Department of Management Studies

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY - DELHI

Studio 2 - LEARNING ORGANIZATION

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Learning Organization

The Learning Organization is seen as a response to an increasingly unpredictable and dynamic business environment. Here are some definitions by key writers:

"The essence of organisational learning is the organization's ability to use the amazing mental capacity of all its members to create the kind of processes that will improve its own" (Nancy Dixon 1994)

"Learning Company is an organisation that facilitates the learning of all its members and continually transforms itself" (M. Pedler, J. Burgoyne and Tom Boydell, 1991)

"Organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to learn together" (Peter Senge, 1990)

Learning organizations are those that have in place systems such as "first-delivery teams" to accompany (historic) product shipments, mechanisms and processes such as strategic knowledge generation and distillation that are used to continually enhance strategic behaviours and organizations — their capabilities and those who work with it or for it — to achieve sustainable objectives for themselves and the communities in which they participate.

The important points to note about this definition are that learning organizations:

- Are adaptive to their external environment
- Continually enhance their capability to change/adapt
- Develop collective as well as individual learning
- Use the results of learning to achieve better results

Introduction to Studio

Group of 12 students from Department of Management Studies (DMS) formed a Studio at IIT Delhi. The people grouped together were on random basis. Studio interaction started by facilitator Johannes Magenheim who briefed on Learning Organization to the Studio. Studio used the technique of Mind Map Diagram and came up with some thought provoking ideas on Learning Organization.

Mind Map of a Learning Organization
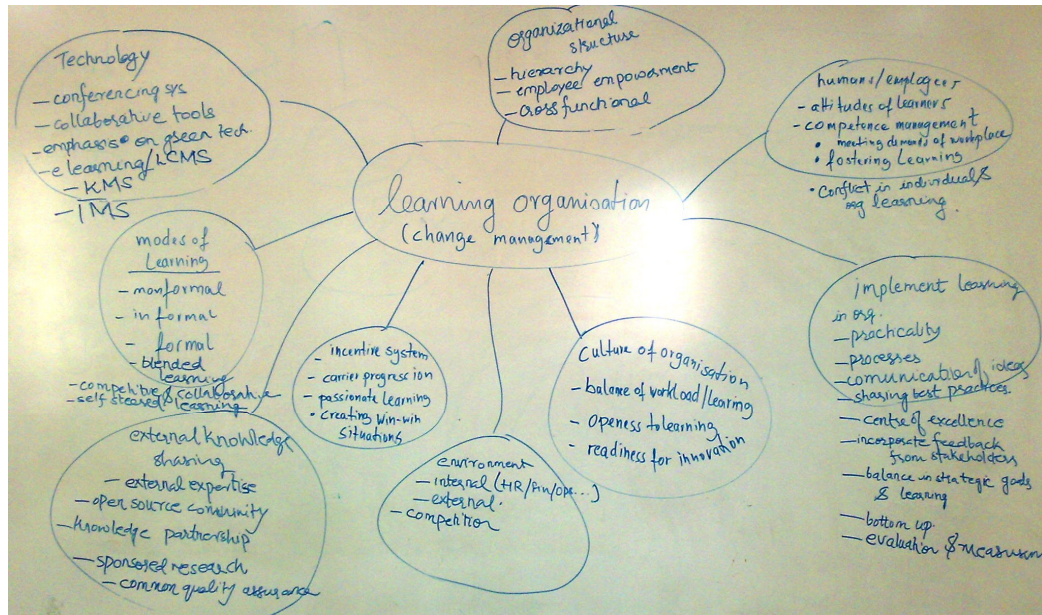
The above diagram show mind map of learning organization. There is a centre bubble on learning organization from which various other bubbles emerges. Each bubble is grouped together by similar points and these are interdependent on each other. The bubbles are explained separately as follows.

1) There are primarily three **Modes of Learning** A) Formal which is done in a structured manner B) Informal which most companies try and promote and C) Non-formal learning. There could be variations as well like Blended learning, Self steered learning, Competitive and Collaborative Learning etc.
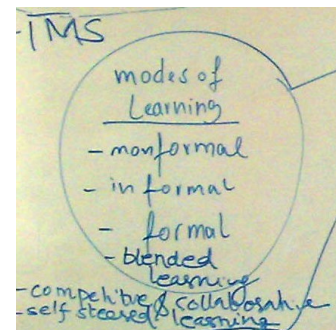

2) **Technology** also helps in creating a learning organization. Tools like Video and Voice Conferencing, Collaborative tools, Emphasis on Green technology helps in creating a learning environment. Well defined processes include e-Learning/LCMS, Knowledge Management System (KMS) and Information Management System (IMS).
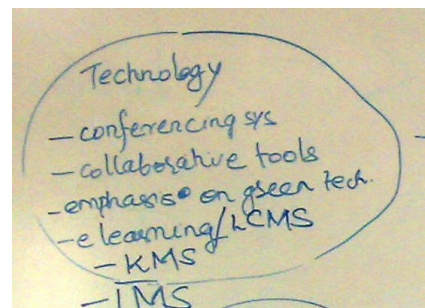
3) **External knowledge sharing** strikes a good balance in enhancing learning within an organization. Elements like External expertise, Open source connectivity, Knowledge partnership, Sponsored research and common quality assurance are good learning factors in an organization.
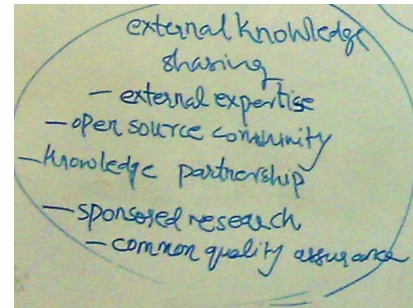

4) **Incentive system** is most important for creating the learning environment. Incentives should be given to people to enhance knowledge. This can be given in terms of promotions etc. This is a win-win situation for both employers as well as employees as it create a conducive environment for learning.
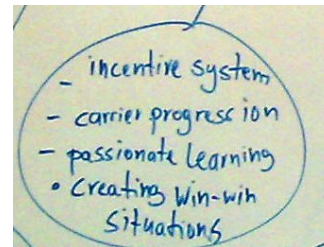
5) **Culture** of an organization provides a great deal in facilitating learning within an organization. Culture should be such where work is appreciated as much an anything else. It also depends on the type of work within a company. If its a manufacturing company then less focus is given to learning within organization. Else if its a service oriented company then more focus be given on learning organization. Also to infuse greater learning in an organization the readiness for innovation should be there.
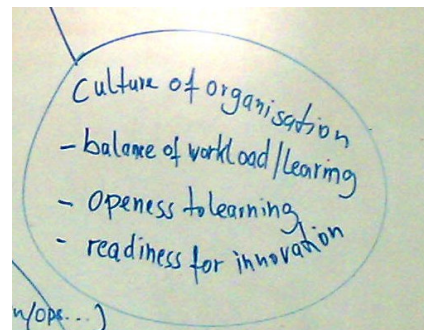
6) **Employees** attitude is very critical in learning organization. People should be recruited such that they appreciate leaning environment and contribute to it. The HR policies should be tuned upon in this respect.
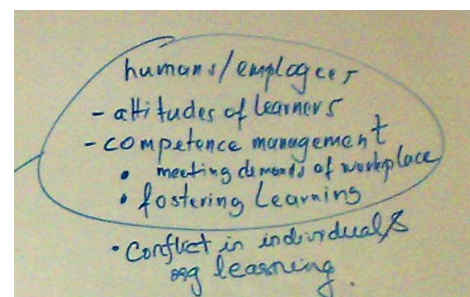
7) One of the most important parts is **Implementation** of learning in an Organization. An organization should understand and have very clear and practical idea of implementing learning in organization. It must also well define the processes in an

organization. The communication of ideas must be very free flowing and should not be restricted at any level in hierarchy. The best practices must be shared from top to down levels in organization. A separate department for centre of excellence should be created with can instil learning across all the departments of an organization. There must also be the mechanism of feedback from stakeholders about the various learning activities.

8) The **Organizational structure** in the organization should be such that people appreciate learning and are motivated by it. Flat structure helps in creating such environment since people are not burdened by hierarchy and communication and exchange of ideas is smooth.