

## URGENCY OF 'CONSTANT LEARNING' TOWARDS FUTURE THE 'PSYCHE' FACTOR

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*Özet - Doğa'da, ancak, değişikliğe uyum gösterenler yaşay-  
akalırlar. Çağdaş küreselleşme'deki 'çekişim' karşısında, Kuru-  
luşlar da değişen koşullara 'uyarlama' sağlamalıdır. Bu da  
'sürekli öğrenme' eylemini gerektirmektedir. Öte yandan, duy-  
gusal bir varlık olan Kişi, böyle bir uyarlamayı 'erteleme'  
eğilimindedir; onun için de, uygulamada bilinç-altı bir direnç  
gösterir. Bunu gidermek için, 'tüm-inandırım' yordamı kul-  
lanılmalıdır. Ancak o zaman, çalışacakların, gönülden onayı  
ve katılımı sağlanabilir. Ters durumda, bütün usçul girişimler  
başarısızlığa yazgılı kalacaklardır.*

### INTRODUCTION

The relatively recent concept of 'organizational learning' is defined as "the process of knowledge acquisition, information distribution, information interpretation, and organizational retention to adapt successfully to changing circumstances [1]. It is indeed this 'adaptive behavior' which constitutes the very essence of learning; otherwise, mere accumulation of information does not amount to 'learning', in the sense of 'modification of behavior in the light of past experience'. What is involved in the organizational learning is "the adjustment of the organization's actions, based on its experience, and that of others. The challenge is doing to learn, and learning to do" [2]. It is because of this dual aspect of the purposive behavior in question that such a self-regulating system is called 'the learning organization' [3].

Yet, the fact that 'learning' for organizations has become a topic for consideration recently, betrays a certain underlying tendency towards the other pole of 'not learning'. Actually, if 'learning' something new is a natural trend, a commonsensical activity, then why should there be an implicit issue of 'non-learning' behaviour in the first place? Since there seems to be no valid, logical answer to the question, then there can only be a psychological explanation. Hence, the 'Psyche' factor. To deal with the malady of 'non-learning' in organizations, the procedure which is used in therapeutic medicine for treating diseased conditions, can profitably be transferred to this context.

**Malaise:** State of unhealthiness, indicative of a disorder

**Etiology:** Underlying causes of the irregular condition

**Analysis:** Detailed examination of the causative factors

**Diagnosis:** Identification of the disease from its symptoms

**Therapy:** Treatment of the affliction, by remedial methods

**Prognosis:** Prospect of anticipated recovery, following treatment

### I. MALAISE: *Lingering Sense of Ill-being*

With the current politico-economic trend towards globalization, business companies, even in highly industrial countries, are experiencing economic difficulties, due to worldwide competition from those, in recently developing countries. Hence, budget cuts, austerity measures, survival plans, and employee lay-offs. The same holds true for industrially emergent countries, as well, which might soon find themselves in the same 'dire straits', displaying what might be called the 'automocycle syndrome'.

According to this, a bicycle, speeding downhill, might overtake, and even surpass an automobile which might be gliding down at a leisurely speed. But, at the next uphill stretch, the inherently deceptive nature of the bicycle's relatively lower speed becomes disappointingly apparent. Actually, behind almost each downfall of a person, of an administration, or of an organization, might be observed this 'tragic flaw' of displaying 'hubris'; that exaggerated self-confidence which does not fail to invite retribution of some kind.

From another angle, organizations in industrial countries too, might soon realize that a mere 'state of preparedness' eventually does indeed lead to corrosive self-complacency. Therefore, in order not to mark time in the same place, or even worse, not to lag behind, a company has to keep itself up-to-date, on all counts. And the best way of doing this, no doubt, is 'constant learning' or 'continuing improvement' as is expressed by the concept of 'kaizen' in Japanese [4]. Otherwise, it is but a short step into falling prey to the malady of 'non-learning'. This is why all organizations, whether profit or non-profit, should avoid being of the 'brooding' type like a lame duck, and should strive to be of the 'learning' type like a speeding cheetah.

## II. ETIOLOGY: *Entropic tendency within systems*

According to the 'the immutable law of change', everything in this world does change except one thing. And this unchangeable fact is that "All things do change". In a system, a change occurs only when there is a prior '*differentiality*', somehow created within it. A case in point is the difference of electric potential between the two poles of a battery when it is first produced. When the battery runs down completely and goes dead, then there is no possibility of any 'change', left in it. However, when the battery is recharged, then a new differentiality is created. With this, a new phase of change starts, and goes on, while the battery keeps running down again.

Under normal circumstances, the direction of change is always from the 'created' category of differentiality towards the undifferentiated, natural, or neutral state. This unidirectionality is observed in the fact that heat always passes from hotter to colder bodies, as is stated by the second law of thermodynamics. In other words, there is no natural 'heating' process in Nature, but only a 'cooling' one; as in the case of dead body, getting cold rather than warming up.

The universal tendency towards pervasive 'non-differentiality', homogeneity, or uniformity is measured in terms of '*entropy*'. In a 'closed system', entropy tends to increase unless an external source of supply halts it, delays it, or simply reverses it. For instance, a flying airplane is kept airborne only with the help of an engine which defies the gravitational pull of the earth. Since there is no such thing as '*sky-gravity*' to keep it up aloft, the flying plane falls down, and crashes if its engine power fails.

In a similar fashion, the act of learning is equal to creating some 'useable' differentiality, by making an additional effort. This, however, happens to be against the grain in human nature. Because, unidirectionality of entropic change is always towards stagnant uniformity; that means towards a 'non-learning' state. Therefore, it usually becomes necessary to promote the learning process, which then takes place at the slowest possible speed, and which generally ceases to be at the earliest opportunity.

As can be seen, the culprit which prevents Person or Organization from constant learning, is this inherent 'disinclination' in Human nature, of making any additional effort, unless there is a compelling need for it. This inborn indolence is indirectly expressed in the well-known observation: "Work expands, so as to fill the time, available for its completion"[5].

The same unidirectionality of increasing entropic change towards uniformity is illustrated by another remark: "In an organization, each person is promoted to one's level of incompetence; and then, s/he just stays

there". The reason is that, with the gradual erosion of the already possessed differentiality, there is no more 'useable energy', left for further progress.

## III. ANALYSIS: *Rationality versys emotionality*

Human behaviour seems to be regulated by two components. One is the 'infrastructure' of '*sentience*' which is a tangle of genuinely existent and persistent emotions. And the other is the 'superstructure' of '*ratiience*' which is a superimposed mechanism of abstract inferencing. If behaviour is likened to a ship, then '*ratiience*' is the captain with a naval certificate, and '*sentience*' is the untrained horde of crew. These two elements are in diametrical contradistinction with each other. Yet, since it is the captain who has the last word, then the crew will eventually obey the orders; but ever so reluctantly.

Apart from this internal duality in human behaviour, there is also an external one. And this is the 'social duality' which has appeared when human beings first began to live in communities. As a result, Person continues its living, not merely as an '*Individual*' by oneself, but also as a '*Sociovidual*' in the company of others. Hence, the so-called '*Nature/Nurture*' controversy over human behaviour; that means the debate on the question of whether it is the natural genetic setup or the later training which is responsible for the terminal behaviour of Person.

Actually, it is almost certain that the total attitude of Person, is the result of its psycho-biological tendencies, as modified and determined by Society which shapes it through the family and through the immediate community. So, Person is not simply a biologically developed rational organism; or '*Ratioganism*' to use a special word; but, it is also a communal '*Socioganism*'. However, on the deepest personal level, Person is an emotional '*Psychanism*', par excellence. Naturally enough, all these dichotomies within Person are duly carried over to any group in which Person takes part. Consequently, the collective behaviour of an organization cannot escape being somehow affected by the inescapable '*psyche*' factor.

Yet, there is a fundamental difference between unitary Person and aggregate Society. When the brain commands, the body obeys, as in the case of committing suicide. Yet, when a certain assemblage of people is asked to act in a particular manner, not all members behave in the same way as a solid group. There always happens to be a certain faction of dissenters who will somehow defy the general agreement.

**IV. DIAGNOSIS: Postponement as stumbling block**

According to the rule of increasing entropy, Person's behaviour has the tendency towards returning to its ordinary, neutral state of least effort. Only when there is a threat to survival or comfort, does Human expend that needed extra energy, necessary to maintain the balance. It is such a basically 'animalistic' orientation which leads human being to procrastination. In fact, language is full of words or phrases which are all indicative of 'putting off' an action to a future date:

postponing	filibuster	moratorium
delaying	shelving	abeyance
adjournment	tabling	days of grace
deferment	pidgeonholing	tardiness
suspension	cold storage	dilatoriness
retardation	truce	mañana
prorogation	cease-fire	eleventh hour
protract	reprieve	last minute
temporize	respite	take time
		wait and see

Of these acts, the most commonly practiced one, seems to be postponement. Such '*postponact*' for short, characterizes that trait of human behaviour which is seen in the last-minute rush of catching a plane, of joining a meeting, or of preparing a final draft of writing.

This lethargic tendency towards not doing additional work beyond the critical threshold, seems to be a universally distributed feature of human nature. Although personal preferences are genetically determined for each individual, there are some common 'archetypes' of behaviour-pattern displayed by the 'Collective Subconscious' of Humankind at large. For instance, the seemingly inexplicable indifference, carelessness, or at least, tardiness about solving the problem of worldwide pollution is a typical case in point.

Nevertheless, such a laggard or disorderly behaviour is reduced to a minimum under strict and disciplinarian systems. For instance the military service where almost any deviation from the norm, is sure to be punished accordingly. Yet, within the social matrix, whether this happens to be the family circle, the national community, or the 'Global Village' [6] worldwide, a 'postponact' on the part of the 'performer' seems to be frequently forgiven, because of the indulgence shown by a considerable portion of other people.

On the other hand, an organization is not a randomly emergent human community or society. It is a

consciously formed establishment, towards achieving a specific goal; and then maintaining it throughout. Therefore, it can reasonably be expected that an organization will heed the telltale signs of increasing entropy in time, and make necessary adjustments. However, the first and foremost condition in doing this, should be a firm determination that, acts of postponement will not be tolerated; and that, deviations from the set norms will not be indulgently treated. Otherwise, an organization is sure to dissolve someday, just like so many once-creditable establishments, or like so many empires, ancient or modern, did.

For this reason, an establishment cannot afford to continue to behave like '*Homo Postponens*' or 'delaying Person' [7]. Instead, it has to be, or has to become '*Corpus Cognoscens*'; in other words, a 'Learning Organization'. And this, not only to repair the past damage or impairment, but also to be prepared against adversely negative contingencies of Future. Advancement means, in a way, to repeatedly redefine a pre-set goal ; not to blindly follow a stereotyped program to a dead end. Therefore, organizations should never become some establishments of the 'pre-programmed' type, but be of the 'programmable' sort.

Since at the base of organizations is Human with its inescapably interfering 'Psyche', one can then diagnose the malaise in non-learning organizations as an essentially '*psycheal*' maladjustment. One should not fall, in this connection, into the easy trap of thinking that the lack of healthy 'harmonization' in question is a mere failure to use state-of-the-art hardware and equipment. Consequently, the therapy of the malady should be implemented, not in deceptive technological gadgets, but along psychological lines.

**V. THERAPY: Productiveness through convincement**

Constant learning is actually an attitude, a state of mind, as much as an effort, towards self-improvement. But, in an organization, not all the members are expected to have such an 'illuminated' mind-set. From this point of view, all personnel, as '*performers*' of any learning activity, can be divided into two categories.

*Originators* - Those 'cognizant' people who introduce projects of novelties into the operation of the organization, either by preparing such plans themselves, or by seeking the professional advice of consulting firms. Such persons might be highly placed, visionary executives or properly trained, technical talents.

*Applicators* - Those working people who merely put into practice, what they are required to. Such persons

might very well include competent managers, workaholic functionaries, or ordinary employees.

Since treatment means an integrated effort in order to reach a certain goal, the following approach of the 'military science' might be used as a reference point.

**Strategy :** Integrated plan for an effect. Attacking or defending?

**Tactics :** Use of available means. When, where, and how, to strike?

**Technics :** Totality of practical means. Use of weapons and gadgetry

So, this tripartite model can usefully be adapted to the needs of an organization in connection with a 're-learning' program.

**Strategy :** Renewal project in response to an unsettling challenge

**Tactics :** Effort to convince, in order to reach 'consensus'

**Technics :** Training scheme as preparation to implementation

In this model, the first 'project' and the third 'training' phases are tangible enough to be handled relatively easily; because they are the products or processes of routine work. Contrastingly, in the second 'consensus' phase, the factor of 'convincement' is the most delicate one; because it has something to do mainly with the psychology of human creature. As the saying goes: "A man, convinced against his will, is of the same opinion, still".

The inherent difficulty in convincement process is that the 'cause/effect' relationship between present undertaking and future reward is usually very difficult to demonstrate. For instance, if vitamin C is taken in sufficient quantities, one does not immediately appreciate its beneficial effect. Only when there is a deficiency of it, then will people understand its value. A typical case is 'scurvy' or vitamin deficiency among the crew members on board overseas ships in olden times, with the result that crew members kept invariably losing their teeth on long sea voyages.

Learning process is, in a certain way, like growing a fruit tree, which might take years of effort before one can actually enjoy its fruit itself. Consequently, it is usually very difficult to demonstrate to people that some present act of learning, or rather the process of constant learning will bear fruit in future. The reason for such a relative lack of success is that Present has a discernible, concrete immediacy for Person, whereas Future is in an abstract, blurry, and fuzzy haze. That is why perhaps a medical checkup is always delayed until an emergency forces Person to undergo a thorough examination.

Therefore, imposition of a re-training program from outside, will always meet with some latent resistance within. It is like the case of antibody reaction in human physiology against germs or other foreign agents. It takes time for the antibodies to form. But, when vaccination is made use of, then the physiology is in a state of preparedness for any imminent attack.

The mind of the supposedly '*sapient*' Homo has a formidable weapon against any unpalatable, external factors. And this is the process of '*rationalization*'; that means, the way of finding, through specious logic, some pseudo-reasonable excuse for doing or for not doing a certain thing. Worse still, if forced to do any such thing, Person might even try to block or undermine a superimposed scheme, although perhaps unwittingly or subconsciously.

For instance, some applicators might always be 'part of the problem' rather than be 'part of the solution'. Because, such people are always '*status quo-ist*' in the sense that their sole concern, understandably, is to keep their jobs until their timely retirement. In case they remain unsure of their positions, they might invariably approach any new scheme with disguised suspicion. Moreover, some executives in key roles might even flatly refuse any proposal of re-learning program, just because they have not thought of such a thing themselves. Since their logical acrobatics usually carries the power of their status in the organization, an attempt at a renewal might end in a perfect stalemate.

Therefore, the most crucial point about the implementation of a renewal project, is the phase of '*total convincement*' of all applicators, concerning the proposed program. Mere attempts of persuasion, which are devoid of genuine belief, and which might smack of deceit, will never succeed. What is actually needed, is not stark 'Realism' about the present state of affairs, but commonsensical '*Factualism*' which treats even the 'illogical' nature of sentiments as a fact in its own right.

Emotions do not have the capacity of consciously referring to intelligence. On the other hand, human reason has got the capability of objectively considering, besides its own mechanism, instincts and sentiments, as well. Therefore, '*Rationalistics*' is the only gateway to understanding human 'sentience'. Because of this, the process of convincement should be more than an approach of superficial persuasion. It should rather be a sincere effort to assure people concerned that they will not suffer, but just the opposite, they will benefit from a new programme; because the corporate advantages will eventually be reflected on their professional well-being.

Unless such 'pervasiveness' is achieved throughout an organization, during the implementation of a learning programme, all efforts of renewal will be wasted, just as

in the case of a burning log in a fireplace. Indeed, the heat largely goes up the chimney although some warmth might also be enjoyed right in front of it. This is a typical case of what might be called the '*perforated-bucket syndrome*'. That means that, even if there is a hole at the bottom of a bucket, one can surely carry the water some distance away. But, what a wastage! Instead, just stopping the gap first, would serve much better.

One should therefore pay attention to the fact that there should be no coercion involved in the process of convincement; neither administrative nor financial. It is like the case of advertisement whose function might be dual. On the one hand, genuinely informing customers, of the presence of some articles; and on the other, shamelessly duping people into buying some goods they do not need, by resorting to all kinds of psychological stratagems and tricks.

#### VI. PROGNOSIS: *Preparedness for contingencies*

In the final analysis, "Nothing succeeds like success", as the saying goes. Therefore the acid test for any learning procedure, for any '*modus operandi*', is the tangible results it will produce within projected time limits. After all, "The proof of the pudding is in the eating".

In order to achieve this, there should be established, by an organization, a '*self-regulatory*' setup, similar to the '*servomechanism*' of a cybernetic system with its '*feedback loop*' [8]. In this way, output values will be constantly sent back to, and evaluated by, the command centre, in order to correct performance, and to proceed along the pre-arranged course.

This kind of monitoring and checking can be of two types. A '*macro-inspection*' on the part of the organization itself, to see if the establishment keeps on being a constantly learning organization. And then, a '*micro-inspection*' by an independent, creditable, '*extra-organizational*' agency to see to it that, a proposed program has been duly initiated, and it is being properly carried out. Otherwise, the personnel in a resident inspection centre within the organization will surely feel hesitant in voicing their candid opinions.

A potential danger even after the implementation and control of a new programme, is that such a project might, in its turn, become ossified and fossilized in time. It should be remembered that Beethoven did not write '*classical music*' as such; but only progressive pieces, which have then become '*classic*' with the passage of time. Modern music therefore cannot afford to replicate, to emulate, or to revitalize, such a '*frozen*' framework. It has to create its own progressive format, which might itself hopefully become a classic in future.

Therefore, an unchangeable goal should be considered, paradoxically enough, very dangerous indeed. As a matter of fact, in teleological terms, the projected '*telos*'

or aim should always be modifiable, as if one were chasing a receding rainbow. Hence, the absolute necessity of '*constant learning*' rather than simply a series of '*ad-hoc learnings*' in response to sporadic emergencies.

The problem of progress in an organization should perhaps be viewed as something '*Janus-faced*'; one facet wistfully looking back to Past; but, another one enthusiastically looking into Future. After all, what is Future today, will be Present soon; and what is Present now, will be Past after a while. Because of this, only those persons or organizations which sincerely feel the urgency of constant learning towards Future will be well-prepared for any eventuality.

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