International Strategic Alliance in Higher Education Sectors (Learning for Competitive Advantage) - A Case From Malaysian Private College

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ABSTRACT

The growing trend of internationalization of education or universities, has called either government public universities or private sponsor universities to take up the challenges. At this point, the paper will discuss the findings from an internationalization process of higher education provider who formed strategic alliance with the purpose to achieve learning and seek competitive advantage. In particular, the paper will discuss on International Strategic Alliances (ISAs) and organizational learning (OL) process, which took place via strategic co-operation between parent foreign partner and ‘child’ alliance company/business. Finally, the paper will discuss the key elements promoting learning as well as factors that inhibit learning via the process of strategic collaboration which lead to bringing competitive advantage to the partners.

The research was conducted using a qualitative approach in a selected private higher education institution from a developing country, which formed strategic alliance with an established international university from developed country. This approach was used in order to support the study of how a newly established education institution has taken opportunity to collaborate with an established university from developed country so that the process of collaboration would help management to the achieve the competitive advantage. Data were collected mainly using semi-structured interviews with selected respondents from both collaborative parties.

Keywords: Strategic Alliance, Learning, Competitive Advantage, Higher Education Institution

INTRODUCTION

Intense competition and the augmentation of business opportunities are amongst two major factors for the globalization of worldwide markets and economies. These trends are currently exploiting the industries manufacturing and non-manufacturing, calls them to take advantage of globalization process and to adopt a more sophisticated approach to strategic marketing and planning including performing collaboration.

Malaysia’s drive for globalizing its higher education reflects our recognition that education can promote social and economic development as well as invariably accelerates the adoption of performance enhancing, or best practices. This is proven when Malaysia is currently striving towards becoming a state of knowledge-based economy (K-economy) through intensifying its effort to upgrade and sustain human resource development by encouraging firms to ally with international organizations and focus on improving training and development (Bank Negara, 2000). For instance, Malaysia has incorporating an open policy for SAs that enhance technological know-how, domestic learning and experience in selected
industries, so that local people get the opportunity to learn, acquire and experience new skills (Bank Negara, 2002). Further, Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) are concentrating in improving the quality of education services and ensuring that program offered by the public and private higher educational institutions in Malaysia are of high quality and international standards. In their endeavor to achieve these goals, they have established promotional offices in Dubai, Jakarta, Ho-Chi Minh City and Beijing (MOHE, 2009). MOHE also has taken up other marketing strategies that include offering incentives to institutions promoting education overseas; recognition of Malaysian degrees by foreign countries and the establishment of the new national quality agency for both private and public higher educational institutions, i.e. Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA). The ultimate aim of all these strategies is to make Malaysia a ‘favored’ destination for international and local students to pursue their tertiary education besides making education an important export commodity that will generate foreign exchange for the country (MOHE, 2009).

**Private Higher Education Development and Prospects for Internationalisation**

K-economy introduces in Malaysia requires business organizations to be more participative in promoting and supporting the delivery of higher education (HE) as this level of education was expected to complement the role of government in producing skilled manpower (Ismail, 1999). To complement with this objective, the government has launched the National Higher Education Action Plan 2007-2010, which provides a critical road map to guide and steer our HE players to effectively put effort and commitment in helping the nation achieve its educational and human resources development objectives. It has suggested that some of the prerequisite skills of a knowledge worker today were expected to have more specialists with upgraded ICT literacy, critical thinking and problem solving. Thus, in order to achieve its objective of becoming the hub for excellent education centre, universities and other education providers in Malaysia are expected to evolve and equip their students with these building blocks in life.

The Ministry of Higher Education, on its part, has taken heed of the Prime Minister’s call for greater transparency, openness and liberalization, and aggressively sought ways to improve governance and reduce bureaucracy. These included amending the Universities and University Colleges Act (UUCA) in the current Parliament sitting with the express purpose of making universities more agile and hence better positioned to overcome the larger issues on hand (Abdullah, J, 2009). According to Abdullah, among other things, the Ministry has introduced more prominent professionals into the composition of public university board of directors which, as a result, public universities today are enjoying the benefit of a broader and deeper perspective on governance, from their respective boards.

**Demand**

The demand for higher education is increasing and the number of foreign students from the ASEAN region is also expected to increase as more foreign universities come to operate in Malaysia. The scenario in the next millennium will be the escalation of the internationalization of higher education in Malaysia. The ‘3+0’ split programs would replace the split foreign degrees, as these private colleges gained more skills and experience. All these will make Malaysia a thriving centre for educational pursuits (Ismail, 1999; Foong, 2002). According to Ismail (1999), enrolment of students in private colleges gained momentum soon after the economic recession in July 1997, and was partly for the following reasons:

- Statistically, the Malaysian family income level has increased (since the early 1990s) and many people are willing to pay for achieving their higher education.
The government’s aim in becoming a K-based economy requires increasing effort in tailoring the education and training system to meet manpower needs.

Table 1 shows statistical data regarding enrolment of students in the Malaysian Public and Private universities and colleges for period from 2002-2007. The statistics show that with the increased number of people enrolled in the universities, educational opportunities must also increase to meet the demand. Thus, with this favorable demand of education market, the government has set up new public and private universities and created the opportunity for the establishment of private colleges that enter into twinning arrangements with foreign universities.

Table 1: Total of Student Enrolment In Higher Education From 2002-2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutions</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Universities</td>
<td>64061</td>
<td>70481</td>
<td>81075</td>
<td>80885</td>
<td>89633</td>
<td>128839</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Universities</td>
<td>165763</td>
<td>163480</td>
<td>169834</td>
<td>113105</td>
<td>144775</td>
<td>167788</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KTAR</td>
<td>7374</td>
<td>10599</td>
<td>9523</td>
<td>12808</td>
<td>13969</td>
<td>12289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POLYTECH</td>
<td>23329</td>
<td>28300</td>
<td>32752</td>
<td>36912</td>
<td>41138</td>
<td>40218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community College</td>
<td>2099</td>
<td>4325</td>
<td>5189</td>
<td>5387</td>
<td>6721</td>
<td>8919</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>262626</td>
<td>277185</td>
<td>298373</td>
<td>249097</td>
<td>296236</td>
<td>358053</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Higher Education statistic 2007, Ministry of Education, Malaysia

In 1997, the first private university in Malaysia, namely Universiti Telekom, was established (it was then renamed Multimedia University) to reflect the government’s effort on IT projects, and in 1998, Monash University of Australia was invited by the Malaysian Government to set up its branch campus. The 1996 Act enabled this arrangement between foreign universities and their local partners to take place. Students save enormously by attending these branch campuses, and the higher institution itself gains experience and skills from the partner in ensuring that a quality and internationally recognized program is delivered to its students (Foong, 2002). Table 2 shows the number of private higher education provider from year 2002-2007.

Table 2: Number of Private Higher Education Provider From Year 2002-2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University status</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University College Status</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Distance with University Status</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University status with local branch</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University status (Foreign Universities Branch)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private HE with no university status</td>
<td>518</td>
<td>519</td>
<td>533</td>
<td>532</td>
<td>482</td>
<td>488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>534</td>
<td>539</td>
<td>559</td>
<td>559</td>
<td>515</td>
<td>525</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Higher Education statistic 2007, Ministry of Education, Malaysia

Further, the Higher Education Ministry wants foreign students to make up 10% of student enrolment in both public and private higher education institutions. According to its Management Department director-general, Prof Datuk Dr Hassan Said, this target had been set in the National Higher Education Strategic Plan 2007-2010.
Quality Control

The quality control of private higher education in Malaysia was placed under the charge of the National Accreditation Board (or LAN, by its Malaysian acronym), which was established in 1997 to accredit (and eventually give ranking to) all institutions of higher learning (private and public) (Ismail, 1999). The board is responsible for scrutinizing every curriculum and setting the requirements before a college can run a course. Further, as noted by the Ministry of Education through 2007-2010 plan, the government has intensively promoted activities abroad and is continuously seeking to raise the standard of Malaysian universities. He further said that, “The setting up of the Malaysian Qualifications Authority last year (2007), which oversees both public and private institutions, would also ensure that quality is maintained.” (The Star online, April, 2008)

The quality of higher education is also dependent on the quality of the teaching staff. Therefore, all lecturers in the universities must have at least a master’s degree, and they are responsible for giving lectures, and being involved in research and business consultation. Meanwhile, lecturers in private colleges usually have only a first degree, especially if the colleges offer diploma courses only. However, when these colleges conduct twinning programs with foreign universities, their foreign partner, in ensuring the standard and quality of the program, would send their skilled and experienced lecturers or professors to deliver the course. In this way, it would help the partner institution achieve the required standard set under the partnership program (Ismail, 1999; Foong, 2002).

Promotion

Another main issue regarding the twinning program delivered at a private college is regarding the promotion and ranking of its partner’s foreign institution. Thus, the promotion of each private college would greatly depend on the programs they provide. The college operators must be able to sell their products aggressively in the market, which could be by collaborating with top-ranking foreign universities. The relationships with foreign universities could promote the outstanding qualities and features of the programs (Ismail, 1999; Foong, 2002).

Research Objectives

Research Objectives defined for this study were:
1. To study strategic alliance formed by a private HE institution as a source for gaining competitive advantage
2. To identify the key element for facilitating learning through alliance
3. To define any issues or problem that could inhibit learning process via the strategy

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research was focused on the formation of alliance with the learning objective to create competitive advantage. Specifically, the study was conducted on alliances formed between Malaysian education provider, Sepang Institute of Technology (SIT), and Huddersfield University Business School (HUBS), together with Blackburn College - as the foreign partners from the UK. However, in this case, no separate company was established, but from the relationship a new program was set up under the Centre for Business and Management Studies (CBMS) at SIT (also known as ‘the ‘child’ business).

Data and information were gathered from semi-structured interviews, which were the main primary sources, as well as from other secondary sources such as institutional brochures, annual reports, and web-
sites. Interviews were conducted with personnel in the alliance ‘child’ business are referred to differently (the questions designed to each of the interviewees are all different to each other to reflect their position and responsibilities), for example the Program Manager (UK partner staff) referred to as B1, Head of Department (HOD) from the CBMS referred to as B2, two local lecturers, referred to as B3 and B4 respectively, one administrative staff member who was also an ex-student (B5), and a number of SIT students (B6, B7). Table 2 shows the interviews conducted with the selected respondents from the partners in this collaboration in terms of their position, length of interviews, types of interviews and code designated to each of them for the data analysis purpose.

Questions for the interviews were designed based on the previous studies on international strategic alliance and organizational learning such as Inkpen (1998, 2002), Lei et. al (1997) and few others, as well as by looking into the learning framework as suggested by Morrison and Mezentseff (1997) in their studies especially in identifying the key elements to promote learning in partnership arrangement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Type of questions</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Head of Department</td>
<td>SIT</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview</td>
<td>B1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT Lecturer</td>
<td>SIT</td>
<td>1 1/2 hour</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview</td>
<td>B2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRM Lecturer</td>
<td>SIT</td>
<td>1 1/2 hour</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview</td>
<td>B3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Manager</td>
<td>HUBS</td>
<td>1 1/2 to 2 hours</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview</td>
<td>B4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex-student (Admin staff)</td>
<td>SIT</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview</td>
<td>B5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>SIT</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview</td>
<td>B6, B7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Based on the interview session with the selected personnel, the summary of findings is presented in three parts;
1. Alliance objectives and contributions, data from this would help the study to analyses whether the alliance contributions do meet the alliance objective set by the parties involved. (Summarized in Table 3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CBMS</th>
<th>UK partner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Objectives and contributions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To have a top-up program</td>
<td>To gain access to Malaysian education market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To have delivery of program that</td>
<td>To get manpower to do pre-delivery and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>involve teaching by the UK staff or</td>
<td>follow-up course at the local partner institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘flying teacher’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To give added value to the degree</td>
<td>To gain customer from the host country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>awarded to the student, as this degree is</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>validated by an established UK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>university</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To have a close contact with the UK</td>
<td>To share cost in providing international</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parent partners for future strategic</td>
<td>program in the local partner institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>planning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To build up experience of local staff where the communication between the parties will give benefit in terms of knowledge and experience
To help reduce the paperwork in providing program in international market

To bring international exposure to the local students

Low relative cost where partners would share the cost for developing the courses, buying the books and maintaining institution facilities

(Source: Interviews with B1, B2, B3, B4)

2. Learning process and strategies, and types of learning; data on this help identify whether this collaborative strategy does have competitive advantage

Learning Process and Strategies

According to B1 and B4, it was formally agreed that HUBS would provide a (top-up) degree program manual, as well as preparing examination and assignment questions. Additionally, it was also agreed that the delivery of the program would be carried out in conjunction with the local SIT staff, working under the direction of UK lecturers on each module concerned. This strategy gave the local staff the opportunity to communicate and share ideas and experience (B1 and B4). Further, with this type of delivery, local students needed to be committed to the subject taken, and to communicate and share ideas with the local lecturers prior to, and after, the UK lecturers’ visits. These communication and discussion processes were designed to overcome any problems in terms of difference of opinions on, and understanding of, the subject topics, and it was hoped that the local lecturers could help students to deal with the matter (B1 and B4).

Additionally according to B1, HUBS would provide on-line access to the Huddersfield University’s collections of journals to SIT staff, especially those at the CBMS. This gave the opportunity to access a wider database system for their source of references. The link (on-line access to the Huddersfield University) would also benefit the local students as they were to be allowed to use the service.

The relationship between the lecturers from HUBS and the staff at the CBMS also had provided a source for international exposure, giving an opportunity for the local staff to broaden their knowledge (B1, B2 and B4). This is suggested based on the interviews with B1, B2, B3 and B4, where they had suggested that when communication or discussions took place – academic or non-academic issues, formally or informally – the process of learning would be enhanced. For example, the HOD at the CBMS would regularly contact and seek any particular decision or advice from the Program Manager in the UK, to ensure the program was delivered to the required standard (see Figure 8.3). In addition, it was claimed that through informal discussion, partners were better helped to know each other.

“I believe that in terms of communication we are improving. I regularly make contact with them (UK lecturers) e.g. through e-mail. And, this has to be taken into consideration because the visiting lecturers get to know our students better through us (as we usually talk about the students’ needs, strengths and weaknesses). These UK lecturers would not be able to know the students themselves in sufficient depth, as they are only here (at SIT) for a very short period. It was anticipated that these communications between the lecturers and SIT staff helped reduce the communication gap experienced by the students.” (B2)
Level of Learning

It was established that learning occurred at two levels: individual and group learning which took place from two sources that are learning from self-experience and learning from the experience of others. Learning from self-experience was evidenced in a number of situations and was considered the most important learning source within the alliance. For example, B1 claimed that “the experiences that I had at this institution (especially when establishing this partnership program) ....... had at least increased my knowledge in terms of dealing with different culture and communication background”. Further, this level of learning experience was facilitated among local lecturers who were required to deliver the course according to the manual provided by HUBS. For example, they were required to assimilate course details, add sources of references and more importantly, make contact with the UK lecturers for the subject, in order to ensure that the course was delivered to the required standard and that its objectives were achieved (B1, B2, B3 and B4).

In the case of learning from the experience of others, the local lecturers took the opportunity to learn from the UK lecturers through informal discussions and communication regarding either the subject or student-related matters. These discussions involved the sharing of ideas and experience, which provided new input or insights to help them deliver the course more effectively. It was generally held that this would also, indirectly, have some benefit for self-development (B1, B2, B3 and B4).

“On the other hand, the visiting UK lecturers were judged to have increased their experience in teaching, and at the same time had attempted to improve their understanding of Malaysian culture (DSB5 and DSB6). For example, it was considered quite important for them to be aware of the differences between UK and Malaysian students’ attitudes and characteristics, to help ‘close the gap’ (B2 and B4).

3. Identification of Key Elements Promoting Learning within Alliance

Learning Culture and Climate

Based on the interviews with B1, B2, B3, and B4, it was established that the individuals’ knowledge and understanding were improved and developed through the following situations:

- Mutually agreed objectives in designing, delivering and rewarding the top-up program.
- Developing experience and knowledge by working as a unit with the UK (visiting) staff and lecturers.
- Expanding and providing useful information such as feasibility studies, course manuals, reports, memos, minutes of meetings, and JV agreements, as well as ‘tacit’ knowledge (i.e. skills and experience).
- Communication and discussion between staff, including the key people such as the UK-based Program Manager and the HOD at the Centre of Business and Management Studies, in dealing with the academic and support (non-academic) responsibilities at the ‘child’ business.
- Providing facilitative technology that was used to enhance the transfer of knowledge (i.e. via the Internet).

Knowledge Acquisition, Creation and Transfer

Specifically, based on the interview with B1, B2, B3 and B4, it was suggested that they had successfully learned and gained new experience since the formation of the alliance. For example, B3 said that through this alliance he had gained an opportunity to learn a new culture and also learned to deal with international partners.

At the organizational level, B1 and B4 agreed that all partners directly and indirectly had learned substantially about each other’s national and international culture, as well as political and government regulations regarding the international arrangement of the programs. They also claimed that they gained an opportunity to learn to deal with associated conflict and to overcome problems, especially when
negotiating the alliance formation. Even though the alliance lasted only for a limited period, all partners were satisfied, and felt that they had benefited from their experience and would use this in the future, where appropriate (B1 and B4).

In conclusion, the information from B1, B2, B3 and B4 suggested that knowledge and new experience at the child business were acquired through the following situations:

- Learning on-the-job and self-experience.
- Formal communication and meetings.
- Informal communication and discussions between local and UK staff and lecturers, especially during the UK staff and lecturers’ visits to the SIT.

**Systemic Thinking**

This form of thinking requires a systemic approach to facilitate learning. The approach starts at management level where the alliance organizations must show that they have mutually agreed and shared objectives. According to B1 and B4, the conditions relating to this element were found when:

- Partners within this alliance were making collective efforts in designing and delivering the program to achieve learning.
- Partners within the alliance were communicating with each other to share ideas, develop new thinking and experiences, and solve problems.
- The HOD of the CBMS regularly communicated and had feedback from the staff (especially the local lecturers), to ensure staff commitment was directed towards the objectives of the alliance.
- Partners were striving to continue sharing the same objectives and making a collective effort for the success of the partnership (for example, proposing new Masters programs).

**Shared Mental Models**

In a learning organization, members need to share their ideas and perceptions about the learning environment to facilitate decision-making, action, and learning. The information from the interviews with B1 and B4, however, suggested little evidence that the element ‘shared mental models’ was given much consideration by the management, especially at the CBMS. They claimed that there was very limited effort in promoting the objective of the partnership and hardly any commitment from the parent organization in inculcating the awareness on the importance of such arrangement.

**Building Learning Relationship**

The development of a learning relationship should involve the commitment of the top management in order to ensure the success of the learning process. However, in this alliance case, the HOD from the CBMS was the only person who had any managerial authority, but his role was limited, especially when associated with strategic decisions. He seems to have had little opportunity to develop a formal structure, system and strategy to help ease the learning process within this specific alliance (B1). Further, he also commented on the limitation of budget given to develop the CBMS program from undergraduate to postgraduate level due to the competition with another international relationship with Australian universities.

**Joint Learning Structure**

Joint learning structure, strategies and process between partners in an alliance is important to ensure a continuous learning process and encourage a foundation of trust and mutual commitment. Based on the interviews with B1, B2, and B3, it was established that, in most cases, shared learning experience and skills from the foreign partners only happened through informal communication or informal meetings (and also based on the staff’s personal efforts), whereas according to the literature, management should
play its role in identifying, transferring/interpreting, and incorporating new knowledge (by reflecting and adjusting learning behaviours) to achieve the intended outcomes.

_Learning Mechanisms_

Knowledge creation in the organization would depend on the mechanisms or techniques designed and used to acquire learning. In this view, B1, and B4 noted that CBMS had developed a specified strategy to promote a learning environment, for example frequently asking for and assessing feedback, by internal or external people. Internally, they stated that staff are evaluated on a yearly basis by completing evaluation forms. This is used to obtain feedback on teaching performance as well as to review the performance of the students and the programs. Another way is by using external benchmarking, where the partner would ask another university to evaluate the marking system for the top up program examination papers.

**CONCLUSION**

This case shows that the partners (SIT and HUBS/Blackburn College) had initiated the alliance partnership program from scratch, and that learning was facilitated both directly and indirectly, and much of the time, through a ‘flying teacher’ approach. The findings show that this alliance program added value to SIT’s current program, while the delivery style, which drew upon the input from the UK ‘flying teachers’, helped the ‘child’ business gain new skills and experience.

The findings also suggest that the ‘child’ business had successfully gained individual and group learning. At the group level, the Centre had benefited in terms of having alliance background experience (in administration and paperwork), especially in dealing with the UK partners. At an individual level, the local staff (particularly the lecturers) had learned new insights into self-development.

However, based on the comments from the interviewees and secondary data on financial performance, it was found that there was little evidence of successful competitive advantage created via the collaborative strategy due to the following reasons, especially at organizational level:
1. The alliance and shared learning objective were not made clear to the staff in the ‘child’ business.
2. Little top management commitment, especially from the ‘child’ local parent partner.
3. High bureaucracy involved (also at ‘child’ business).
4. Less face-to-face communication or direct interaction between partners (communication gap).

**Contribution to Knowledge**

It is established that learning through alliances is a widely recognized opportunity, be it through strategic, operational or financial motivations (Hamel and Prahalad, 1994; Beamish and Berdrow, 2003). Literature suggests that ‘parent control’ could determine the performance (Yan and Gray, 1994; Lin et al., 1997). This study however, suggests that ‘alliance top management involvement’ can be positively related to the learning performance of the alliance business (specifically in terms of learning from parent partners to the ‘child’ businesses). The research has shown that the top management in the local business was responsible for preparing and providing a focused learning environment and strategy in order to maximize learning from its parent partners.

In another view, it is also suggested that having a mutually agreed and organized alliance relationship from the beginning of the collaborative venture provides the opportunity for alliance managers to concentrate on the learning effort, a focused strategy, structure and culture that promote a better learning environment.
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