The Learning Organization: Maintaining a Culture of Adaptive Change

Prof. Sandhya S. Jadhav
M.com.M.Phil.NET
Assistant Professor
Mahavir Mahavidyalay, Kolhapur.

The Learning organization

The Cambridge dictionary defines an organization as "a group of people who work together in an organized way for a shared purpose". Holly Branson of Virgin Group, a global conglomerate, believes that an organization is only as strong as its people (Branson, 2004). From a financial standpoint, we know that, employee salaries and benefits is the most expensive item on the balance sheet of any organization (Cleverly & Cleverly, 2018). If we make such an investment in people, it behooves us to improve return on this investment. Considering this, building a culture of learning organization seems imperative.

The idea of learning organization emerged in the early 90s. The early concepts were put forth in a bestselling book The Fifth Discipline by Peter Senge (Senge, 1990), a systems scientist and senior lecturer at the MIT Sloan School of Management, and the founder of the Society for Organizational Learning. Over the years the idea was discussed, developed by numerous business forums and publications. Peter Senge starts the book with this:

"In the long run, the only sustainable source of competitive advantage is your organization's ability to learn faster than its competition."

A learning organization consists of employees who create or acquire knowledge and efficient processes and are deliberate and proficient at transferring those to coworkers. Ideally all employees should do so but at a minimum, the organization should empower and promote key employees to drive this. These people can inspire and foster open exchange and facilitate learning.

The building blocks of the Learning Organization

Drawing up on the organizational research Garvin (2014) have identified three general building blocks that make up a learning organization, namely, a supportive learning environment, concrete learning processes and practices, and leadership behavior that provides reinforcement. The authors further state that the presence of each block in an organization can be measured separately. This is good news for organizations because if it can be measured, it can be implemented, tracked and improved upon.

The first building block, a supportive learning environment, is characterized by psychological safety, appreciation of differences, openness to new ideas and allowing time for reflection. Such environment encourages stepping back and reviewing organization's processes. It relieves from the scheduling pressures and deadlines.

The second building block is that of concrete learning processes and practices. A learning organization does not happen without a conscientious effort. It requires deliberate activities of generation, collection, interpretation, and dissemination of information. This, in turn, requires innovation, data gathering, analysis and interpretation. Then there is a people aspect of education and training of current and new employees. Channels need to be created to allow flow of knowledge laterally and vertically within the organization. Hamlin, Ellinger, and Beattie (2006) have empirically demonstrated that effective coach is an essential feature of being an effective manager or managerial leader.

The third building block is the leadership that reinforces learning. Behavior of leaders have direct influence on employee perception and understanding of the organization. An effective leader can single-handedly precipitate shift in the organizational culture. Leaders that display the importance of spending time on problem identification, knowledge transfer, and reflective post-audits, can empower employees propose and discuss new ideas and alternatives.

Email id's:- **aiirjpramod@gmail.com**,**aayushijournal@gmail.com** I **Mob.08999250451**
website :- **www.aiirjournal.com**

Page No. 241

Learning organizations in healthcare: Necessity, challenges and benefits

There are several compelling reasons why healthcare institutions have to be learning organizations (Edmondson, 2004). There has been a significant increase in healthcare knowledge. The publications have increased over 10,000 per year. The medical device applications to FDA have reached over 5,000 along with several new drugs. The number of board-certified specialties have crossed the 100 mark and interdependence of physician and non-physician staff has increased due to steep increase in the non-physician staff. This means the caregivers should not only learn as individuals but also learn as teams and as an organization. New knowledge creation, technology advances, market changes, public health disasters can add unexpected demands to health care delivery. Health care organizations have to be resilient to respond and incorporate new knowledge and realities (Ratnapalan & Uleryk, 2014).

The healthcare industry has unique challenges. First, it deals with the human life making it risk-averse for change in established processes. Second, the patientcare is highly complex and variable, making it difficult to describe many times before even thinking of improvement. Lastly, the healthcare organizations suffer from historical hierarchy across professions and clinician sub-specialty making collaboration and teamwork challenging.

However, an effective leader can overcome these barriers over time. For example, Garvin (2014) describes how a COO at a Minnesota hospital enacted a policy of "blameless reporting" that encouraged substituting terms such as "errors" and "investigations" for terms such as "accidents" and "analysis." This resulted in increased collaboration, openness to discuss policy, process, behavior changes that increased patient's risk. These learning activities reduced preventable deaths and illnesses at the hospital.

The learning organizations are bound to be more resilient and adaptable to withstand the social, political and economic vagaries that can jeopardize their viability. The ongoing economic fallout and resource challenges from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic is a perfect example of how unexpected events can destabilize (airlines), wipe out (small restaurants, bars) or overwhelm (healthcare) organizations. Once the pandemic was realized, the health institutions had to come up with a game plan within days to respond to the surge.

After his 1859 voyage on the HMS Beagle, one of Charles Darwin's most important insights was "It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one most adaptable to change."

References

1. Branson (2017. An organisation is only as strong as its people... Retrieved July 12, 2020, from https://www.virgin.com/virgin-unite/entrepreneurship/organisation-only-strong-its-people
2. Cleverley, W. O., & Cleverley, J. O. (2018). Essentials of health care finance. Burlington, MA: Jones & Bartlett Learning.
3. Edmondson, A. (2004). Learning from failure in health care: Frequent opportunities, pervasive barriers. Quality and Safety in Health Care, 13(Suppl_2), Ii3-Ii9. doi:10.1136/qshc.2003.009597
4. Garvin, D. (2014). Is Yours a Learning Organization? Retrieved July 12, 2020, from https://hbr.org/2008/03/is-yours-a-learning-organization
5. Hamlin, R. G., Ellinger, A. D., & Beattie, R. S. (2006). Coaching at the heart of managerial effectiveness: A cross-cultural study of managerial behaviors. Human Resource Development International, 9(3), 305-331. doi:10.1080/13678860600893524
6. Ratnapalan, S., & Uleryk, E. (2014). Organizational Learning in Health Care Organizations. Systems, 2(1), 24-33. doi:10.3390/systems2010024
7. Senge, P. M. (1990). The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization. New York: Doubleday.