

Learning Organizations: A Study in the Indian Context

by

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Abstract

Continual change is the distinguishing feature of today's global competitive challenges. The organization that can quickly learn and innovate is capable of adapting to a continually changing business environment with a sustainable competitive advantage. Learning organization (LO) facilitates the learning of its members and continuously transforms itself. Empirical studies on LO focused on individuals, teams, and organization-level issues, workplace based learning, innovative management practices, measurement systems, and different characteristics of LO. With mixed results, researchers suggest, for implementation, different strategies and characteristics to become a LO. This study explores how the concept of learning organization is presently implemented by Indian organizations. The three organizations studied are Indian multi-location organizations with global presence. It examines the relative influence of workplace based learning, and learning disciplines on certain characteristics of learning organizations. Results indicate that workplace based learning features— learning resources in work area, time of study and learning, organization facilitated computer skills, the Internet use for learning, reward for learning, inspiring to experiment and learn new ways, enjoying studying as part of a group, and learning new skills in team meetings—are positively correlated with learning disciplines of personal mastery, shared visioning, mental modeling, team learning, and systems thinking. The learning disciplines are positively correlated with the chosen key organizational practices of learning organization— frequent rotation of managers, continual training of personnel, decentralization of decision making, encouragement of multiple experiments, high tolerance for failure, and openness and diversity of viewpoints. Learning disciplines are found to have consistent influence across the chosen key organizational practices of learning organization. On average, there is scope for improvement in implementation of the characteristics of learning organization. The study has developed a diagnostic tool for assessing the learning organizations.

Keywords: Learning organization, learning disciplines, characteristics of learning organization, workplace based learning, change management, execution-as-learning.