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Transforming the school into a learning organization

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Abstract

The need for schools to become learning organizations arises from the fact that the lack of confidence in the environment has increased with the increase of the complexity and the speed of environmental changes. As a result, organizations are of more need to extensive knowledge and awareness of environmental factors so that they can self-adapt to environmental changes. Therefore, schools and educational institutions should be amenable to learning organizations approaches. Since the role of education is very important in the development and the progress of the society, raising the awareness of the managers and other related elements to changes and developments in various fields should be taken into consideration more seriously. This cannot be achieved except through teaching and learning that in turn will be facilitated through the emergence of a phenomenon known as learning organizations. "Schools that learn" are similar to a learning community, where organizational learning is promoted, the test of experiences is emphasized, self-reflection in opinion and behavior is promoted, the possibility of creativity, innovation, and critical thinking is expanded, effective guiding ideas are raised, human beings are motivated to change and organize social changes through planning and strategic thinking and overcome the uncertainty and fear of knowing. Along with the presentation of a definition of a learning organization and the principles and rules which govern it, the process of transforming the schools into a learning organization through using other researches have been discussed in the present study.

Keywords: School, Organization, Organizational Learning, Learning Organization

Introduction

Learning means strengthening the ability with the help of an experience which is gained through keeping track of the results. Learning is always happening over time and in real life. This type of learning is very difficult to control. However, it produces a sustainable knowledge and enables the learner to behave effectively when dealing with different situations (Ghorbanzadeh and Moshabaki, 1385). Learning organizations are phenomena that were raised at the beginning of the 90s. The emergence of such organizations was due to the conditions, theories, and changes in corporate environments before this decade in a way that all organizations have begun major effort in order to survive and should be out of non-dynamic forms and be transformed into a learning organization in order to retain in their turbulent environment. That is, they should make profound changes in their base and structure.

Organizations previously lived in a stable environment and future events were almost predictable which let managers to plan in certain circumstances. But today's environment is rapidly changing and technological, economic, cultural, and political changes influences the organization rapidly (Alborzi and Eslamieh, 1384).

This descriptive review article has used texts and documents library, websites, and papers to collect information with the aim of reviewing some of the obvious factors which influence elementary students learning in a way that identifying these factors leads to the development of education and continuous improvement of the quality of students' learning.

School:

School is a training site which has been designed to teach students under the leadership of teachers. In today's language it refers to the training sites below the level of higher education that public education occurs in them.

Organization:

An organization consists of a group of people who are working together to achieve certain goals.

Organizational Learning:

Organizational learning includes of all methods, mechanisms, and processes which are used within the organization in order to for learning to occur.

Argyris (1978) considers organizational learning as a process during which the organizations discover the errors and take the steps to correct them (Najaf Begay, 1395).

Learning Organization:

An organization which has a continuous ability to create change and maintain compatibility.

Pedler (1997) says an organization that provides learning for all of its members and continuously embarks on self-changing is a learning organization (Najaf Begay, 1395).

Learning organization is an organization whose actions improved and amended through awareness and better understanding (Alvani, 1394)

Peter Senge (1990) argues that learning organization is an organization that is continually seeking to enhance its capabilities to create things that it wants to make (Zare'ei Matin, 1388).

Characteristics of a Learning Organization:

- Learning organizations constantly make use of their abilities to build a better future.
- Learn new methods and forget old ways of doing things.
- Will not disappointed with the problems and offer new ideas.

- Facilitate learning for all members and carry it continuously.
- Facilitate and encourage group learning. "Gardner and Julier" believe that employees who work through working groups enjoy more of work. Because instead of being a mere listener, they actively participate in the learning process and consider themselves responsible for their learning.
- Learning organization creates new perspectives.
- Learning organization is a place where people regularly increase their ability to create whatever they desire to create, learn new models of learning, and learn how to learn.
- Learning organization guides work practices.
- Learning organization cares the training of staff and notes that they are always interested in learning.
- Learning organization emphasis on risk and avoids blame.
- Learning organization establishes a comprehensive relationship with employees and gives them the necessary information in a timely manner.
- Learning organization teaches employees to develop their realistic decision-making powers.
- Learning organization welcomes new ideas.
- Learning organization introduces regulations and directives too fast.
- Learning organization gives positive feedback to all employees continually and minimizes the punishments.
- Learning organization puts a priority for knowledge and awareness for the professional development of staff.
- Learning organization reinforces the staff satisfaction and pride.
- Learning organization distributes power throughout the organization almost logically in order to avoid self-determination.
- Learning organization relies on documented data, not on assumptions and capriciouse.
- Learning organization learns lessons from its experiences and knows the value of failures.

(Alborz Islamiyah, 1384).

Peter Senge's Vision of Principles and Rules Governing Learning Organizations:

Personal Mastery

Increasing the abilities and the capabilities of staff is one of the most important principles in a learning organization. First, the ability and the capability is limited to perform job tasks and in its wider sense includes ability to think and general ability of people in professional and social life. In fact, it should be noted that the continuous process of mastery is considered in the field of personal mastery and causing a change in it, so that people can keep pace with changing environment and respond to them. On the other hand, organizations are only considered as learning organizations through people who are learning and organizational learning does not make sense without it.

Shared vision

There is a shared vision (outlook) where all members are of the same opinion.

In Senge's model, having a shared vision among the organizations' employees is of utmost importance in creation of a learning organization, because this perspective is the focus and supply of energy and mobility for shared learning.

Mindsets

From the perspective of the Senge, promotion of skills related to management of mental models is particularly important to achieve a learning organization. In doing so, the power to review the thoughts, thinking, search, and research must be strengthened together. Staffs throw away the old ways of thinking and normal methods of doing things for solving problems or carrying out organizational activities.

Group Learning

Employees, beyond personal profit and group interests, work together at high levels in order to achieve shared vision (outlook).

Senge considers group learning as the outcome of alignment and capacity building of the total force in a group that is used to achieve the really desirable goals of members. People may work alone hardly; however, their efforts may not lead to the efficient effort and team work. Conversely, when the force and energy of the group is in line, the sense of unity and harmony of energy occurs in them. Obviously, minimal energy is wasted in this case. In fact, the in line energies of people become Synergy.

Systems Thinking

Senge has called systems thinking as the fifth discipline, organization/s members are of systems thinking, and all process, activities, and corporate functions and interactions with the environment are considered as a part of a system of mutual relations.

Systems thinking are a conceptual framework for analyzing issues that will help us to see the whole pattern more clearly. In fact, skills in our systems thinking help us to consider general issues in analysis. As Senge says, systems thinking are a framework to see the relationship between components as a whole rather than cause and effect. System dynamics shows that organizations are connected just like a vast network. Systems thinking teach us that there is no something out of the system that is causing problems. It must be understood that all causes of problems lies within the system and is a part of it. (Senge, 1996)

Learning School

Schools are service organizations which are committed to teaching and learning. The ultimate goal of the school is students' learning. In fact, the existence of the schools is based on such an activity.

Hoy and Miskel (2001) argue that schools should be learning organizations more than any other organization. Schools should be places in which participants could continuously develop their capacity for creativity, conclusions, and situation; where new patterns of thinking are encouraged, collective urged arises, members learn to learn together and reveal their ability to innovate and problem-solving. Finally, in a supplemental definition, learning organization is an organization that its members pursue common goals and objectives, with a collective commitment and on a regular basis evaluate the value of these goals and objectives, modify it if necessary, and consistently create more effective and more efficient ways to reach these goals (Alaghrband, 1386)

According to the principles of learning organizations, those schools can become effective learning organizations which operate in line with the principles and rules governing learning organizations.

Administrators, teachers, and students have the opportunity to talk about their vision in learning schools. Everybody is looking for creative tension. This tension increases the ability of staffs and students. Environment is encouraging this issue that all have the ability to achieve higher standards and conditions to obtain them is provided.

Teachers, administrators, and students can learn that through developing common images of the future that they are seeking to establish and through guiding principles and practice which are hoped to bring about will foster a sense of commitment in the group and organization in learning schools.

Schools or communities which hope to live with learning require the process of shared vision. Given the fact that the shared vision routine give its way to happiness and prowling, the relations between people in the groups are changed as well and a sense of belonging to the environment is felt, when problems occur, the group solves it through noting the shared vision.

Since mental models in education are often "non-negotiable" and are hidden, one of the vital activities in each learning school is to increase safe and fruitful dialogue about the dangerous and confusing issues.

Clearing the mental patterns, patterns that are hidden from our view requires a safe environment for people to express their mental model or their attitude to surrounding reality without fear of being judged. Group learning can be fostered in the classroom, between parents and teachers, between locals, and "experimental groups" who are looking to successful development in school.

Conclusion

In order for the schools to become effective learning organization they should be of a structure that would support teaching and learning, and strengthen organizational adaptation and adjustment; have a cooperative self-regulating open organizational culture and atmosphere, have hired people who have very open-minded and are familiar with change and work efficiently and effectively and prefer educational and training activities and teaching and learning to political and organizational games.

In such schools all people learn from each other, teachers welcomes the students' questions, the parents see their children's questions as human essence, students mostly seeking to understand the problem rather than the correct answer, educational policy-makers and decision-makers motivate the courage to ask questions, the courage of knowing and accepting its social responsibilities, educational planners and curriculum developers recognize the diversity of methods and resources to achieve scientific facts and emphasize knowledge more than life skills, managers think of improving the learning processes more than result of actions, teachers admit the possibility of human errors and respect efforts to make up for it and promote it and assist people to overcome the concerns of "awareness" and the fear of "knowing".

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