

Learning organisation as a realistic model



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The learning and functioning in workplace carries a foremost responsibility to establish a constant learning for the organization. Learning organisation is one of the most significant forms of organisation used in present to shape the future for the success (Belasen 2000). In this type of organisation, learning is a base which assists in the development of most effective career plans and individual skills towards the path selected. In present, most of the organisations are trying to convert themselves in a learning organisation so that it can attain significant benefits related to learning organisation (Coffield 1998).

Here, in this report the concept of learning organisation is discussed so that it can be identified that “ is the ‘ learning organization’ a useful or realistic model at the workplace”. It is done in reference to a learning organisation that is IBM.

Learning Organisation

Learning Organization refers to an organisation in which employees at all levels, separately and conjointly, are incessantly growing their capability to bring forth results they truly care about (Nagwekar n. d.). It is not just the

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most appealing or existing management trend but it can also furnish organisations with work environment that open and flexible to innovative ideas. It also involves the concepts that provide solutions to continuous work-related troubles that are available among all its employees (Svensson, Randle & Bennich 2009).

It assists individuals with an ability to strengthen their knowledge base, which gives them with an ability to think significantly and ingeniously. Additionally, it also facilitates workplace individuals with an ability to communicate thoughts and conceptions, and the talent to collaborate with other individuals throughout the procedure of interrogation and action (Belasen 2000). A learning organisation try to create its own future by assuming that learning is a continuous and inventive procedure for its people (Rainbird, Fuller & Munro 2004).

The learning workplace directs individuals towards a development, adaptation and transformation of themselves in reaction to needs of organisation and as well as customers. It allows employees to work freely so that they can learn and express their ideas and problems and in turn can contribute towards the development of an improved work place (Nagwekar n. d.). This environment also assists individuals in shifting from the conventional authoritarian workplace philosophy to one in which the organisational hierarchy is broken down, and human potency is acclaimed (Coffield 1998).

This type of working environment foster a culture in which individuals believe in creating results that they actually want and where they can learn that how

they all can learn together for the advancement of all inclusive organisation. This type of organisation furnishes people with reaction to the competencies that is essential for every individual to attain success in its own field (Gould & Baldwin 2004). The learning can be increased with the help of different learning approaches like training, rotational experiences, coaching, work-related education, electronic-system learning, and with the help of several other learning-oriented interventions (Lasseey 1998).

Today most of the organisations are trying to attain benefits of learning organisation as they feel that it is a realistic model but it is not the situation as it is much useful rather realistic (Nagwekar n. d.). An organisation become learning organisation with its own efforts and practices that if not undertaken accurately will not direct towards the creation of a learning organisation. In this type of organisation it is essential to make use of appropriate training programs that may vary according to the needs of specific organisation and its individuals (Belasen 2000).

All aspects related to becoming a learning organisation need to be undertaken carefully as otherwise it would not be possible for a firm to use it for its own benefit. If it used effectively can assist a firm with several advantages and abilities to deal with existing challenges related to business, management of internal environment, employees commitment towards learning and working in the direction of organisational goals (Pun & Balkissoon 2011).

Throughout studies and evaluations, it is identified that there are some disciplines which must be mastered by an organisation if it wants to introduce a useful learning organisation that are as follows:

Systems Thinking - For becoming a learning organisation, it is essential that the firm develops and ability to envision the big picture and to make out patterns rather than conceptualizing change as obscure events (Belasen 2000). Additionally, there is also a need to think by interconnecting to the whole so that it can become easy to identify that how it operates and what actions can create troubles.

Personal Mastery - It commences by becoming devoted to lifetime learning and it is the key element of a learning organization (Nagwekar n. d.).

Building Shared Visions - For creating a learning organisation organisations need to develop a genuine or shared vision that evokes commitment in good and as well as in bad situations and has the potential to unite an organization.

Mental Models - Managing mental models is also vital as they can obstruct new and prevailing penetrations and organizational practices from being carried out. Until or unless there is no realization and a concentration to openness it is not possible to implement real change.

Team Learning - It is also critical as almost all modern organisations in present are operating on the basis of team work. It means that if a firm's team members do not come together and learn it cannot become a learning organisation (Nagwekar n. d.).

The concept of learning organisation is quite useful as it does not only allow firms senior managers to do all thinking but it also appropriates all individuals at all levels to think in regard to the entire organisation. It facilitates all employees to make use of their inner potential with a hope that they can also build something distinctive or unique for their firm.

Benefits of Learning Organisation

How learning organisation is useful at the work place can be understood with the help of discussion of its benefits to a firm. The benefits of learning organisation started appearing with the realization of its importance. It is helpful for dealing with different types of challenges that are as follows:

Rapid Change: In present competitive environment change is occurring rapidly in all workplaces that in turn forces agencies to quickly adapt work procedures. Development of a learning organisation furnishes organisations' with an opportunity to learn through adapting change and other pertinent issues (Belasen 2000).

Eroding Knowledge Bases: The current attrition of Federal employees, awaited retirements decreases-in-force are inducing on-going damage to the organizational knowledge bases. This can be resolved with the help of a learning organisation that assist in furthering information exchange and tap expertise from all level employees (Murphy & Willmott 2010). As well, it also makes use of technology to support and strengthen information exchange that in turn assists in resolving employees' queries and issues.

Shifting Focus: Focus of federal agencies is altering from a duty of ensuring compliance to serving customers effectively that also creates different

challenges. The creation of a learning organisation will ensure a strategic alignment between customers' needs & preferences, individual learning, organisational aims, and resource distributions (Coffield 1998). Attainment of strategic alliance is very important as without this it is not possible for a firm to attain its aims and it can be done effectively with the help of development of a learning organisation.

Limited Training Resources: The companies' overall training budgets are decreasing day-by-day whereas employees also have less time to attend formal training sessions. This affects their growth and as well as company growth. With the help of a learning organisation at workplace, a company can make use of different alternative strategies that may easily incorporate learning into the workplace (Gould & Baldwin 2004). These alternative methods are low in cost and are much more effective to furnish a company with all essential training needs of its employees.

Evolving Roles of Supervisors: With the increasing diversity in organisations supervisors roles are evolving with an increasing responsibility. Now, supervisors are not only accountable for playing traditional human resource functions as they are also responsible for managing each and every aspect of business and its employees (Belasen 2000). With the development of learning organisation supervisors roles has become much more easy as in this they work as teachers and each employees is empowered to be accountable for their own learning.

Management of all the above discussed challenges' can be done effectively with the help of a learning organisation. The benefits of learning organisation

evidenced that how it is useful in a workplace in regard to management of different aspects and as well as employees continuous learning (Wang & Ahmed 2003).

Learning Organisation as a Useful Model at Workplace

Learning organisation is quite useful model at workplace as it allows a firm with several advantages related to attaining superior performance, improvement in quality, concentrating on customers, for attaining competitive advantage, to manage change, develop committed workforce, and for recognizing assured success and growth (Serra 2009). How a learning organisation work as a useful model at workplace can be understood with the discussion of IBM that makes significant use of learning for attaining above discussed advantages.

At IBM, learning is a strategic facilitator of change. It works as an essential tool that helps it in affirming its new go-aheads, re-skills its manpower and appropriates it to handle key market changes and organizational alterations. Its use of learning helps it in developing a learning organisation that in turn works as a useful model at its workplace. IBM's commitment towards learning can be evidenced by its US\$750 million annual spending for different learning initiatives (IBM's learning transformation story 2004).

This annual spending of IBM is done with a belief that learning organisation enhances its productivity, endows employees and teams to innovate, empowers development of employee potential, and expands organizational knowledge to providers, co-operators and customers. In addition to developing a learning organisation, IBM has also adopted a repetitive

procedure of learning transformation that helped it in attaining a leadership in learning. The continuous learning and leadership in organisational learning has enabled IBM to win and continuously grow in present competitive environment.

The company success as a learning organisation can also be understood with its efforts towards enhancing learning. IBM operates with a belief of learning anywhere, anytime and on demand. Employees of IBM spend an approximate 17 million hours each year (around 55 hours per employee) in different formal training programs that may be conducted online or in a traditional classroom (IBM's learning transformation story 2004). Previously learning was given through traditional classrooms but now it is mostly conducted online (Belasen 2000).

Another substantial belief that helped IBM is its link up of learning with employee retention. It's appropriate learning to its employees assist it in retaining its employees that is most significant issue in present competitive era (Furnham 2005). The continuous learning also assist the company in saving significant costs related to new employees training costs. Being a learning organisation, IBM respects the role that learning plays in attaining organisational effectiveness (IBM's learning transformation story 2004).

All efforts of IBM towards becoming a learning organisation or using it as a useful model assist it with several advantages related to organisation, people, technology and knowledge that are as follows:

Organization:

By making use of leadership organisation as a useful model at its workplace, IBM has become able to attain organisational effectiveness. The company learning strategy facilitates it in attaining its vision. It has also helped the company in developing a leadership that is devoted to the significance of learning and believes in distinctly communicating learning that is essential for organisational success (Serra 2009). Development of appropriate leadership assists employees in identifying the needs, intends and chances for learning.

Implying a learning organisation at workplace also helps IBM leaders in creating and maintaining a supportive learning culture for their team members that in turn motivates them towards working at their utmost potential. Continuous learning also helps IBM in making use of effective communication systems that alleviate the lateral information transfer and facts throughout all levels of organisation (Furnham 2005). The continuous learning arouses creativity and brings forth new penetrations and innovative practices at IBM.

People:

Being a learning organisation, IBM has become able to hire people who are significantly interested in their work and vigorously replicate on their experience. The intense learning had allowed its employees to make use of their understanding and take different initiatives to contribute towards knowledge management (Serra 2009). The different online and traditional learning programs have facilitated IBM with the development of employees as reflective practitioners.

By working in a learning organisation all employees of IBM become able to grow their strengths and maximize their learning by getting involved into different learning programs. It also assists the company in creating an environment in which everyone work with cooperation and collaboration so that everyone's learning towards working in a much more effective way can be enhanced (Chich-Jen 2011).

Knowledge:

Another substantial field in which it is beneficial to make use of learning is knowledge. For every learning organisation it is a critical asset as learning is the product of knowledge and its origin (Caldwell 2006). Development of a learning organisation enables an organisation to understand that how it can attain knowledge. Establishing learning organisation at workplace enables knowledge creation through individual to collective approach (Serra 2009).

IBM being a learning organisation provides substantial opportunities for company knowledge to be developed and shared with others through social contact and approach to documentation. IBM employees are aware that how they can put specific knowledge in all essential systems for knowledge management (IBM's learning transformation story 2004). All these information and knowledge is not possible if a firm is not a learning organisation.

Technology:

Another substantial field supported by learning is a firm's technology. When a firm, become learning organisation it become able to harness the

significance of advanced information and communication technologies.

Without having knowledge and empowerment in these technologies it is not possible for a firm to attain its objectives related to knowledge management and learning (Serra 2009). IBM as a learning organisation makes an effective use of information and communication technologies that in turn assist in strengthening its organizational identity, establishing and maintaining learning communities, keep everyone informed and aware of all essential corporate evolutions (Chich-Jen 2011).

Additionally, continuous learning at workplace also helps IBM in creating unbelievable and associative linkups between people that in turn furnish access to their creative knowledge and thoughts. It also encourages innovation and originality by sharing and developing a practice of learning from others effective practices (Serra 2009). IBM being a learning organisation provides different opportunities to its employees to learn that how they can make an effective use of advanced information and communication technologies to enhance their knowledge and leaning (IBM's learning transformation story 2004).

All the above discussed fields evidence that how IBM is able to use learning at its workplace by continuously investing in learning. The role of learning in IBM can be understood with its importance from last 90 years. From last 90 years, learning is playing a substantial role in driving IBM towards success (IBM's learning transformation story 2004). On the basis of its unified and lined up approach, IBM has furthered and are constantly maintaining effective learning programs for its employees, professional and administrator development.

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In the year 1915, after four years of IBM incorporation, it established a distinct IBM education department for training and developing all of its employees. Subsequently it was used formally on all its product lines so that employees can be instructed regularly and works effectively by increasing their learning towards their roles and company products and services (John 2002). Afterwards it offered a formal customer education following an IBM Management Development Program.

For making employees more effective towards reacting customer requests and queries, the company started an IBM Customer Education Program that shows the company dedication to become a learning organisation (IBM's learning transformation story 2004). All these company management initiatives towards increasing employees learning significantly assist it in developing employees that are highly dedicated towards organisational goals and making innovations with the help of their creative thoughts and maximized sharing (O'Keeffe 2002).

The learning commenced in its beginning has now enabled company and its employees to operate by considering its future. IBM's focus on learning organisation was significantly useful for it as it assisted it in transforming itself from a hardware company to a recognized service-driven company. This change at company necessitated reorganization and re-skilling of its employees that became easy with the help of continuous learning (Aktharsha & Anisa 2011). With learning, it became easy for IBM to align its employees in accordance to its new business models as its employees were dedicated and was ready to change their approach so that business opportunities' available to company can be optimized.

Throughout their past efforts, IBM has become able to develop dedicated employees and now it has been concentrating on the development of core-competencies and job-related abilities and skills. For improving its employees' job-related competencies, the company learning programs target five strategic aspects that are sales, employee development, leadership and management, IT training and training to support business partnerships (IBM's learning transformation story 2004). For developing effective learning programs, the company also employed a learning governance model that helped IBM in setting its learning priorities.

The company learning governance model is structured in a way that assures maximum effectiveness of IBM's learning investment. IBM's learning governance model is structured to ensure maximum effectiveness for our learning investment. For developing a learning organisation at workplace IBM governance complies with different aspects like every learning intervention should be integrated and implemented in regard to IBM strategy (Dierkes, Antal, Child & Nonaka 2003).

Additionally, its focus was on implementing a disciplined approach to enterprise wide learning so that more and more benefits related to organisation, people, technology and knowledge can be attained (IBM's learning transformation story 2004). All these company initiatives towards becoming a learning organisation significantly helped it in attaining all business related objectives. The company success is due to its integrated learning approach.

The company management operates with a belief that individual learn in different patterns and on this belief IBM tried to use different educational approaches for increasing its employees learning. The integrated learning approach includes interactive, web-based, collaborative and face-to-face learning (Aktharsha & Anisa 2011). Among these the most appropriate method suited to a group can be selected according to their own skills and requirements. Another effort in this direction done by IBM is the development of the IBM Learning Investment Council.

For increasing learning at IBM, first of all the employees' performance reports and other available reference materials are used that are usually web-based. This appropriates online transfer of information and also provides an access to individual to the material that is pertinent to their job and needs (IBM's learning transformation story 2004). It allows employees to learn at their own pace that in turn create interest among them and motivates them to learn according to their own suitability and abilities (John 2002).

In addition to this, learning is also created from interaction, simulation or games that motivated individuals to contribute on real-life situations and endows them with an ability to practice specific competencies at their own speed (O'Keeffe 2002). Another significant approach used at IBM for increasing learning is collaborative learning and class-room learning. The approach of IBM towards learning from its initiatives has significantly assisted in it transforming its history that was not possible without its timely learning initiatives (Dierkes, Antal, Child & Nonaka 2003).

From beginning, the company management was aware with the usefulness of organisational learning at workplace and this is the reason they tried to implement it by undertaking different efforts. The company motivated all its employees to focus on continuous learning so that their skills and abilities can be strengthened (Curado 2006). It was done with a realisation of learning's importance and its usefulness for a firm in the direction of attaining all its pre-determined business goals.

With the realization of learning's importance IBM tried to integrate it with its business strategies so that all its efforts can be directed with continuous learning that in turn can provide its employees with an advantage to increase their abilities and skills from time-to-time or according to changes in market and customer needs.

Conclusion

With the help of above discussion of learning organisation, its benefits and use of learning by IBM it can be said that learning is a useful model for an organisation. Without learning it is not possible for a firm to develop its employees with all essential job-related competencies. Organisation learning at workplace encourages employees to strengthen their skills that in turn direct them towards performing their duties in a much more effective manner (O'Keeffe 2002). The success of IBM demonstrates how important and useful organisational learning is at workplace if implemented appropriately.

IBM learning initiatives evidences its importance and how it assisted it in transforming its image (Rae 2008). In present competitive environment

organisational learning is highly useful as it assist organisations with an ability to develop its employee's competencies and skills in accordance to their own requirements related to attaining business aims and objectives.