

Chapter 22

Learning Organizations: A Path to Gain Competitive Advantage

Şefik Özdemir
Aksaray University, Turkey

ABSTRACT

The main aim of this chapter is to contribute to the literature by providing detailed information on the learning organization. Therefore, the study will first provide general information on learning and learning organization concepts and examine the development of the learning organization. Then, it includes information on the basic skills of the learning organizations, the five disciplines of the learning organizations, the features of the learning organizations, the differences between the traditional and learning organizations, and the benefits that the learning organization.

INTRODUCTION

Current economic, social, psychologic, cultural and technologic changes and transformations affect the work life considerably. Especially innovations brought by information technologies turn competition into a cruel and conflicting environment. The way that enterprises become successful in this competition environment lies adapting to work life. In other words, the basic condition of the survival of organizations is showing enough adaptation to the changes happening at work life (İnce, 2008, p.169). The transformation of the organizations that are dynamic, adapt to the new processes quickly, make the changes on time and feel innovations that do not exist in their environment and apply them into organization processes into centers that produce innovations together with a considerable growth makes new approaches in organization life important. One of those approaches is the learning organization. The learning organization concept is one of the terms that organizations are interested in and follow most in order to develop themselves and survive. Therefore, a great number of enterprises pay much effort in order to be learning organizations, regardless of their size.

The enterprises try to develop better quality products that have faster marketing time and higher customer satisfaction in order to remain in the forefront in the inconsistent and competitive work environment. The enterprises do not only need to manage workforce and capital but also have the capacity to manage their workers' knowledge effectively. As a result, learning term that is closely related to pioneer of creating new information and new skills and perspectives becomes important (Peltek, 2008, p.1).

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-6301-3.ch022

Firstly being used by Peter Senge in his book “The Fifth Discipline” in 1990, the learning organization term has been one of the important factors in the development of enterprises in the transition from industry society to information society (Şimşek, 2008, p.444). When the reasons that direct researchers to study on learning organizations are examined, it is seen there are many important factors some of which are (Sezer, 2006, p.3);

- Quick and big developments in information technologies
- The transition from industrial period to information society
- Globalization and global networking
- Globalization and forming blocks in global networks
- Global competition and its increase
- Deep changes experienced in organizational technology
- Inevitability of living together with information technology
- Continuous change in the organization and its demographics due to information axes
- Fact of not being able to manage information workers through approaches from the past
- Tendency of innovation to be the only determiner of the competition and its shortening the distance between theory and practice all the time
- Entrepreneurship’s becoming forefront and gaining organizational context

When the reasons above are examined, it is clear how learning organization concept is important for enterprises to adapt their environments and for their success.

THE CONCEPT OF LEARNING

Learning has become a matter of interest to many scientists, researchers and philosophers in the history as it has an important place in human life. Nowadays, studies about learning continue to be made in almost all of the educational sciences and nearly all other disciplines of science. Learning is the change of behavior after transferring the necessary information for the behavior desired to be changed. In other words, it is that we become able to apply a behavior that we couldn’t after learning a new piece of information (Özcan, 2009, p.3). Learning is both an abstract and a dynamic concept. It enables to solve problems by bringing together acquisitions such as talents, knowledge and behaviors in different levels, starting from individual to organization level (Öneren, 2012, p.164).

The learning experience helps to develop new skills that can be applied to the job. Individuals who implement new ideas and skills are recognized and rewarded for it (Figure 1). This chain of positive events - learning experience, application, recognition, motivation to learn- can increase the effectiveness of people’s activity or their belief in learning new skills. In Figure 1, there are several built-in feedback loops shown with dotted lines. The arrow, which returns the learning experience to the motivation of learning, shows that some individuals’ learning experiences have a positive relationship with the learning motivation. The arrow from application to motivation to learn shows that new ideas and skills can be applied successfully, regardless of organizational form (Tannenbaum, 1997, p.438-439).

Researchers interested in the subject have generally classified the learning into three main groups, at the level of individuals, groups and organizations (Koçel, 2011, p.428). People’s changing their behaviors as a result of the learning by blending the information that they have themselves and the accumulated

20 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:

www.igi-global.com/chapter/learning-organizations/217196

Related Content

Organizational Citizenship Behavior Among Employees of Public Higher Learning Institutions: The Role of Internal Corporate Social Responsibility

Faustina Mangor Narh, Rita Appiah and Louis Gyekye Appiah (2022). *International Journal of Applied Management Theory and Research* (pp. 1-22).

www.irma-international.org/article/organizational-citizenship-behavior-among-employees-of-public-higher-learning-institutions/305112

Spiritual Leadership in Collectivist Cultures: Turkey Example

Elif Baykal (2019). *Science and Spirituality for a Sustainable World: Emerging Research and Opportunities* (pp. 44-69).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/spiritual-leadership-in-collectivist-cultures/232773

Enterprise Immune System

(2018). *Enterprise Resiliency in the Continuum of Change: Emerging Research and Opportunities* (pp. 88-111).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/enterprise-immune-system/183036

Global Income Inequality, Trickle-Down Economics, and Charity in Islamic Economics

Mohd Nayyer Rahman and Badar Alam. Iqbal (2021). *International Journal of Applied Management Theory and Research* (pp. 38-47).

www.irma-international.org/article/global-income-inequality-trickle-down-economics-and-charity-in-islamic-economics/279654

Diversity and Inclusion Management: A Focus on Employee Engagement

Urmila Itamand Bagali M. M. (2018). *Management Techniques for a Diverse and Cross-Cultural Workforce* (pp. 149-171).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/diversity-and-inclusion-management/198229