

Ready to Lean? Lean Awareness Level of Higher Education Institutions in Malaysia

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Impacted by the Coronavirus pandemic, the world is experiencing unprecedented challenges and every industry is rapidly adjusting to the situation including the higher education institutions (HEIs). To remain relevant, HEIs are struggling with its sustainability, competing for students, research funding, ranking, as well as challenges to continue serving the students with limited resource and budget. HEIs need to stand out for re-examining their strategic, operations, and work flow to enhance the competitive advantages which push them to a higher level of quality. Therefore, Lean is introduced as one of the best strategies to maximize the value and transform the waste into value added elements for continuous improvement. Despite there are examples of Lean adoption in many large organizations, it is often said to fail when it comes to implementation. Researchers evidenced such failure is rooted in the fact that the organization is not ready for the Lean adoption. Based on this, assessment of readiness is required before the adoption of Lean to eliminate the disruption of its success. Likewise, understanding of the readiness of Lean in HEIs is needed to gauge how well they are aware of Lean, and the academicians' attitude towards Lean. Survey was administered to the academicians in both private and public HEIs in Malaysia and the data collected were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). The findings revealed that majority are not familiar with Lean term, as well as the awareness and readiness level of Lean is low among the target respondents. The academicians believed that the Lean aids in waste reduction and improve the quality of HEIs. They ranked the unnecessary movement and processes as the top wastes in higher education, followed by lengthy meeting, lack of empowerment and malfunction of equipment. In addition, academicians perceived that the limited knowledge on Lean and resistant to change is the biggest barrier for Lean implementations. Nonetheless, 90% of them are interested to know more about Lean in higher education and 75% of them have faith in the Lean implementation. Lean implementation itself incurs cost, thus understanding the Lean readiness of HEIs is essential before its implementation. To boost the successful of Lean culture and maximize its benefits, the government and management need to build a strong awareness and comprehensive understanding of Lean with real commitment in higher education. Only through the understanding, get it ready and improve accordingly, the higher education will manage to discern whether Lean is just a fad or truly enhancing the organization quality management and performance.

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