The importance of learning organization

Business, Organization

L & D Assignment 2: The Importance of Learning Organization A learning organization works with ideas i. e. it comes up with new ideas on all levels, disseminates these new ideas across the organization and finally inculcates these new ideas into operations by embedding them in its policies processes and reviews. It has structured mechanisms and processes put in place to generate knowledge and it takes this new knowledge as a basis of responding to the change in its businessenvironment. A learning organization as per its formal definition is skilled at two things which are as follows: a. Creating, acquiring, interpreting, transferring and retaining knowledge which is relevant to its business processes for enable it to achieve its business objective in an efficient manner. b.) Acting or modifying its behaviour as an organization to respond to that new knowledge and insights. To be a successful organization one must monitor its processes and make sure that they are efficient. A learning organization observes its business processes and learns where it is efficient and where it is not.

It encourages organizations to shift to a more interconnected way of thinking. A learning organization has five main features; systems thinking, personal mastery, mental models, shared vision and team learning. In the article " Is yours a learning organization" the authors David Garvin and Amy Edmondson described the three building blocks of learning which fosters the creation of a learning organization which are as follows: a.) A supportive learning environment b.) A concrete learning processes and practices c. Leadershipthat reinforces learning Importance of learning organization in current business context: Ray Stata, the confounder and chairman of the board of Analog Devices once quoted " The rate at which organizations learn

may become the only sustainable source of competitive advantage. " In highly competitive current business scenario products and services can easily be copied or emulated by the competitors. Even processes can be copied for example Six sigma is easily available and accessible to anyone for implementation.

Thus the only source of sustainable competitive advantage for any organization is rapid pace of learning and the execution of this new knowledge in its internal processes. Furthermore, the current business environment is evolving at a very rapid pace due toglobalization, deregulation and evolution of new business paradigms. As an organization the only way to survive and compete in this business environment is to have a rate of learning which is greater than this rate of change of the business environment. Barriers in being a learning organization: The idea of a learning organization is been around for quite some time.

The discussion about the learning organization has been around for almost 4 decades but there were certain shortcomings and limitations of in these ideas of learning organizations. As a result of which these ideas have failed to bring about little concrete change as they should have. Firstly, the fundamental fallacies with these initial ideas were that they were abstract concepts without concrete prescriptions for actions for the organizations. For an organization to be able to change, it needs to know the steps necessary to solve the problems it faces.

Secondly, these initial concepts of learning organization were aimed at the top managements of the organization without including the middle level managers. These managers heading divisions, departments and projects

where the real critical work of the organization happens. Their inclusion was very necessary because these are the people who are primarily responsible for generation of business intelligence at the operational level. Thirdly, there was real lack or standards or tools through which the managers can assess how well they were doing on being a learning organization. An Ideal learning organization:

The concept of perfection is in itself elusive as no individual or organization cannot ever claim to be perfect no matter how good they are. However, the one organization which comes very close to becoming a ideal learning organization is General Electric (GE). Infact, In his last letter to the shareholders Jack Welch wrote that I finally understand why we as an organization are so successful. The reason is that we are an learning organization. They have all three building blocks (processes, environment and leadership) which is prerequisite to become a successful learning organization. Role of management in building Learning Organization:

Managers can help their teams have a supportive learning environment. In particular, the concept of psychological safety where the perceive that the workplace environment one that is comfortable for asking questions, making mistakes and floating of new ideas related their job role responsibilities. Basically, the managers facilitate the creation of a workplace environment which is conducive to taking personal risks by the employees that it is absolutely essential for learning. The managers should make conscious efforts to help people be comfortable with the risks which are present in the workplace today.

So that the employees can engage in the learning processes without fear. Apart from a supportive learning environment the managers can also put in place concrete processes and procedures for experimentation, sharing knowledge and best practices across the organization and ways of reflecting on what we have learned from past expierence. Each of these are systematic processes where companies generate ideas, respond to new knowledge and reflect on what they have already learnt. In some organisations a lack of a learningculturecan be a barrier to learning.

An environment must be created where individuals can share learning without it being devalued and ignored, so more people can benefit from their knowledge and the individuals becomes empowered. A learning organization needs to fully accept the removal of traditional hierarchical structures. As a manager the most ideal way to start implementation of the concept of Learning organization in its organization is to start within his/her own department by modelling the behaviours of learning himself like showing curiosity, asking a questions and laying emphasis on disruptive innovation.

This kind of leadership at department levels creates the environment where more structured kind of processes to build a learning organization can take form. References: 1.) Garvin, David A. " Building a learning organization. " HarvardBusiness Review (1993). 2.) Garvin, David A. , Amy C. Edmondson, and Francesca Gino. " Is yours a learning organization. " Harvard Business Review (2008). 3.) Darling, Marilyn, Charles Parry, and Joseph Moore. " Learning in the thick of it. " Harvard Business Review (2005).