

## Benefits and Barriers of Learning Organization and its five Discipline

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### I. Introduction

Learning organization is a group of people working together collectively to enhance their capacities to create results they really care about. Organizational learning involves individual learning, and those who make the shift from traditional organization thinking to learning organizations develop the ability to think critically and creatively

The concept of a learning organization was \_1<sup>st</sup> developed by Peter M. Senge in 1990. Dr. Senge was a senior lecturer of leadership and sustainability at MIT's Sloan School of Management. He was the founding chairman of the Society of Organizational Learning. His book *The Fifth Discipline* discussed learning organizations.

According to Dr. Senge, a **learning organization** is an organization that encourages and facilitates learning in order to continually transform itself to survive and excel in a rapidly changing business environment. The highly complex, interrelated, and integrated global economy of the 21st century presents new challenges to managers and employees attempting to effectively compete in such a dynamic business environment. The characteristics of a learning organization will help managers and employees meet these challenges by providing them tools to pursue a creative vision, learn and work together effectively, and adapt to change.

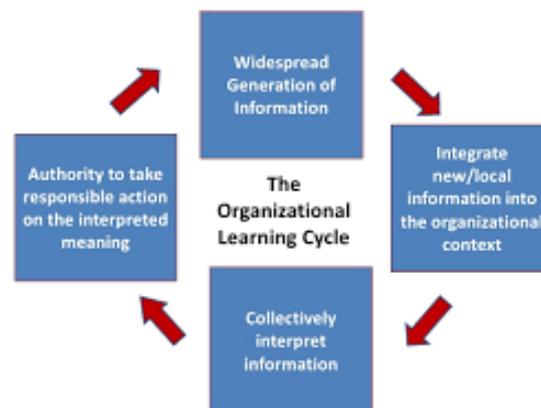


Figure No. 1 The organizational Learning cycle

Those who work in a learning organization are “fully awakened” people. They are engaged in their work, striving to reach their potential, by sharing the vision of a worthy goal with team colleagues. They have mental models to guide them in the pursuit of personal mastery, and their personal goals are in alignment with the mission of the organization. Working in a learning organization is far from being a slave to a job that is unsatisfying; rather, it is seeing one’s work as part of a whole, a system where there are interrelationships and processes that depend on each other. Consequently, awakened workers take risks in order to learn, and they understand how to seek enduring solutions to problems instead of quick fixes.

Huber (1991) considers four constructs as integrally linked to organizational learning: knowledge acquisition, information distribution, information interpretation, and organizational memory. He clarifies that learning need not be conscious or intentional. Further, learning does not always increase the learner's effectiveness, or even potential effectiveness. Moreover, learning need not result in observable changes in behavior. Taking a behavioral perspective,

McGill et al. (1992) define the Learning Organization as "a company that can respond to new information by altering the very "programming" by which information is processed and evaluated."

The paper is organized according to the five disciplines that Peter Senge (1990) says are the core disciplines in building the learning organization: personal mastery, mental models, team learning, shared vision, and systems thinking

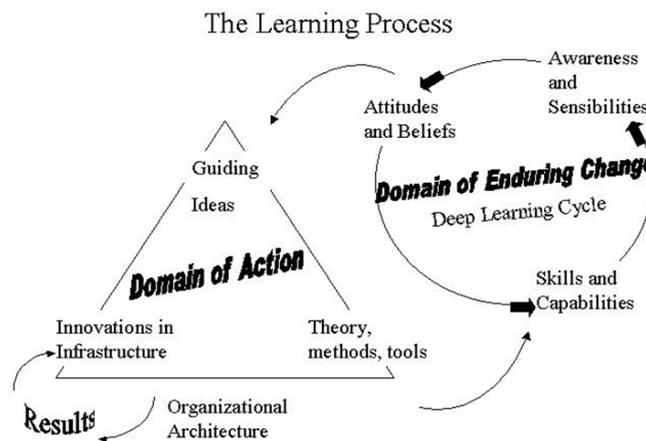


Figure No. 2. The Learning process of Learning Organization

## II. Review Literature

A organization become a learning organization. McGill and Slocum (1993) proposed that the primary responsibility of management and the focus of management practices in a learning organization is to create and foster a climate that promotes learning. According to them, in order to build learning organizations, there is a need to unlearn several roadblocks that hinder learning, and embrace new practices which pertain to: Learning Culture, Continuous Experimentation, Network Intimacy, Information Systems, Reward Systems, Human Resource Practices, and Leaders' Mandate.

Slater and Narver (1995) suggested five components of learning organization - two elements of culture and three elements of climate. The culture elements consist of market orientation and entrepreneurship, whereas the climate features include facilitative leadership, an organic and open structure, and a decentralized approach to planning. A learning organization is a living, breathing organism that creates the space that enables people and the system to learn, to grow, and to endure (Marsick & Watkins, 1999). In order to develop better ability to adapt to a changing global environment, there is a greater need to design organizations that can learn (McGill, Slocum & Lei, 1993). Then, how is a learning organization formed? Are there any elements or attributes that are specific to these organizations?

There are diverse views regarding the design of a learning organization. Pedler, Burgoyne, and Boydell (1991) offered 11 characteristics of the learning organization.

Garvin (1993) suggests that learning organizations have to develop skills in a systematic problem-solving approach, experiment with new approaches, learn from their own experience and past history, and learn from the experiences and best practices of others, transferring that knowledge quickly and efficiently throughout the organization. McGill and Slocum (1993) stated that the role of management is not to control or be a corporate cheerleader or crisis handler; it is to encourage experimentation, create a climate for open communication, promote constructive dialogue, and facilitate the processing of experience. When the management accomplishes this, employees share a commitment to learning. The current review suggests that there are wide ranging theoretical perspectives that provide a basis for identifying a bundle or set of variables that define the management practices and characteristics of a learning organization (Goh, 2001).

The present study tries to focus on the kind of role that empowerment plays in building a learning organization. The subsequent section reviews the relationship between empowerment and organizational learning.

## III. Objectives

- To study about the five discipline of a learning organization.
- To study the main challenges faces by learning organization.
- To described the concept of learning organization.
- To study how discipline work in learning organization.

**Five Disciplines:** There are five disciplines available in a learning organization. These five disciplines are: *Personal Mastery, Mental Models, Shared Vision, Team Learning, and Systems Thinking*. These five disciplines are the building blocks for an organization



**Figure No. 3.** The five disciplines of Learning organization

#### **IV. Personal Mastery**

Personal mastery applies to individual learning, that organizations cannot learn until their members begin to learn. Personal Mastery has two components. First, one must define what one is trying to achieve (a goal). Second, one must have a true measure of how close one is to the goal.

Long-term goals are often something to be achieved in the next three to five years. In personal mastery, the goal, or what one is trying to achieve, is much further away in distance. It may take a lifetime to reach it, if one ever does.

Individuals who practice personal mastery experience other changes in their thinking. They learn to use both reason and intuition to create. They become systems thinkers who see the interconnectedness of everything around them and, as a result, they feel more connected to the whole. It is exactly this type of individual that one needs at every level of an organization for the organization to

A brief look at the literature pertaining to learning organization suggests that a learning organization is nothing but a particular organizational form (Goh, 2001). Senge (1990) who popularized the concept of learning organization stated that in order to build a learning organization, five disciplines are necessary. The presence or mastery of these disciplines distinguishes a learning organization from others.

#### **V. Mental Models**

It is a framework for the cognitive processes of our mind. In other words, it determines how we think and act. A simple example of a mental model comes from an exercise People act this way to avoid embarrassment or threat. They remain in unilateral control, maximize winning and minimize losing, suppress negative feelings, and as rational as possible by which people clear objectives and evaluating their behavior in terms of whether or not they have achieved them.

The assumptions held by individuals and organizations are called mental models. To become a learning organization, these models must be challenged. Individuals tend to espouse theories, which are what they intend to follow, and theories-in-use, which are what they actually do. Similarly, organizations tend to have 'memories' which preserve certain behaviors,

#### **Teams**

A team, say Robbins and Finley, is “people doing something together.” People trusted each other, complemented each other's strengths, compensated for each other's weaknesses, aimed for goals higher than anyone might have dared individually-and a result produced an extraordinary outcome. In such teams, each member is committed to continual improvement, each suspends judgment as to what's possible and so removes mental limitations, each shares a vision of greatness, and the team's collective competence is far greater than any individual's. Team members also recognize and understand the system in which they operate and how they can influence it. a number of persons, usually reporting to a common superior and having some face-to-face interaction, who have some degree of interdependence in carrying out tasks for the purpose of achieving organizational goals.” (French and Bell, 1995, p. 169)

#### **A team has following characteristics**

1. A clear, elevating goal
2. A results driven structure
3. Competent team members

4. Unified commitment
5. A collaborative climate
6. Standards of excellence
7. External support and recognition
8. Principled leadership

### **Personal mastery**

The commitment by an individual to the process of learning is known as personal mastery. There is a competitive advantage for an organization whose workforce can learn more quickly than the workforce of other organizations. Individual learning is acquired through staff training, development and continuous self improvement; however, learning cannot be forced upon an individual who is not receptive to learning. Research shows that most learning in the workplace is incidental, rather than the product of formal training, therefore it is important to develop a culture where personal mastery is practiced in daily life. A learning organization has been described as the sum of individual learning, but there must be mechanisms for individual learning to be transferred into organizational learning.

### **Shared vision**

A shared vision begins with the individual, and an individual vision is something that one person holds as a truth. a vision is a vivid mental image. In this context, vivid means graphic and lifelike. Based on this, it can be concluded that a vision is a graphic and lifelike mental image that is very important to us, i.e., held within our hearts. The vision is often a goal that the individual wants to reach. In systems thinking that goal is most often a long term goal, something that can be a leading star for the individual.

The development of a shared vision is important in motivating the staff to learn, as it creates a common identity that provides focus and energy for learning. The most successful visions build on the individual visions of the employees at all levels of the organization, thus the creation of a shared vision can be hindered by traditional structures where the company vision is imposed from above. Therefore, learning organizations tend to have flat, decentralized organizational structures. The shared vision is often to succeed against a competitor however, Senge states that these are transitory goals and suggests that there should also be long-term goals that are intrinsic within the company. the vision must be created through interaction with the individuals in the organization. The leader's role in creating a shared vision is to share her own vision with the employees. This should not be done to force that vision on others, but rather to encourage others to share their vision too.

### **Systems Thinking**

The idea of the learning organization developed from a body of work called systems thinking. This is a conceptual framework that allows people to study businesses as bounded objects. Learning organizations use this method of thinking when assessing their company and have information systems that measure the performance of the organization as a whole and of its various components. Systems thinking states that all the characteristics must be apparent at once in an organization for it to be a learning organization. If some of these characteristics are missing then the organization will fall short of its goal. Systems thinking is a framework for seeing patterns and interrelationships. It's especially important to see the world as a whole as it grows more and more complex.

### **Positive impact**

A learning organization actively creates, captures, transfers, and mobilizes knowledge to enable it to adapt to a changing environment. Thus, the key aspect of organizational learning is the interaction that takes place among individuals. A learning organization does not rely on passive or ad hoc process in the hope that organizational learning will take place through serendipity or as a by-product of normal work. A learning organization actively promotes, facilitates, and rewards collective learning



**Figure No. 4** The positive impact of Learning organization

- Because we want superior performance and competitive advantage
- For customer relations
- To avoid decline
- To improve quality
- To understand risks and diversity more deeply
- For innovation
- For our personal and spiritual well being
- To increase our ability to manage change
- For understanding
- For energized committed work force
- To expand boundaries
- To engage in community
- For independence and liberty
- For awareness of the critical nature of interdependence
- Because the times demand it
- The main benefits are;
- Maintaining levels of innovation and remaining competitive
- Being better placed to respond to external pressures
- Having the knowledge to better link resources to customer needs
- Improving quality of outputs at all levels.
- Improving corporate image by becoming more people oriented
- Increasing the pace of change within the organization
- Even within or without learning organization, problems can stall the process of learning or cause it
- Advantage increasing demands. Because of these global trends, the value of human capital is even greater now than ever before.
- Knowledge of key personnel within the organization can be made explicit, codified in manuals, and incorporated into new products and processes.
- Leads to responsible decision making enough knowledge to allow them to make educated choices so that the result of that Engagement occurs when Satisfaction, Motivation, and Effectiveness intersect. Motivation, satisfaction, effectiveness, and engagement—synonymously.
- When we explore them from a practical perspective, we see that each is actually a distinct and unique concept, and that all of three are required components of engagement. environment (both internal and external)

### **Challenges in the transformation to a learning organization**

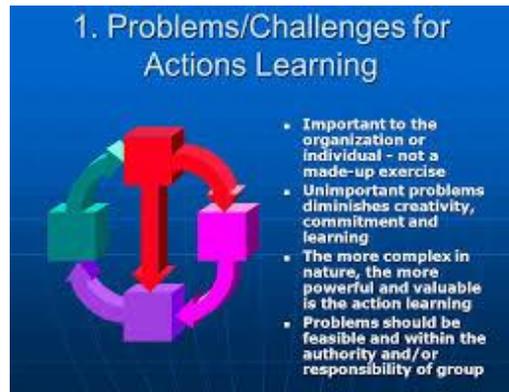
There are many reasons why an organization may have trouble in transforming itself into a learning organization. The first is that an organization does not have enough time. Every learning step mostly the time consuming steps. First we invest our valuable time then the result will come and after some time this step will also out dated. The new learning frame work has a lot of risk it may success or may not.

What recommendations can be provided to enhance learning in organizations? *What* would an optimized learning structure look like in theory and what are the implications of such in practice? How does it

Employees and management may have other issues that take priority over the learning process. They give priority to other issue. Trying to change the culture of their organization. The team may not be able to commit the time an institution does not have the Appropriate help or training. For an organization to be able to change, it needs to know the steps necessary to solve the problems it faces. As a solution, a mentor or coach who is well versed in the learning organization concept may be necessary.

The change may not be relevant to the organization's needs. Some time they adaptation the learning system that same firm adopt it. this is not beneficial for the institution. Time should be spent on the Actual issues of the organization and its daily issues. To combat this challenge,

Learning and the pursuit of personal mastery needs to be an individual choice, therefore enforced take-up will not work. In addition, organizational size may become the barrier to internal knowledge sharing. When the number of employees exceeds 150, internal knowledge sharing dramatically decreases because of higher complexity in the formal organizational structure, weaker inter-employee relationships, lower trust, reduced connective efficacy, and less effective communication. As such, as the size of an organizational unit increases, the effectiveness of internal knowledge flows dramatically diminishes and the degree of intra-organizational knowledge sharing decreases. Problems with Senge's vision include a failure to fully appreciate and incorporate the imperatives



**Figure No. 5.** The challenges face by learning organization

### **Stubbornness and Resistance to Change**

This is prevalent mostly in environments with individuals who have been at their jobs for a long time, and are set in their ways. Older companies have a hard time with organizational learning, if they have older career people working for them who feel they know darn well how to do their job, and won't have some young guns telling them how to do it better. This kind of mentality is inevitable, and all human beings are prone to it, so it's the first and most severe barrier to overcome. This is where you as a leader must be able to win them over and make them understand that it is for their benefit, not detriment that changes and new ideas are being brought in.

### **Ignoring Purple Elephants**

There are often problems and situations in a professional environment that everyone knows about, but nobody wants to discuss. This may be the result of it being a sensitive subject that could result in offense, or possibly something that collectively is upsetting to the whole, resulting in the innate desire to turn the other way. These things, however unpleasant, must be discussed, openly though with discretion. If problems exist that go ignored then learning dynamics will ultimately fail as a result. One must never ignore the purple elephants, they will trample everyone in time.

### **Lack of Direct Leadership**

Leadership that is overly passive isn't going to get the job done with organizational learning. While some passive, mellow mindset helps in leadership with modern culture, leaders need to be present and involved in every aspect of learning, to motivate people and give them the resolve and confidence they need to press on. Leaders must ask difficult questions and be a little tough where need be – tough love isn't always a bad thing.

### **Disregard of Team Success**

In many corporate cultures, a mindset sinks in of congratulation and adoration of personal accomplishments, but a sense of team spirit and unity isn't really there. Beyond a sense of zeitgeist within the company as a whole, teamwork is viewed as a means to an end, and not something to be valued itself. For organizational learning to be successful, then team success and unity must be valued equally to if not more than individual success and prosperity.

### **Lack of Value for learning Itself**

In some environments, learning for the sake of knowledge and wisdom itself isn't present, which can result in a disregard by parts of the whole for the new learning being introduced. The problem here is that for an organization to be trained as a unit, some individuals must learn new information they don't immediately need to apply. When individuals don't value new learning and growth for its own sake, this will make that aspect of organizational learning very difficult and troublesome overall.

### **Short-Term Focus**

In business, it's often easy to focus on stop gaps to solve short term problems without looking at the big picture. When one is in a leadership position that isn't so grandiose as CEO or the like, this is often necessary, in order to carry on with things. Unfortunately, this is a mistake in organizational learning, as the big picture must always be the focus of all involved. This includes the people learning as well as the leadership in charge.

### **Too Much Control**

While being organized and planned out is always valuable, it's often an unintentional habit for leaders to abuse charts and graphs and the like when planning out organizational learning like any other procedure. The problem is that this kind of thing will frustrate those involved, and the act of charting and plotting everything will take on a mind of its own. It is best to keep the plotting and charts simple. They are needed, but only in small doses most of the time.

## **VI. Conclusions**

It concludes that it is not possible to transform a bureaucratic organization by learning initiatives alone. It believes that by referring to the notion of the learning organization it was possible to make change less threatening and more acceptable to participants. 'However, individual and collective learning, which has undoubtedly taken place, has not really been connected to organizational change and transformation'. Part of the issue, it suggest, to do with the concept of the learning organization itself. They argue that the concept of the

Time should be spent on the actual issues of the organization and its daily issues. To combat this challenge, a strategy must be built. The organization should determine what its problems are before entering into the transformation. Training should remain linked to business results so that it is easier for employees to connect the training with everyday issues.



**Figure No. 6.** Never stop Learning

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