

UNIVERSITY OF MACAU

FACULTY OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

**ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING IN PUBLIC
ORGANIZATION**

The background of the page features a large, faint watermark of the University of Macau seal. The seal is circular with the text "UNIVERSIDADE DE MACAU" around the top and "仁義禮智信" (Confucian virtues) around the bottom. In the center is a shield with a crown on top and a banner at the bottom.

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Executive summary

As the pace of globalization keeps on accelerating, even public organizations have to search for new ways to cope with both internal and external forces for survival and development. Since public organizations have distinct characteristics and learning processes (Vince, 2000), this research aims to explore how the sense-making and sense-giving activities take place in a government department in Macao through the use of different powers and politics.

This study analyzed the government department by, its unique 'purpose and goals', 'accountability', 'autonomy' and 'environment' and the impact on organizational learning. The findings indicated that these organizational characteristics formed the 'power of the system' and became the barriers of sense-making for organizational learning. On the other hand, other three types of powers, including 'power of processes', 'power of resources' and 'power of meaning', generated the facilitators of sense-making. Both barriers and facilitators interacted with each other to determine the overall orientation to action of organizational members and thus affect the learning outcome. A case study research was adopted and in-depth interviews were carried out with the top management, middle management, front line staff and technical staff in the Identification Services Bureau (DSI), for

gathering their learning experiences and feedback for implementing the new passport project.

It is concluded in the study that the relationship between power and organizational learning were somehow different from what was conceived by Argyris & Schon (1978) and Senge (1990), who considered that power was one major barrier for the establishment of learning organization. However, I argue that power should be studied in a positive way and can be regarded as a resource of any social process possessed by various stakeholders. It depends on whether the power beholders could make use of the relevant power at their advantage in order to overcome the learning barriers.

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