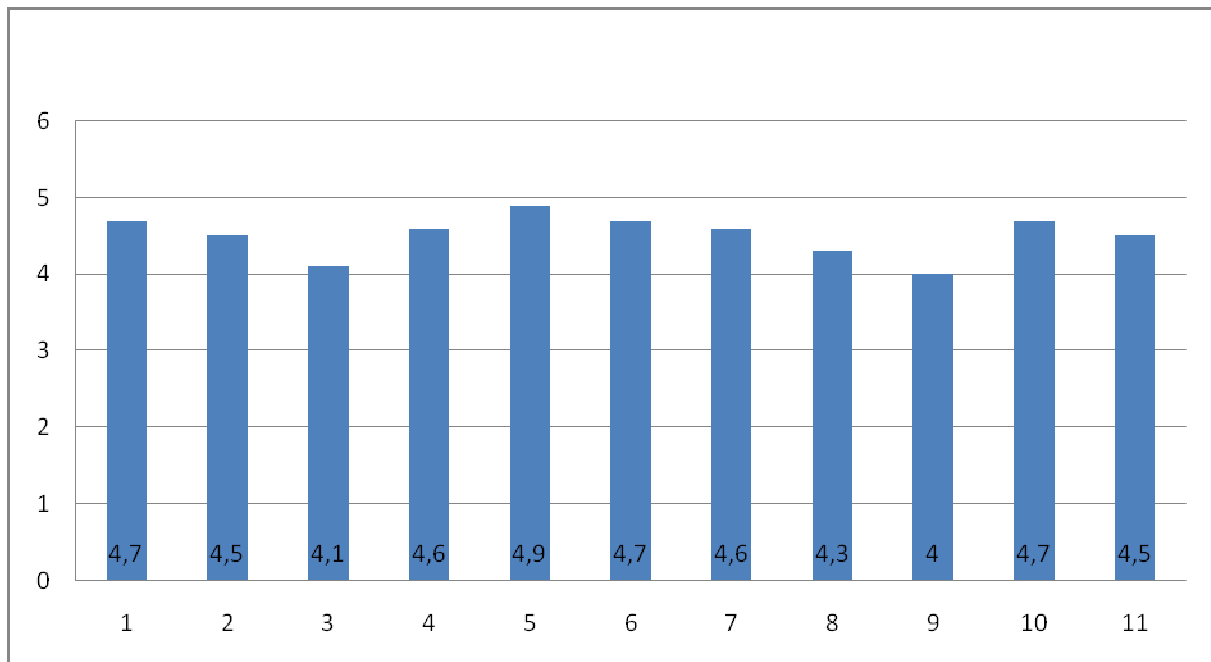
In chapter 4 - Methodology is put a minimal limit by which is measured if LIPA Velkoobchod papírem is or is not learning organisation. This limit was set up to 4 points and more – so LIPA Velkoobchod papírem is learning organisation if each of the characteristics has 4 or more points.

In the Graph 3 above is shown the average evaluation of all employees in the company. From the Graph 3 is presented that each of examined characteristics received average mark 4 points or more. The evaluation of all 11 characteristics is balanced.

Now 11 characteristics (according to Pedler et al., 1994) will be reminded:

1. Learning as the part of formulation of strategy

2. Participative approach

3. Informatics

4. Formative accountancy

5. Internal exchange

6. Flexible system of remuneration

7. Supporting structures

8. Collection of information about external environment

9. Inter-organisational learning

10. Atmosphere supporting learning

11. Occasion for personal development to everyone

In the next part of this chapter individual results will be discussed.

The characteristic nº1 - Learning as the part of formulation of strategy – received average evaluation 4,7 points. From the answers of employees results the fact that strategy of the company is formulated so that the employees can learn.

The characteristic nº2 - Participative approach – received average evaluation 4,5 points. This score affirms that the employees have the occasion to assist or cooperate on the formulation of strategy.

The characteristic nº3 – Informatics – received average evaluation 4,1 points. This is relatively weak mark. This evaluation signalise that information technology is not used enough for the sharing of important information. And consequently sometimes the employees do not have occasion to participate on the solution of problems.

The characteristic nº4 - Formative accountancy- received the average evaluation 4,6 points. This evaluation affirms that systems of accounting, budgeting and audit are structured and transparent so that members of organisation enable learning about s functioning of finances within the company.

The characteristic nº5 - Internal exchange – received average evaluation 4,9 points. This is very strong evaluation. So LIPA Velkoobchod papírem can be described as the company with the ability to share data and information on high level of internal exchange. The employees consider each other as the partner in learning.

The characteristic nº6 - Flexible system of remuneration – received average evaluation 4,7 points. The employees feel that the system of remuneration considers their individual needs (e.g. monetary and non-monetary remuneration).

The characteristic nº7 - Supporting structures – received average evaluation 4,6 points. This quiet high evaluation indicates that processes and procedures are considered as temporary and can be changed in dependence on change of needs of costumers or requirements in work.

The characteristic nº8 - Collection of information about external environment – received average evaluation 4,3 points. The managing director marginalises the role of internet. Some of the employees on the appropriate position do not have the access to computer and internet to look for information and for share the information.

The characteristic nº9 - Inter-organisational learning – received average evaluation 4,0 points. This is weak evaluation for learning organisation. The company does not provide benchmarking and it is not a member of any strategic alliance. However the employees try to create new services for the costumers and they participate on the strategy making.

The characteristic nº10 - Atmosphere supporting learning – received average evaluation 4,7 points. This evaluation indicates that the atmosphere supporting learning in this company is present. The employees get feedback on their work; they can ask questions and they are encouraged to learn.

The characteristic nº11 - Occasion for personal development to everyone – received average evaluation 4,5 points. The employees of the company have the occasion to learn, get skills and experience. The managing director arranges various trainings for all employees – some of them are specialised, some of them are general and all staff must be trained.

5.3 Analysis and discussion of second research question

The second research question ´ Does LIPA Velkoobchod papírem have the appropriate culture to support learning?' was examined by second part of the questionnaire (questions 26 – 61). The average results of all company are arranged in the Figure 10 below.

Figure 11: Table of allocation of conditions for appropriate culture supporting learning

Question number:	1. condition	2. condition	3. condition	4. condition	5. condition	6. condition	7. condition	8. condition	9. condition	10. condition
26			3,2	3,2						
27			4,8	4,8		4,8				
28			4,3	4,3						
29		4,7	4,7		4,7		4,7	4,7		
30			3,0	3,0						

31			4,6	4,6		4,6				
32				3,9			3,9	3,9	3,9	3,9
33				4,7						4,7
34	4,1	4,1				4,1				
35					4,1		4,1	4,1		
36						3,8				
37		3,9	3,9		3,9	3,9				3,9
38					4,9				4,9	
39		4,2	4,2	4,2					4,2	
40									4,1	
41	4,3	4,3		4,3	4,3					
42					4,0					
43				4,1	4,1					
44					4,9	4,9	4,9	4,9	4,9	
45						4,1				
46		4,6	4,6	4,6						
47	4,2				4,2	4,2				4,2
48	4,1						4,1	4,1	4,1	4,1
49	3,9									3,9
50	4,3		4,3	4,3	4,3	4,3				
51	4,4							4,4		4,4
52						4,7				
53		4,7	4,7	4,7	4,7					
54			3,8		3,8	3,8				
55		4,2			4,2	4,2		4,2		
56		4,1			4,1	4,1		4,1		
57	4,5		4,5						4,5	
58						4,0			4,0	
59			4,2	4,2	4,2					
60	4,8					4,8	4,8	4,8	4,8	
61	4,7		4,7	4,7		4,7				
Sum	43,3	38,8	63,5	63,6	64,4	69	26,5	39,2	39,4	29,1
Divide	/10/	/9/	/15/	/15/	/15/	/16/	/6/	/9/	/9/	/7/
Average	4,33	4,31	4,23	4,24	4,29	4,31	4,42	4,36	4,38	4,16

The results from the Figure 10 above can be arranged in the Graph 5 below.

Graph 5: Results from the second part of the questionnaire (question 26 – 61)
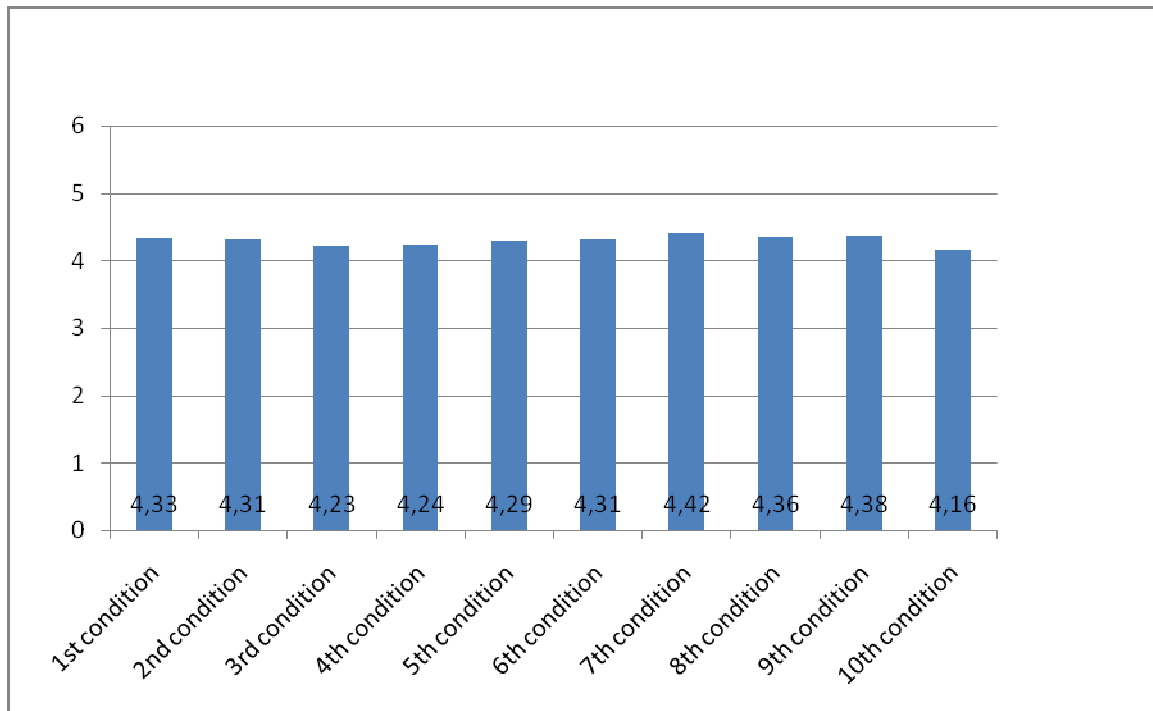
From the Graph 5 is evident that each condition get evaluation more than 4 points. So the culture in LIPA Velkoobchod papírem can be considered as supporting learning.

Now 10 conditions (according to Tichá, 1999) will be reminded:

1. Evaluation of the culture endorsing learning in the organisation.

2. Support of everything what is positive.

3. Strengthening in people the sense of safety.

4. Remuneration of the willingness to risk.

5. Help to the people to cooperate.

6. Introduction of learning in real life.

7. Formulation of vision.

8. Introduction of vision in life.

9. Connection of the systems.

10. Realisation of the concept.

Condition nº1 - Evaluation of the culture endorsing learning in the organisation – received average evaluation 4,33 points. The main purpose of first condition is to get information what

the employees think about the company. The employees of the company feel that the quality of work life is ameliorating and this amelioration is expected in the future. The employees think that the company give them the possibility to learn.

Condition nº2 - Support of everything what is positive – received average evaluation 4,31 points. This evaluation suggests that the employees are commended for well done work and that they are supported in learning. The employees have enough of sources to learn.

Condition nº3 - Strengthening in people the sense of safety – received average evaluation 4,23 points. This evaluation indicates that people do not have fear of repressions or of some menace coming from expression of disagreement or different opinion. Managers try to help employees in their learning.

Condition nº4 - Remuneration of the willingness to risk – received average evaluation 4,24 points. This shows that in the company is the willingness to break old habits in order to introduction of new types of management and ways of working. Also people are supported in experimenting.

Condition nº5 - Help to the people to cooperate – received average evaluation 4,29 points. The employees are supported in open discussions and they are supported for work in teams.

Condition nº6 - Introduction of learning in real life – received average evaluation 4,31 points. The employees use the mistakes as the occasion to learn, they exchange the knowledge and experiences with other employees. Also each employee has specific annual training programme.

Condition nº7 - Formulation of vision – received average evaluation 4,42 points. The employees understand what the purpose of their business is. They are supported in discussing. Managers are able to change the vision when environment changes.

Condition nº8 - Introduction of vision in life – received average evaluation 4,36 points. This evaluation shows that managers have leadership skills.

Condition nº9 - Connection of the systems – received average evaluation 4,38 points. The employees are informed about happening in other departments – in whole organisation. Systems support learning of individuals.

Condition nº10 - Realisation of the concept – received average evaluation 4,16 points. This indicates that LIPA Velkoobchod papírem tries to put previous 9 conditions together in practice quiet well.

The average evaluation is quiet balanced. However the last condition - Realisation of the concept – received the lowest evaluation. The realisation of this condition is very difficult because it unifies the rest of given conditions. It is all the time very difficult to implement the theory in practice and this is probably the cause of the relatively low evaluation (but it meets the minimal 4 point limit) of condition 10 in the questionnaire.

5.4 Conclusion

From the results of the survey presented in this chapter results that both research questions can be answered positively – LIPA Velkoobchod papírem is learning organisation (it is evident from balanced evaluation of the first part of the questionnaire – questions 4 - 25) and in LIPA Velkoobchod papírem is appropriate culture supporting learning (it is obvious from the results of the second part of the questionnaire – questions 26 – 61).

Both results of the survey together will lead to good and healthy development of the company. And in future it will be surely noticed in the development and the profits of the company.

6 Recommendation

In response to the results of the research LIPA Velkoobchod papírem should focus on amelioration of access to information technology. Some employees on appropriate positions do not have access to computer and internet and consequently it can be a barrier to learning. Also manager of the marketing department who offers personally company´s products and services in other companies should have laptop for better arranging of orders and gained information.

The lack of the information technology is related to the lack of sufficient collection of information about external environment. So it is evident that the purchase of computers with the access to internet could solve this problem. Also the company could purchase some newspaper – some of the employees could appreciate it during lunch time.

On the base of evaluation of 10 conditions of culture supporting learning I would recommend to LIPA Velkoobchod papírem to thoroughly take heed to applying in practice of all yet mentioned conditions.

7 Conclusion

In this chapter the overall conclusions of the study will be given. This chapter tries also to summarize findings and recommendations of the study and declare whether the research objectives were achieved.

The main purpose of this study was to describe the characteristics of learning organisation and show how learning organisation is recognised. In order to put theory in practice Czech company LIPA Velkoobchod papírem was focused where the research was provided through questionnaires.

Except the main purpose of this study mentioned above there were two partial objectives. The objectives of the research provided was to recognise if LIPA Velkoobchod papírem is or is not learning organisation and if in LIPA Velkoobchod papírem is or is not appropriate culture supporting learning.

In literature review I identified 11 characteristics of learning organisation and 10 conditions which should be met if the culture within the company is considered as supporting learning. Following this literature background and by examination of 11 characteristics of learning organisation and 10 conditions I found that LIPA Velkoobchod papírem can be considered as learning organisation and I also identified that the culture within the company can be considered as supporting learning. The employees of the company feel that they are member of the learning process within the company and that they can share their experience and skills. Also the employees feel that they have possibility to learn and get skills and experience. The average evaluation was balanced nevertheless it is apparent that some of the characteristics and conditions received lower evaluation than the others. From this resulted the recommendations that LIPA Velkoobchod papírem should care more of information technology, sharing of information and inter-organisational learning. As the solutions for those problems could be the purchase of computers for employees on appropriate positions.

My findings that LIPA Velkoobchod papírem is learning organisation and that there is appropriate culture supporting learning are not final state. For LIPA Velkoobchod papírem it means that the company goes on the good way, has assumptions to be still developing it self and build up its strategy.

8 Appendix

8.1 Appendix A - Czech version of the questionnaire

Vážená paní, Vážený pane,

Do rukou se Vám právě dostal dotazník k mé disertační práci. Dotazník je rozdělen do tří sekcí. Před každou sekcí jsou vypsané instrukce jak s vyplňováním dotazníku postupovat. Data z dotazníku získaná budou využita pouze k účelům této disertační práce a zaručuji Vám naprostou anonymitu při zpracovávání těchto dat.

Předem děkuji za Váš čas.

Dagmar Nejedlová

GENERAL DATA:

Prosím zakřížkujte vždy jen jednu odpověď

1. Jste: Muž ❑ Žena ❑
2. Kolik je Vám let? ❑18 - 24; ❑25 - 34; ❑35 - 44; ❑45 - 54; ❑55 - 64; ❑64 a více
3. Jak dlouho pracujete ve firmě LIPA Velkoobchod papírem? ❑Méně než 1 rok; ❑1 – 5 let; ❑6 let a více.

FIRST PART:

Níže uvedená tvrzení ohodnoťte ve vztahu k firmě LIPA Velkoobchod papírem. K hodnocení využijte následující škály: 1 – vůbec neplatí, 2 – platí jen velmi málo, 3 – platí částečně, 4 – platí do značné míry, 5 – platí zcela.

4. Trendy v oblasti společenské, ekonomické, politické a vývoje trhu jsou v naší firmě pravidelně diskutovány a vyhodnocovány. ❑
5. Na tvorbě strategie podniku se podílí každý zaměstnanec. ❑
6. Podnikové informace a databáze jsou dostupné každému zaměstnanci. ❑
7. Příslušní pracovníci jsou okamžitě informováni o finančních dopadech jednotlivých kroků. ❑
8. Organizační jednotky (oddělení) mají jasnou představu o svém vlastním účelu i o účelu ostatních organizačních jednotek (oddělení). ❑

9. Formou peněžitých i nepeněžitých odměn je odměňována dobře odvedená práce. ❑

10. Struktury v podniku jsou velmi pružné a rychle se přizpůsobují různým potřebám a úkolům. ❑

11. Informace o vnějším prostředí, konkurentech, zákaznících, apod. jsou do podniku přinášeny zcela přirozeně zaměstnanci a jsou sdíleny s ostatními. ❑

12. Angažujeme se ve společném podnikání, abychom vyvinuli nové služby a naučili se od svých partnerů nové metody. ❑

13. Zaměstnanci nejsou obviňováni za špatné zprávy. ❑

14. Učení se novým věcem a získávání nových schopností je u všech zaměstnanců podporováno. ❑

15. Nové zaměření rozvoje je hledáno experimentováním a realizací pilotních projektů. ❑

16. Důležité záměry jsou nejdříve probrány v nejširším plénu a potom prováděny. ❑

17. Informační technologie nejsou pouze prostředkem automatizace procesů, ale pomáhají nám společně realizovat nové věci. ❑

18. Význam podnikových zdrojů i způsob jejich využívání je zaměstnanci dobře chápán. ❑

19. Kdykoli situace takovou potřebu vyvolá, různé organizační jednotky sdílejí informace a vypomáhají si svými dovednostmi. ❑

20. Systém odměňování je ovlivňován většinou zaměstnanců. ❑

21. Podávání návrhů na změny v organizaci práce je podporováno. ❑

22. Podnik vybudoval efektivní komunikační kanály pro sběr, zpracování a distribuci informací o vnějším prostředí. ❑

23. Pracovníci jiných podniků se s námi často schází, abychom si vyměnili informace a zkušenosti. ❑

24. Hlavním záměrem hodnocení pracovníků je zjištění potřeb jejich profesního i osobního rozvoje. ❑

25. Profesní rozvoj pracovníků je podporován dostatkem příležitostí a zdrojů k tomuto rozvoji (pracovníci mají otevřený přístup ke vzdělání a kvalifikačnímu růstu). ❑

SECOND PART:

Vyhodnoťte společnost LIPA Velkoobchod papírem s využitím níže uvedených stanovisek. Použijte hodnotící škálu od 1 do 5, přičemž 1 bude znamenat, že dané stanovisko neodpovídá podmínkám ve firmě – firma se tak nechová, hodnocení na opačném konci (5) bude znamenat, že je to v souladu s chováním ve firmě.

26. V našem podniku není žádný strach z odvet nebo nějakého ohrožení plynoucího z vyslovení nesouhlasu nebo jiného mínění a zaměstnanci nemají žádné obavy se vyjadřovat. ❑

27. Chyby jednotlivců nebo celých oddělení se využívají jako příležitost k poučení. ❑

28. Zaměstnanci i manažeři sdílejí názor, že vždy existuje způsob jak něco udělat lépe. ❑

29. Diskuze a různé náhledy na věc jsou v naší firmě podporovány a rozvíjeny. ❑

30. Experimentování má výraznou podporu – je to součást vnitřní kultury. ❑

31. Chyby jsou nazírány jako příležitost k růstu. ❑

32. V podniku je možnost porušit staré zvyky za účelem vyzkoušení nějaké nové lepší metody. ❑

33. Manažeři řídí podnik inovativně a kreativně, jsou ochotni přijímat riziko . ❑

34. Kvalita pracovního života ve firmě se zlepšuje. ❑

35. Zaměstnanci mají možnost si vyměňovat zkušenosti i nově nabyté znalosti – a to formálně i neformálně. ❑

36. Řešení problémů a učení se je v našem podniku podporováno. ❑

37. Na všech úrovních našeho podniku je učení se očekáváno a podporováno. ❑

38. Lidé mají přehled o celé firmě, nad rámec svého pracovního místa nebo své specializace či funkce v podniku a své pracovní chování tomu přizpůsobují. ❑

39. Změny v naší firmě jsou diskutovány na pravidelných firemních poradách. ❑

40. Zastaralé procedury a systémy řízení jsou nahrazovány novými. ❑

41. V naší firmě je očekáváno neustálé zlepšování. ❑

42. U každého pracovníka je přesně specifikován druh a rozsah školení, dalšího vzdělávání nebo tréninku, kterého se mu během roku dostane. ❑

43. Uvnitř i mimo náš podnik se nachází relevantní zdroje k učení a zaměstnanci jsou k nim odkazováni. ❑

44. Každý v naší firmě má příležitost k učení a chápe propojení své vlastní práce s prací ostatních. ❑

45. Proces učení je převážně zajišťován manažery. ❑

46. I nečekané události jsou přijímány jako příležitost k učení. ❑

47. Příležitosti k rozvíjení vlastních znalostí a zkušeností jsou zaměstnanci přijímány pozitivně. ❑

48. Struktura naší firmy a vnitřní systémy jsou navrženy tak, aby dostatečně rychle a správně reagovaly na podněty z vnitřku i vnějšku naší firmy. ❑

49. Naše firma se v současném prostředí nepůsobí přetíženě . ❑

50. V naší organizaci je hladina stresu na úrovni, která podporuje učení. ❑

51. V naší firmě se podporuje trvalé zlepšování. ❑

52. Zaměstnanci naší firmy chápou, že k učení může dojít na školení, či při výcviku. ❑

53. Zaměstnancům naší firmy jsou poskytovány zdroje, které podporují jejich samostatné učení. ❑

54. Manažeři v našem podniku se dále vzdělávají, aby byli lepšími lídry. ❑

55. Rozpoznání rozdílů mezi vlastním stylem učení a styly učení ostatních spolupracovníků je využíváno ke zlepšení komunikace i procesu organizačního učení.

56. Manažeři respektují různé druhy učení u svých podřízených. ❑

57. Zaměstnanci se zajímají o to, co se v organizaci děje. ❑

58. Manažeři vypracovávají plán, který určuje průběh školení a učení během roku a zajišťují potřebné zdroje ke splnění tohoto plánu. ❑

59. Nová zlepšující řešení jsou odměňována. ❑

60. Manažeři jsou dostatečně schopní vyrovnat se s měnícím se vnějším prostředím firmy. ❑

61. Zaměstnanci v naší firmě jsou v učení a jiných pracovních aktivitách podporováni manažery. ❑

Děkuji za vyplnění dotazníku a přeji Vám příjemný zbytek dne.

Dagmar Nejedlová

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