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## IS THE LEARNING ORGANIZATION A FASHION, A MANAGEMENT MODEL, A GOVERNMENT PRACTICE?

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### Abstract

Learning organization (Senge, 1993); can be determined as, employees to create new knowledge, to share it, to make this information into the organization's knowledge and to solve the problem is expressed as the basis. The purpose of this study is to criticize whether learning organizations have a management model or a fashion of management. The notion of learning organization has started to gain importance especially after the organization theorists have frequently emphasized since the late 1980s. After the mid-1990s, Information Management became popular and became widespread. In this respect, the ambiguity of the relationship between the information processing approach and the learning organization is noteworthy. After all, businesses that cannot collect information from their environment, do not create information, process them or convert them into specific decisions or fail to do so quickly are losing their ties with their environment and losing their harmony with their environment. This study is a qualitative research. In this study, the concept of learning organizations has been critical through secondary data collected through document analysis. All documents and publications used in the research are secondary data sources obtained by literature scanning technique. In the interpretation of the information, especially technical issues were not taken into consideration considering the purpose of the study. Those who can do this can continue their activities successfully in adaptation. As a result of this study, the historical adventure of

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stated that organizations can change their behavior and enable them to survive. In this sense, it is advisable to do this with the learning organization. In this study, besides being a fashion term learning organizations and its development as a concept are explained with an eclectic perspective. Essentially, all of the adaptation theories and methods are focused on, but it is for learning organizations, the effects and benefits of organizations on their way of doing business are explained.

**Keywords:** *Knowledge Management, Organizational Learning, Learning Organizations, System Thinking, Critical Approach.*

## **ÖĞRENEN ORGANİZASYONLAR MODA MI, YOKSA BİR YÖNETİM MODELİ Mİ?**

### **Öz**

Öğrenen organizasyonlar (Senge, 1993); çalışanlar için yeni bilgiler oluşturmak ve paylaşmak, bu bilgileri adapte ederek kurumun bilgisine dönüştürmek olarak ifade edilir. Öğrenen örgüt kavramı, özellikle örgüt kuramcılarının 1980'lerin sonlarından itibaren sık sık vurgu yapımlarıyla birlikte önem kazanmaya başlamıştır. 1990'ların ortalarından sonra Bilgi Yönetimi popüler hale gelmiş veya yagınlaşmıştır. Çevrelerinden bilgi toplayamayan, bilgi üretemeyen, bunları işleyemeyen veya belirli kararlara dönüştüremeyen veya hızlı bir şekilde yapamayan işletmeler, çevreleriyle bağlarını kaybetmekte ve çevrelerine uyum sağlayamamaktadırlar. Bunu yapabilenler, çevrelerine uyum sağlamayı ve gelişen durumlara adapte olabilmeyi başararak varlıklarını devam ettirebilmektedirler. Esasen, tüm adaptasyon teorileri ve yöntemleri, ancak öğrenerek çevrelerine uyum sağlayabilen işletmelerin varlıklarını devam ettirebileceklerini vurgulamaktadırlar. Bu çalışma nitel bir araştırmadır. Bu çalışmada, öğrenen organizasyonlar kavramı, literatür analizi yoluyla toplanan ikincil veriler marifetiyle eleştirel bir yaklaşımla ele alınmıştır. Araştırmada kullanılan tüm bilgiler ve yayınlar literatür tarama tekniği ile elde edilen ikincil veri kaynaklarıdır. Bilginin yorumlanmasında, çalışmanın amacı gözönünde bulundurularak özellikle organizasyonların işleyişine dair teknik ayrıntılar gözönünde bulundurulmamıştır. Bu çalışmanın sonucunda öğrenen organizasyonlarının tarihsel serüveni ve kavram olarak gelişimi eklektik bir bakış açısıyla açıklanmıştır. Esasen, tüm adaptasyon teorileri ve yöntemleri, ancak organizasyonların davranışlarını değiştirerek hayatta kalma becerilerine katkı sağlayabilmeleri nispetinde kıymetlidirler. Bu bağlamda, öğrenen organizasyonlar olgusu kuşkusuz örgüt teorisine organizasyonların varlıklarını devam ettirebilmeleri konusunda sağladığı bilgi birikimi ve bakış açısı ile önemli katkılarda

bulunmuştur. Bu çalışmada, öğrenen organizasyonlar olgusunun moda bir terim olmasının yanısıra, yönetim disiplini açısından organizasyon teorisi ve adaptasyon kuramlarına doğrudan ve dolaylı katkıları açıklanmaya çalışılmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Bilgi Yönetimi, Organizasyonel Öğrenme, Öğrenen Organizasyonlar, Sistem Düşüncesi, Eleştirel Yaklaşım.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The idea that the organization is a learning system is actually at the beginning of the century even in the Frederick W. Taylor's Scientific Management approach (Kotter, 2006). However, in the works of Chris and Donald (1978), this concept was first encountered. Later, the concept was shaped by Peter M. Senge (1993). Today, this approach can be adapted to organizations, what organizations learn what they need to learn and how to apply this research is done.

In 1993, there was a description of the learning organizations in the book *The Fifth Discipline*, written by Peter M. Senge. The foundations of this concept were taken with the emergence of the System Theory in 1950s and the development of system thought enabled the organizations to be considered as living organisms. Senge system thought was adapted to the learning process and the information obtained from it was transferred to the business world and the organization discipline learning with the positive results began to be popular in the business world.

In the above-mentioned process, as it affects all modern post and modern management and organization concepts, especially in communication and information technology developments, globalization, human being as an asset has been effective. Nevertheless, it can be stated that the multi-faceted and continuous change in globalization and globalization process has a relatively important place to affect every part of society and therefore the organizations. After the post-cold war period, in the 1980s world order, with the effect of globalization, the enterprises were in search of new structures and operations in order to maintain their existence and to adapt to their environment. At the core of this search was the desire to conceptualize, disseminate and market the secrets of the achievements of the globally successful enterprises. This was in fact a characteristic of the information society (Hara, 2012). Because the point of view of the information society; the main added value in the labor market can only be obtained by selling a new information or a new design. For this reason, enterprises were interested in taking advantage of the opportunities offered by globalization and to new understandings and structures that could adapt to the change environment accelerated by globalization. In this context, it was assumed that human was the most important source of the organizations that formed the secret of superiority in the competition. This process was in fact a necessity of the information society that emerged as a result of the agriculture, industry and post-industrial society evolution. The basic feature of the information society man was that he had the desire and the opportunity to continuous learning and self-development. Learning and

self-development on an individual basis required that the people working in an organization should learn and develop while working. It can be said that it was an expression of a state that was known to be expressed by the learning organization. In fact, it is generally accepted that the distinction between Fayol and its management functions in 1910 is still valid today with small changes (Şengöz, 2019). In this respect, the emphasis on learning organizations can only be a convincing rhetorical development.

The concept of learning organizations is defined by Peter M. Senge. The learning organization is the organization in which people are constantly improving their capacities to achieve the results they desire, the ways of thinking that push the new boundaries, and where people constantly learn to learn together. The emphasis here is basically on the basis of the rhetorical expression that organizations are constantly monitoring the changes in the environment and how they can adapt to developments in the environment, how they can absorb changes, and for that they already have to make the changes needed in organizational structures and processes.

In the ongoing sections of the study, the evolution and development of learning organizations as a management model and basic building stones of the concept will be discussed. Thus, it will be discussed whether the mentioned concept is a fashion term or a management model.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

Learning organization (Senge, 1993); can be determined as, employees to create new knowledge, to share it, to make this information into the organization's knowledge and to solve the problem is expressed as the basis. The purpose of this study is to criticize whether learning organizations have a management model or a fashion of management. The notion of learning organization has started to gain importance especially after the organization theorists have frequently emphasized since the late 1980s. After the mid-1990s, Information Management became popular and became widespread. In this respect, the ambiguity of the relationship between the information processing approach and the learning organization is noteworthy. After all, businesses that cannot collect information from their environment, do not create information, process them or convert them into specific decisions or fail to do so quickly are losing their ties with their environment and losing their harmony with their environment.

This study is a qualitative research. In this study, the concept of learning organizations has been critical through secondary data collected through document analysis. All documents

and publications used in the research are secondary data sources obtained by literature scanning technique. In the interpretation of the information, especially technical issues were not taken into consideration considering the purpose of the study.

### 3. EVOLUTION OF LEARNING ORGANIZATIONS

The evolution of the learning organizations in the literature is examined in four stages. Knowing organizations, understanding organizations, thinking organizations, learning organizations (Lopez, 2015). When the development process mentioned above is examined; the effects of the learning event on the building blocks of new organizations and their relations with the employees and their environment and their effects on the new management techniques can give us a clue whether the learning organizations are a management philosophy or just a management practice.

When looking at the literature on learning organizations, it is hard not to recall that famous line from Mark Twain: “Many researchers have already cast much darkness upon this subject, and it is probable that if they continue, that we shall soon know nothing at all about it.” Neither the idea of learning nor the idea of organization is entirely clear. Not surprisingly, we do not achieve much more clarity when we connect these ideas in the “learning organization.” Despite this lack of precision, we can get our feet on the ground and find our way. According to the The Public Service Learning Policy Directorate Canada Public Service Agency (2007), here are a few of the better-known definitions:

Senge	Organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create 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 how to learn together.
Pedlar	An organization which facilitates the learning of all its members and continuously transforms itself.
Schon	We must, in other words, become adept at learning. We must become able not only to transform our institutions, in response to changing situations and requirements; we must invent and develop institutions which are ‘learning systems’, that is to say, systems capable of bringing about their own continuing transformation.
Watkins & Marsick	Learning organizations are characterized by total employee involvement in a process of collaboratively conducted, collectively accountable change directed towards shared values or principles.

Jamali, Khoury, &Shayoun (2006)	A type of organization that promotes continual organizational renewal by weaving/embedding a set of core processes that nurture a positive propensity to learn, adapt, and change.
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Knowledge Management: It occurs in response to the change in the environment. Change is not large-scale. Addition to the existing product and service. They believe they know best. Competitiveness is limited. The human element is in the background. It is not a new approach. It is similar to classical management.

Understanding Organizations: 'Organizational culture is tried to be created. It is emphasized that there may be different in manufacturing good instead of single method or understanding in manufacturing good. The human element is important. Employees feel they belong to the institution. It is similar to Neo Classical Management. The organization focus on producing quick solutions to current problems. It sees the change and tries to adapt. Lack of this organization is that it does not address the underlying problem. It is similar to the system approach.

Learning organizations encourages learning. Learning is at the forefront. There is open communication. Constructive dialogue. Measures are taken and seen without any change, rather than seeing and implementing change (Starbuck, 2014). There is a learning philosophy to learn. Typical information society according to adaptation theories; In other words, it means an understanding where value added is gained by invention and new designs, and it is necessary for enterprises to have organizational structures and operations that provide continuous development in order to maintain their existence.

On the other hand, learning is a normal process for units that produce or trade goods or services. It is a corporate behavior to learn from all the basic activities of all organizations, in all organizations, in all periods of history (Cohen, 2014). In business life, learning is not just a pleasant rhetoric, but an important function in an educational institution. For example, one of the principles of business guild, which is the Ottoman Empire's major Employees Chamber, to teach art and crafts to anyone who wants to be foreign, criminal, innocent, Christian and Muslim-is important in showing the importance given to learning. business guild organizations were given such importance in learning that; for example, those who did not take epic business guild were allowed to open a business. Taking allowance meant having a kind of certificate of craftsmanship or vocational training. Here, apprentices were not only equipped with work or

professional knowledge, but also with work, business and professional ethics. The process of acquiring learning and business ethics was so institutionalized and he found himself in the plane of social behavior to the extent that, for example, from an apprentice master, without taking the ranks, without a ceremony, from his master's side to open a shop, the public won't respect him, his shop did not go, and he would not shop. Garvin's (1993) learning organizations are experts in the creation, acquisition and transfer of knowledge, and they change their behavior in accordance with the new knowledge and insights they acquire. Garvin's (1993) study of work and occupational ethics gained within the scope of business guild morality. It is seen that it is a product of an understanding.

#### **4. BUILDING STONES OF LEARNING ORGANIZATIONS**

According to Kim (1993) the building blocks of the learning organization; systematic problem solving, experimenting with new approaches, taking lessons from past experiences, benefiting from the experiences of others and transferring knowledge. I will not enter into the details of the building blocks that Garvin put forward in relation to the way of thinking, equipment and behavior that supports the operations of businesses. What is already expressed is the way in which businesses let their businesses, reasonable and reasonable people to follow in their daily lives.

On the other hand, Peter M.Senge's five disciplines (Senge, 1993) are the personal discipline (personal development and learning discipline), which the basis for the issues is expressed as the building blocks of the learning organizations above. the process is a lifelong discipline), mental models (mental models include awareness of our knowledge of the flow of life, the testing and development stages of them), shared vision (which reflects their own personal visions is a vision that connects people very strongly) learning in teams (the process of developing the group's capacity in the same direction to enable the group members to truly achieve the results they want), which, when considered separately, depend only on learning organizations and is not the principles, principles and practices that make sense of it.

In this context, it may be useful to mention system thinking separately. Senge calls the system thinking as Fifth Discipline. Because this thought constitutes the conceptual framework and world view of the five disciplines and the whole learning organization. Essentially, in order to solve any problem or to make a decision in order to realize a purpose, what is necessary is to reach a rational decision by evaluating all known factors affecting the issue. Of course, in order to make such reasoning, the competence of the individuals who are not only individual but also the process is needed. Thus, the meaning of learning organizations and the reference to learning



is an overriding emphasis on a factor involved in an ordinary mechanism, a disproportionate effort and concern. It can be said that it is a rhetorically produced and developed rhetoric (Smith et al, 2019).

Again, learning organizations refer to; new management practices such as empowerment, outsourcing, benchmarking, business process reengineering-BPR, downsizing, strategic alliances (Baumard and Starbuck, 2011). These are management practices related to organizations that are associated with themselves and with one another (Calhoun et al, 2011), but as a result of eclectic rather than challenging learning.

## **5. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION**

Those who can do this can continue their activities successfully in adaptation. As a result of this study, the historical adventure of learning organizations and its development as a concept are explained with an eclectic perspective. Essentially, all of the adaptation theories and methods are focused on, but it is stated that organizations can change their behavior and enable them to survive. In this sense, it is advisable to do this with the learning organization. In this study, besides being a fashion term for learning organizations, the effects and benefits of organizations on their way of doing business are explained.

Human learning and self-development, with a common vision, spreading to the definition of the organization, learning on an organizational basis is a natural consequence of the information age and a necessity and necessity for organizations that want to maintain their existence simply as stated in the adaptation theories (Mahler, 2019). However, this cannot be limited to the learning organization philosophy. This is because rationality refers to the way in which organizations are indirectly able to achieve this in a process in which individuals achieve learning and self-improvement throughout their lives.

Changes in environmental conditions played an important role in the emergence of rhetoric of learning organizations. Changes in globalization, competition and technology have led to the emergence of lean and horizontal organizations with fewer levels (Şengöz, 2019).

In the thinking of learning organizations; the institutionalization of learning means that the enterprise continually tries to improve its products and services in all its aspects. As individuals evolve, employees will feel a renewed commitment to their work and customers will receive better service. This is the starting point of almost all organizational theories and has not changed since Fayol.

What can be said about the learning organization approach in the shortest possible way

may be the mentioning of a practice that is partly differentiated and focused specifically on learning, rather than mentioning ten innovations in this management approach. It can be said that although it is revealed with a different rhetoric (Kırım, 1998), the learning organizations are actually a management practice rather than a new management model.

In fact, to talk about learning organizations as a new management approach is nothing but a presentation of a concept or a practice as if it were a new approach. Indeed, it is not clear what the learning organizations are. Such uncertainties are strangely related to contemporary management approaches and practices (Tutar, 2011). We can say that learning organization is not a management model but a management approach or management philosophy.

All of the characteristics of learning organizations are included in the definition of learning given in the Turkish Language Dictionary. The process of making TDK dictionary conceptual arrangements. 1-Name given to the very continuous effects of exercises and applications. 2-The process of acquiring certain knowledge, skills and insights. 3-Changes in reactions and behaviors, always or in some cases, experiences; as defined. Learning; it is defined as the ability to create reactions and behaviors in response to certain situations and problems, to change them and to acquire new ones. As it is seen, the elements that exist in the definition of learning cover all the characteristics of the learning organizations. Therefore, only one definition is defined.

The discursion created by the management gurus by displacing the concepts, breaking the meaning, and breaking the semantic rules is not enough to make the theories they develop and make the theory a new approach or management (Gérard, 2001). The unnecessary extension of concepts also does not qualify to be efficient and effective.

For all these reasons and according to the methodology of Frankfurt School critical approach theory (Schwab and Starbuck, 2016), management and organization issues are simple, accurate, most contemporary, modern, most modern, throwing aside all the old ones, etc. instead of the opinions and approaches presented in such claims, clarity and measurability in the concepts used, scientific rigor in every stage of the studies, always the use of a robust method, and finally the results to be presented to the opinions of other scientists should be based on the approach of allowing the verifying or verification.

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