MBA(SEM-4) ,

SUBJECT- OC&D

UNIT-7 (PART-2)

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**THE LEARNING ORGANISATION**

Peter Senge (I 990) first floated the concept of the learning organisation. According to him learning organizations are:

organisations 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 see the whole together."

The basic rationale for such organizations is that in situations of rapid change, only those that are flexible, adaptive and productive will excel. For this to happen, organizations need to 'discover how to tap people's commitment and capacity to learn at all levels'.

For a 'learning organization it is not enough to survive. Survival learning or what is more often termed adaptive learning is important - indeed it is necessary. But for a learning organization, adaptive learning must be joined by generative learning,

**Components of a Learning Organisation**

The dimension that distinguishes learning from more traditional organizations is the mastery of certain basic disciplines or 'component technologies'.

The five disciplines that Peter Senge identifies as crucial to learning organizations are:

a Systems thinking

a Personal mastery

a Mental models

a Building shared vision

a Team learning

**Systems thinking** –

the cornerstone of the learning organisation .

Systemic thinking is the conceptual cornerstone of the learning organisation. It is the discipline that integrates the others, fusing them into a coherent body of theory and practice.

We tend to focus on the parts rather than seeing the whole, and to fail to see organization as a dynamic process.

One key aspect of systems is the extent to which they inevitably involve delays - 'interruptions in the flow or process which make the consequences of an action occur gradually'. For instance, during admissions, giving in to pressures to admit a student who does not satisfy the school's admission criteria, does not immediately have any affects. A year later when the admission process starts there are more instances of parents demanding similar concessions that you made the previous year. Denying them will put questions on your integrity and accepting them will result in compounding problems.

**Personal mastery**

Organizations learn only through individuals who learn. ~ndividual learning does not guarantee organizational learning. But without it no organizational learning can

occur.(Senge 1990: 139)

Personal mastery is the discipline of continually clarifying - and deepening our personal vision, of focusing our energies, of developing patience, and of seeing reality objectively. It goes beyond competence and skills, although it involves them.

People with a high level of personal mastery live in continual learning mode.

**Mental models**

These are deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, or even pictures and images that influence how we understand the world and how we take action.

We are often not that aware of the impact of such assumptions etc. on our behaviour - and, thus, a fundamental part of our task is to develop the ability to reflect-in- and -on-action.

The discipline of mental models starts with turning the mirror inward; learning to unearth our internal pictures of the world, to bring them to the surface and hold them rigorously to scrutiny. It also includes the ability to carry on 'learningful' 'conversations' that balance inquiry - where people expose their own thinkrng effectively - and advocacy - making that thinking open to the influence of others.

If organizations are to develop a capacity to work with mental models then it will be necessary for people to learn new skills and develop new orientations, and. for there to be institutional changes that foster such change

**Team learning**

Such learning is viewed as the process of align& and developing the capacities of a team to create the results its members truly desire. 1 builds on personal mastery and shared vision - but these are not enough. People nded to be able to act together.

When teams learn together, Peter Senge suggests, qot only can there be good results for the organization, members wilpgrow rapidly than could have occurred otherwise.

The discipline of team learning starts with 'dialogue', the capacity of members of a team to suspend assumptions and enter into a genuine 'thinking together'.

leadership style. Indeed, such is the emphasis on dialogue in his work

(To be. Continued as part - 3)