<div align="right">บทความวิชาการ</div>

การพัฒนาและความสำคัญของมหาวิทยาลัยบรรษัท

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บทคัดย่อ

บทความนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์หลักเพื่อทบทวนวรรณกรรมที่เกี่ยวข้องกับมหาวิทยาลัยบรรษัท (Corporate university) เพื่อให้ได้รับความรู้ในปรากฏการณ์นี้ เนื่องจากมหาวิทยาลัยบรรษัทเป็นหนึ่งในเครื่องมือสำคัญด้านทรัพยากรมนุษย์สำหรับโลกธุรกิจยุคปัจจุบัน เพราะมหาวิทยาลัยบรรษัทเกี่ยวข้องกับความรู้ ซึ่งเป็นสินทรัพย์ที่มีความสำคัญเป็นอย่างยิ่งต่อการประสบความสำเร็จขององค์กร จำนวนของมหาวิทยาลัยบรรษัทเพิ่มขึ้นอย่างต่อเนื่องตั้งแต่มหาวิทยาลัยบรรษัทแห่งแรกถือกำเนิดขึ้นในสหรัฐอเมริกาช่วงทศวรรษที่ 1900 ถึงแม้ว่ามหาวิทยาลัยบรรษัทจะมีคุณลักษณะเฉพาะบางประการที่น่าสนใจ มหาวิทยาลัยบรรษัทนี้ก็ไม่ได้มีจุดมุ่งหมายในการก่อตั้งเพื่อทดแทนสถาบันการศึกษาแบบดั้งเดิม โดยที่สถาบันการศึกษาทั้ง 2 ประเภทสามารถร่วมมือกันได้ ดังจะเห็นได้จากตัวอย่างความร่วมมือจริงที่เกิดขึ้นระหว่างมหาวิทยาลัยบรรษัทกับสถาบันการศึกษาแบบดั้งเดิม นอกจากนี้ ในตอนท้ายของบทความได้นำเสนอและอภิปรายเกี่ยวกับปัจจัยที่มีความสำคัญต่อการประสบความสำเร็จของมหาวิทยาลัยบรรษัท

คำสำคัญ: มหาวิทยาลัยบรรษัท (Corporate university) สถาบันการศึกษาแบบดั้งเดิม การพัฒนาทรัพยากรมนุษย์

REVIEW ARTICLE

Development and significance of corporate universities

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Abstract

This study aimed to review existing literature regarding to corporate universities to gain an understanding about this phenomenon. A corporate university is one of the most important strategic human resource tools in the today's business world because it involves with knowledge, the vital asset for all successful organizations. A number of corporate universities have been increasing since the first corporate university was established in the U.S. around the 1900s. Although a corporateuniversity has some unique and interesting characteristics, it was not established to replace a traditional education institute. However, both institutes can benefit by working collaboratively as can be seen from the actual examples from many corporate universities and traditional education institutes. Finally, critical success factors of corporate universities are provided and discussed.

Keywords: Corporate university, Traditional education institute, Human resource development

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The significance of the knowledge economy in the today's business world is generally accepted. For example, it was estimated that 79% of works in the U.S. economy related to intangible assets, such as medical services, education, and consultations (Robbins & Judge, 2011). Thus, the importance of knowledge as the valuable asset helping an organization sustain its competitive advantage is increasingly accepted (Barley, 2002; Blass, 2005; Jansink, Kwakman, & Streumer, 2005; Prince & Stewart, 2002). This phenomenon stresses the importance of the human resource development duty toward organizational growth and prosperity (Rurkkhum, 2011) since human resource development is dealing with both important organizational assets: employees and knowledge (Gold, Rodgers, & Smith, 2003). Thus, effective human resource tools that can develop employees and knowledge are important. A corporate university is one of the significant phenomena showing the effort of organizations, especially large organizations, about their emphasis on the continuous development these two important assets. In this study, literature regarding to a corporate university is reviewed and analyzed to gain a better understanding about a corporate university. It is expected that organizations interested in a corporate university can have a clear understanding that might be useful for them in terms of an establishment and administration of corporate university. Additionally, this study suggested a mutual benefit between corporate universities and traditional education institutes. In the following sections, a brief history, definition and development of corporate universities are presented, and followed by the way to enhance a collaborative work between corporate universities and traditional

education institutes, and the section about critical success factors of corporate universities is presented later to provide the basic information about the important things that the funding organizations should be aware of.

Definition and development of corporate universities

A corporate university is one of the interventions that organizations use in the today's business world. Although no universal definition of a corporate university is created, a corporate university can be defined as a company-owned educational institute that is established to help an organization achieve its goals by providing directly relevant and necessary business knowledge, and instilling company values, culture, and history to their own employees and/or other stakeholders (Abel & Li, 2012; Allen, 2002; Anderson & Lichthenberger, 2007, Guerci, Bartezzaghi, & Solari, 2010; Guthrie, 2013). A corporate university is the evidence of the human resource department effort, as the main player in developing knowledge within an organization, in moving from on-site and mostly reactive basis training programs to proactive workplace education initiatives with broader aims and scope in the high competitive market like the present (Abel & Li, 2012; Blass, 2001; Guerci et al., 2010; Latuha, 2010).

Apart from the importance of knowledge toward the sustainable growth of organizations, a corporate university can be used as a significant human resource tool in drawing and retaining talented employees. Nowadays employees value continuous learning and growth opportunities, not just a job security or financial rewards (Gebauer, Lowman, & Gordon, 2008; Latuha, 2010), and a corporate

university is the concrete evidence to show both current and future employees that an organization values the development of employees and is willing to invest in them.

The root of a corporate university is in the U.S. as a result of the moving from an industrial economy that largely required a huge pool of skill-based workers to an information economy that emphasizes the significance of knowledge workers (Allen, 2002; Anderson & Lichtenberger, 2007; Barley, 2002; Nixon & Helms, 2002). However, it is still a debate about the first corporate university: some said GM institute established in 1927 was the first corporate university, while some argued that Disney University established in 1955 was the first representative of a true corporate university (Allen, 2002; Anderson & Lichtenberger, 2007). Blass (2001) explained that the first emerging corporate university acted like a corporate training center, while the current generation of corporate university shifts to strategic tasks. Although it is unclear about what the first corporate university is, it is undoubtedly that a corporate university is important and not a management fad as can be seen from an increasing number of corporate universities throughout the world since the establishment of the first corporate university in the 1950s (Nixon & Helms, 2002).

In Thailand, it is not sure what the first Thai corporate university is. Although at the present, a number of corporate universities in Thailand are not high compared to other parts of the world, the benefits of corporate universities are accepted certainly. The details of corporate universities in Thailand are elaborated later in this study. In the following section, a debate between traditional education institutes and

corporate universities about whether they are partnership or a threat to each other is presented.

A debate between traditional education institutes and corporate universities

Although the concept of a corporate university has received an increasing attention, especially in terms of its practices within an organization, the term 'university' in a corporate university should be re-investigated first. A university is "a college or collection of colleges at which people study for a degree" (Cambridge Dictionary), and it is expected to be a place where "people professionally dedicated to the quest and transmission of truth in scientific terms" (Jaspers, 1960, p. 21 as cited in Blass, 2001). According to John Dewey, an important American philosopher and educational reformer, the principal purpose of education is to expand "a person's horizons and provide him [and her] with the tools to interpret and to alter his [and her] world" (Drost, 1977, p. 20). In other words, education is not to prepare students for one certain career or one industry; however, "education should liberate people, enabling them to change and better their lot" (Drost, 1977, p. 25). Education institutes, especially higher education institutes, are expected to act as intellectual providers and knowledge creators (Binkauskas, 2012) in order to prepare people to be able to survive in the rapid society. In contrast, the main purpose of a corporate university is to build and develop organizationally specific skills and knowledge that have been used as "a vehicle to connect learning initiatives to organizational objectives" (Abel & Li, 2012, p. 103). This is the first thing showing the difference between a corporate university and a traditional education institute.

Apart from the different purposes between traditional education institutes and corporate universities, these two types of institutes are different in terms of the academic freedom and the evaluation system. Academic freedom, defined as "the freedom of student and teacher to do research in their own way and teach as they see fit" (Jaspers, 1960, p. 142 as cited in Blass, 2001), in corporate universities seems to be limited compared to the traditional education institutes. In a corporate university, all training and learning programs aim to improve the organization, leaving instructors having a little control over the teaching content and research that they can choose to do (Blass, 2001). In addition, the importance of freedom of speech is lessened in corporate universities because of the strict organizational structure: the educational provider is the employer having authorities to punish and reward employees, or in other words learners (El-Tannir, 2002). However, it does not mean that traditional education institutes have the most superior position in producing knowledge. In contrast, the rigid structure and other obstacles, such as the absence of university-industry linkage, also hinder traditional education institutes exercise their full knowledge potential (Binkauskas, 2012; Vaidya & Charkha, 2008). Thus, it seems to be hard to conclude that whether a traditional education institute or a corporate university has an advanced position in terms of the academic freedom.

Additionally, even though both traditional education institutes and corporate universities are continuously engaging in conducting research, their output aims different targets. Research conducted in traditional education institutes is going to be shared among a community of scholar through publication, especially in the peer-

reviewed journals (Blass, 2001). In contrast, research produced in corporate universities is usually related to the success of the organization, leading to a limitation in sharing among community (Blass, 2001). For the evaluation system, "a pass/fail syndrome" is emphasized in the traditional education institutes (Dealtry, 2000a, p. 173), whereas the evaluation system in corporate universities focuses the application of learning on the real job and the bottom-line business impact—or the level 3 and 4 of the Kirkpatrick's evaluation model (Abel & Li, 2012). This evaluation system in corporate universities emphasizes the fact that the main focus of a corporate university is to produce employees who are able to work for the organization in the cost-effective approach (Blass, 2005; Dealtry, 2000b; Nixon & Helms, 2002). However, it is hard to evaluate the ability to apply or transfer knowledge in traditional education institutes because of the emphasis on the nature of knowledge that is different between corporate universities and traditional education institutes, leading to the emphasis on the evaluation in the learning level in traditional education institutes.

Another point about the difference between corporate universities and traditional education institutes is the awarded degrees. In Thailand, Panyapiwat Institute of Management (PIM) is one of the first Thai corporate universities (Bangkokbiznews, 2012; Komchadluek, 2012). PIM is a higher education institute established by CP All Public Company Limited, one of the largest organizations in Thailand. However, PIM does not only produce employees to its organizations; rather, students graduate from PIM can work at other organizations since the programs, both undergraduate and graduate levels, are accredited by the Thai Ministry of Education.

However, this system seems to different from most corporate universities in the U.S. Allen (2002) explained that even though some corporate universities in the U.S. are accredited, there is no existing corporate university offering real academic degree programs. In contrast, the U.S. corporate universities usually partner with traditional education institutes. Able and Li (2012) described that GM Institute partners with Indiana University to offer a customized MBA program, and Motorola University based in China partners with 21 Chinese higher education institutes to deliver executive management programs and specialized technology training programs. Another partnership between corporate universities and traditional education institutes is the exchange faculty member program. Corporate universities usually invite faculty members from traditional education institutes to be guest speakers on special topics, and faculty members can contribute to their field and the corporate university simultaneously by engaging in research that is useful in terms of knowledge development and practice (Abel & Li, 2012; Rurkkhum & Pruetipibultham, 2008).

Thus, it might be concluded that a corporate university and a traditional education institute can benefit from each other. These two types of universities are partnership. Especially in Thailand, one of the corporate universities goes further by producing qualified employees for other organizations, not just working collaboratively with traditional education institutes. This seems to be a good example of a corporate university. In the following section, critical success factors of corporate universities are discussed.

Critical success factors of corporate universities

Based on the fact that an organization benefits from a corporate university, it is interesting to know how a corporate university should manage to succeed. Research suggests that successful corporate universities must have these factors (Abel & Li, 2012; Blass, 2001; Bober & Bartlett, 2004; Latuha, 2010; Overcast, Schmidt, Lei, Rodgers, & Chung, 2009; Rurkkhum & Pruetipibultham, 2008; Sriphetluang, 2002):

(1)   A corporate university must have a clear learning vision and mission aligning to the organizational goal and its human resource system. As explained above, a corporate university is an important tool to fostering an organizational growth in the present world. A corporate university is not only to fulfill the current needs of an organization in terms of qualified employees by identifying gaps and developing programs to close these gaps, but it must be able to plan ahead and prepare the whole organization in advance by being as a catalyst for change. In other words, training and learning programs provided by a corporate university must be proactive and aligned with the business needs.

(2)   Training and learning programs provided by a corporate university must be able to show the concrete benefits. In other words, training evaluation and the use of evaluation results are significant. All programs offered by a corporate university must be evaluated, especially the evaluation in the application of learning on the job and the impact on the business bottom-line. Additionally, a corporate

university can use the evaluation results to improve its operation and as an accountability tool toward the funding organization.

(3)   All stakeholders must be involved. However, this is hard because in reality a corporate university is not generally generating satisfied financial benefits in a short-time basis, leading stakeholders started to lose their interest in participating in corporate university activities. Thus, it is an essential task of a corporate university to persuade stakeholders by providing concrete benefits as suggested in the above factor. An example of the concrete benefits from a corporate university is a number of talented employees who were trained and then promoted to a management level, resulting in a decreased time to fill in the critical vacant positions by outsiders which possibly leads to an increased level of employee morale in the organization.

(4)   A corporate university can work collaboratively with traditional education institutes. A corporate university is not a threat to traditional education institutes. Rather, corporate universities and traditional education institutes can be a partner to benefit mutually.

(5)   A corporate university should use technology to improve its operation, such as delivering on-line courses, and using technology to reduce all paperwork. Using technology will reduce non-significant tasks, and enable human resource staff who are responsible for managing a corporate university to have time and resources to invest in more strategic tasks.

Although all these five factors are critical toward successful corporate universities, funding organizations should be aware of the uniqueness of a corporate

university. A corporate university is not a short-term human resource tool that can immediately solve the organizational problems or support the organizational growth. In contrast, a successful corporate university requires a vast amount of resources and a true understanding to effectively manage it.

Conclusions

Corporate universities and traditional education institutes are different in some way. Although the purpose of a corporate university seems to limit to its organizational benefits, not the whole society as the goal of traditional education institutes, the term corporate university is widely used and accepted. Thus, it might be acceptable to conclude that the term corporate university is used as a symbol to aspire and emphasize the importance of knowledge toward the success of organizations. A corporate university is not established to replace traditional education institutes; in contrast both institutes can benefit from being a partnership with each other. Additionally, a corporate university is important for organizations in the knowledge-based economy; however, it requires a huge amount of resources and right management methods in order to succeed. Thus, an organization that wants to establish its own corporate university must be aware of these facts and does not treat a corporate university as a management fad.

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