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The Shift from 'Training' to 'Learning' - The 21st century Change Management Paradigm for Pharma Units.

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ABSTRACT

The concept of Learning Organization is increasingly relevant given the increasing complexity and uncertainty of the organizational environment. A "Learning Organization" is one in which people at all levels, individually and collectively, are continually increasing their capacity to produce results they really care about, with an ingrained philosophy for anticipating and responding to change and uncertainty. In the absence of learning, companies and individuals simply repeat old practices. Change remains cosmetic, and improvements are either fortuitous or short-lived. Globalization is presenting its own set of challenges that span multiple levels of most pharmaceutical organizations—from marketing to regulatory. Hence, it becomes inevitable for the HRD professionals in Pharma units to shift from the role of 'trainer' to 'coach' enabling Learning.

Keywords: Organizational Learning, Learning Organizations, Pharmacy units

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INTRODUCTION

Pharmaceutical companies face multifarious issues that grow more challenging by the day. Healthcare reforms and alterations in technology, government policy, and consumer expectations are revolutionizing relationships with key stakeholders and influencing operations in unforeseen ways. Globalization is presenting its own set of challenges that span multiple levels of most pharmaceutical organizations—from marketing to regulatory.

Healthcare changes and a more cost-constrained environment mean that launching a new medicine is becoming more difficult. Perceiving the challenges and processes before and after a launch can make the difference between success and usage restriction. An understanding of the changing environment and overall launch process are highly sought after combination to maximize the investment made by healthcare companies and to enable the right patients to benefit from the medicines of today. This demands some of the Critical Competencies in the middle and lower level pharma managers, like: Strategic perspective, to understand the viewpoint of higher management and effectively analyzes complex problems; Being a quick study, to quickly master new technical and business knowledge; Decisiveness, for quick and approximate actions in many management situations; and Change management, for effective strategies to facilitate organizational change initiatives and to overcome resistance to change. In nutshell the HR managers need to rethink and strategize to develop a holistic 'Learning' perspective in the workforce, rather than 'Training' them.

The Issue under study – The current status of HRD in the perspective of managing change

The HRD professional of the current day are mainly the classical or typical type of trainer. Senior executives justify their interest in organizational learning in one of three ways: 1) they want their organization to be able to adapt to change; 2) they turn to organizational learning in desperation when other efforts to enhance strategic planning and management fail; 3) they want to reduce or eliminate the paradigm blindness plaguing their organizations.

Most business executives know that traditional, hierarchical, authoritarian, bureaucratic organizations tend to be slow to adapt. Even if they perceive environmental changes, they have a hard time motivating themselves to take action. They tend to change only in times of crisis, when there is rarely enough time to adapt significantly.

Learning Organizations are those with an ingrained philosophy for anticipating, reacting and responding to change, complexity, and uncertainty. The concept of Learning Organization is increasingly relevant, given the increasing complexity and uncertainty of the organizational environment.

Studies show that Fortune 500 companies survive somewhere between thirty and forty years. Clearly, adaptability should not just be a concern during a passing business cycle recession. It is a fundamental, long-term issue. Yet, most large successful organizations show very little evidence of being highly adaptable. The only people who ignore it are those who are not concerned whether their organization will be around in ten years. As Senge remarks: "The rate at which organizations learn may become the only sustainable source of competitive advantage"[1].

Trends and implications

One of the most influential concepts at the organizational level is the concept of the learning organization and organizational learning[2] and, as a consequence of this concept, there was a whole series of studies of knowledge management[3], knowledge creation and boundary crossing as a new interpretation of transfer as expanded learning emerged[4]. In many cases, there is a convergence with the psychology of learning according to the concepts of constructivism ([5]; [6]) and anthropology. Philips [6] , analyzing the concepts of learning as social construction, helps to distinguish between good and very naive forms of learning which organizational consultants seem to use. In many cases, however, learning and training are based on the strong and tested principles of behaviorism and performance technology, and many learning processes are organized quite effectively according to the principles of cognitive process. Situational learning, co-operative

learning and team learning could be powerful means of learning from a constructive view. The consequence is a redefinition of learning and learning environments.

At the Department and Professional levels, many HRD writers see collective learning and the ability to do this as an organization as a pre-condition for the future. Based on the notions of Nonaka and Takeuchi [7] of sharing tacit knowledge and expertise, many HRD staff should break away from their roles and competencies, which are based on traditional models of classroom learning and formal knowledge exchange [8]. The future role of the HRD practitioner should hence change, to that of a coach, guide and facilitator of Organizational learning.

From Peter Drucker to Peter Senge – The transformation from ‘Traditional’ to ‘Learning organizations’

Most of the traditional organizations are bureaucratic, stiff to the changing demands of the current-day business scenario.

A "Learning Organization" is one in which people at all levels, individually and collectively, are continually increasing their capacity to produce results they really care about. They are Organizations with an ingrained philosophy for anticipating, reacting and responding to change, complexity and uncertainty." The concept of Learning Organization is increasingly relevant given the increasing complexity and uncertainty of the organizational environment. Organizational learning is the 'activity and the process by which organizations eventually reach the ideal of a learning organization'[9].

Learning organizations requires basic changes in thinking and behavior that overturn conventional and reactionary beliefs. Shifting from a fragmented, competitive and reactive organization to one that is systemic, cooperative and creative also requires a 'Galilean shift' toward building 'communities of commitment.' In this regard, commitment goes beyond personal loyalty to include a commitment to societal changes through one's organization.

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", learning that enhances our capacity to create' [2]. Some authors contrast Organizational Learning and Learning Organization in terms of process versus structure.

Those who do not distinguish between Learning Organization and Organizational Learning., define Organizational Learning as the ability of an organization to gain insight and understanding from experience through experimentation, observation, analysis, and a willingness to examine both successes and failures.

Impediments for effective transformation into Learning Organizations

Areas of cultural dysfunction

Fragmentation

We continually fragment problems into pieces; yet the major challenges we face in our organizations and beyond are increasingly systemic. The analytic way to address a complex situation is to break it into components, study each component in isolation, and then synthesize the components back into a whole. Management experts have very little ability to influence organizational health. All too often, their solutions contribute to a vicious pattern of "programs of the month" that fail and are replaced by the next program of the month.

Moreover, in business, fragmentation results in "walls" or "chimneys" that separate different functions into independent and often warring fiefdoms. Product designers, for instance, disregard marketing surveys and "throw the product over the wall" to manufacturing, which finds the design impossible to produce. After making the "appropriate" changes and producing the product, manufacturing "throws it over" to sales. Salesmen find themselves stuck with a low-quality product that does not meet customer requirements. The product gets sent back and departments start blaming each other. This process constantly repeats itself. Academics, consultants, and managers try to "reengineer" themselves away from stovepipe



structures and toward horizontal business processes that cut across traditional functions and power hierarchies, though potentially significant, such changes often prove difficult to implement.

Competition

We have become over dependent on competition, to the extent that it is our only model for change and learning. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with competition it can promote invention and daring. The problem is that we have lost the balance between competition and cooperation precisely at a time when we most need to work together. Fascinated with competition, we often find ourselves competing with the very people with whom we need to collaborate. Members of a management team compete with one another to show who is right, who knows more, or who is more articulate or persuasive. Divisions compete with one another when they ought to cooperate to share knowledge. Team project leaders compete to show who is the best manager, even if it means covering up problems for which, ultimately, everyone will pay.

Fear of missing

Our overemphasis on competition makes looking good more important than being good. The resulting fear of not looking good is one of the greatest enemies of learning. To learn, we need to acknowledge that there is something we do not know and to perform activities that we are not good at. In response, many of us have developed defenses and become masters of what Chris Argyris [10], calls "skilled incompetence," as skillful at protecting ourselves from the threat and pain that come with learning, but also remaining incompetent and blinded to our incompetence. Overemphasis on competition also reinforces our fixation on short-term measurable results. Consequently, we lack the discipline needed for steady practice and deeper learning, which often produces few manifest consequences for long periods.

Reactiveness

The attitude, "if it ain't broke don't fix it," prevents the steady improvement of products and processes. When something is broken, the immediate reaction is to call an expert--a specialist--to fix it. Regardless of the specialist's success, the intervention creates a black-box mentality that prevents the organization from developing its own capacities for continual learning.

Lack of the impetus for change

The impetus for change in the creating mode comes from within. Only the creating mode leads to a genuine sense of individual and collective power. It is a testament to how reactive we are, that many leaders see the absence of vision as a "problem" to be solved in their company and go about writing and disseminating vision and mission statements as the solution. This is evident today in the simple fact that most leaders believe that people are willing to change only in times of crisis.

Perils of Problem-Solving

A problem-solving outlook tends to limit creativity in certain ways. When executives are trying to solve a problem, they focus their efforts on defining the problem, on understanding its extent. By thinking about solving problems, rather than dissolving them, executives often reinforce a problem's existence. Another major limitation to problem solving is that, as a mindset, it tends to produce episodes of abrupt change rather than continuous, proactive, evolutionary change. The extreme form of problem solving in businesses is crisis management, which produces enormous and rapid change. In fact, many corporations view crises as the only things that will produce change.

A problem-solving orientation tends to extract an emotional toll from the people in the organization, and clearly cramps imagination. There are two great energies of change in human affairs: fear and aspiration. A problem-solving orientation tends to reinforce fear; crisis certainly does. People become addicted to waiting until a problem develops before taking action, becoming more dependent on the problem, the crisis, the reaction, and the individuals who excel at that approach.

Imperatives for the Transformation to Learning Organizations

The Traditional organizations are more typically beaurcratic. The Learning Organization embodies new capabilities beyond Traditional organizations.

At the Organization level

Build/create communities of commitment

Building learning organizations requires basic shifts in how we think and interact. The changes go beyond individual corporate cultures; they penetrate to the bedrock assumptions and habits of culture as a whole. Without communities of people genuinely committed, there is no real chance of successfully moving forward, towards creating learning organizations. These organizations are as such organs of the society.

Foster set of practices for generative conversation and coordinated action

Learning organizations are spaces for generative conversations and concerted action. In them, language functions as a device for connection, invention, and coordination. People can talk from their hearts and connect with one another in the spirit of dialogue. Their dialogue weaves a common ongoing fabric and connects them at a deep level of being. When people talk and listen to each other this way, they create a field of alignment that produces tremendous power to invent new realities in conversation, and to bring about these new realities in action.

Nourish and encourage systemic thinking

This is a capacity to see and work with the flow of life as a system. In learning organizations, people are always inquiring into the systemic consequences of their actions, rather than just focusing on local consequences. They can understand the interdependencies underlying complex issues and act with perceptiveness and advantage. They are patient in seeking deeper understanding rather than striking out to "fix" problem symptoms--because they know that most fixes are temporary at best, and often result in more severe problems in the future.

Accommodate Political behavior

'Good' learning takes place in a climate of openness where political behavior is minimized[11]. This is an assumption that can be questioned. It could be argued that organizations are inherently political – and that it is important to recognize this. Organizations can be seen as coalitions of various individuals and interest groups. Organizational goals, structure and policies emerge from an ongoing process of bargaining and negotiation among major interest groups. Thus, perhaps we need to develop theory that looks to the political nature of structures, knowledge and information. Perhaps the aim should be 'to incorporate politics into organizational learning, rather than to eradicate it'[11].

Provide the impetus to unlearn

In simple words, unlearning is the process of letting go of what is or what is known, in order to create fresh space for new learning to take root. Unlearning is not about a method or a cycle. Perhaps it is rather about honesty and courage and a process or journey towards that. Sometimes it boils down to facing our blame or guilt and to accepting the antidote of forgiveness.

Practices and Processes

Several design principles come together in creating effective managerial practice fields that foster learning:

- The learner learns what the learner wants to learn, so focus on key managerial issues.
- The people who need to learn are the people who have the power to take action, so focus on key operational managers as opposed to staff.

- Learning often occurs best through "play," through interactions in a transitional medium where it is safe to experiment and reflect. Create them
- Learning often requires altering the flow of time: slow down the action to enable reflection on tacit assumptions and counterproductive ways of interacting; or, at other times, speed up time to reveal how current decisions can create unanticipated problems in the long term.
- Learning often requires "compressing space," as well as time, so that the learner can see the effects of his or her actions in other parts of a larger system.
- This transitional medium must look like the action domain of the learners.
- The learning space must be seamlessly integrated into the workspace for an ongoing cycle of reflection, experimentation, and action.

After assessing results, we must be willing to abandon what doesn't work. Abandonment often precedes innovation. It clears the decks for trying something new.

The first step in practicing abandonment is openness -- creating an environment in which, at a critical moment, somebody with lots at stake can tell a boss, "This is not working." Building a culture in which people can express their views without fear of reprisal is a huge challenge for most organizations. By nature, innovation is a continual learning process. Organisations must experiment, assess, reflect on mission, identify results, experiment some more. Yet from an early age in school, and continuing in work, we have been trained to avoid failure, and thus real learning

Leveraging Intrinsic Motivation

First, the organization has to redefine learning. Real learning involves the development of capability and capacity to do what one aspires to do. However, that is almost the antitheses of the perception of learning that pervades our "educational" process.

What does it take to build a learning organization? All learning involves two activities: thinking and doing. Begin by thinking about the things that can enhance the organization's capacity for learning-things that will make the organization more adaptable, challenge mental models, and create aspiration. Then select tools and methods that will accomplish those goals.

At the Department and HRD Professional level

From the viewpoint of improvement in HRD Practice, Rothwell[12] distinguished new roles for HRD practitioners with the core competencies connected to these roles including ; *Analyst* - performing trouble-shooting procedures to diagnose gaps in human performance and identify opportunities for performance improvement; *Change manager* - being responsible for the implementation of interventions consistent with the intended results; and *Evaluator* - tracking the impact of the interventions and the consequences of the changes.

As a consequence of knowledge management and outsourcing, the role of purchaser of training becomes visible . Trends in the field relating to the learning organization and competence management lead to a possible role of knowledge manager, whose main task is to fine-tune the knowledge needs of the organization and the available knowledge or expertise of employees. In terms of outputs, the knowledge manager produces the development of new knowledge, the targeted distribution of knowledge within the organization, the anchoring of relevant information in the organization, the effective combinations of knowledge, the identifying of information needs and the fine tuning of needs and available expertise.

Flexible organizations, in combination with trends toward flexibility and employability, will have managers in the near future who act more and more like coaches. A coach supports the employees, formulates targets and standards, delegates responsibilities and provides a supportive shoulder when needed. He gives feedback and reinforces good results, including financial ones. The outputs of a coach are[13]: facilitating learning conditions; supporting learning processes; giving responsibilities; formulating targets and standards; organizing feedback and counseling and guiding to optimal performance. To this role can be added

that of teacher, coach or mentor, the person who 'helps individuals (managers, professionals, workers) to reflect upon their theories-in-action'[9].

Senge([14];[15]) argues that the leader's role in the Learning Organization is that of a designer, teacher, and steward who can build shared vision and challenge prevailing mental models. He/she is responsible for building organizations where people are continually expanding their capabilities to shape their future -- that is, leaders are responsible for learning.

Changes in Attitudes and Beliefs (at the Individual level)

The conventional notion of learning is transactional. A learner has a certain way of operating and certain knowledge. If this knowledge proves to be incomplete or ineffective, the learner has the ability to drop part of it, change some of it, or add some new ideas to it. The problem with this view is that the self is not separate from the ideas and assumptions that form it. Our mental models are not like pieces of clothing that we can put on or take off. They are basic constitutive structures of our personality. For all intents and purposes, most of the time, we are our mental models.

Willingness to face failure

The learning required in becoming a learning organization is "transformational learning." Static notions of who we are must be checked at the door. In transformational learning, there are no problems "out there" to be solved independent of how we think and act in articulating these problems. Such learning is not ultimately about tools and techniques. It is about who we are. We often prefer to fail repeatedly rather than let go of some core belief or master assessment.

When we see that to learn, we must be willing to look foolish, to let another teach us, learning doesn't always look so good anymore. Only with the support, insight, and fellowship of a community can we face the dangers of learning meaningful things.

Predisposition

It is easy to waste time attempting to bring about changes with people who do not want, or are not ready for, such changes. There are aspects of each person's background that made that person predisposed. In some cases, it was academic training. In others, particular work or life experiences.

Chris Argyris[16], in his 1991 *Harvard Business Review* article "Teaching Smart People How to Learn" lays out a basic problem of learning in organizations. He notes that most people in organizations are quite smart, but that to succeed, they've learned to find correct answers and cover up incorrect ones. This undermines the inquiry skills essential to real innovation and leadership because these skills revolve around how to "uncover" what isn't working in ways that do not invoke defensiveness.

Foster ability of inquiry

Organizations want people at all levels who can produce results. But often the most important act of executive leadership is the ability to ask a question that hasn't been asked before, the ability to inquire, not just dictate or advocate. Unfortunately, most people in executive leadership positions are great at advocacy but poor at inquiry

From Habit to Discipline - Drucker is exactly right that innovation is a "discipline," a word having its root in the Latin *disciplina*, one of the oldest words for "to learn." Many have talent but real learning requires discipline, the process through which we draw out our potential through commitment, practice, passion, patience, and perseverance.

Communicative competencies

Most competencies are relevant, especially social skills, feedback skills, raising questions, presentation skills, coaching, and guiding team processes. These skills are very important in the professional job of trainer.

Intellectual competencies

Self-efficacy, intellectual versatility and perception seem to be relevant intellectual competencies for HRD practitioners.

Five Core Capabilities

- *Shared Vision*: Without shared vision, significant learning occurs only when there are crises, and the learning ends when the crises end.
- *Personal Mastery*: Collective commitment to learning comes from individual commitment to learning. An organization that is continually learning how to create its future must be made up of individuals who are continually learning how to create more of what truly matters to them in their own lives.
- *Mental Models*: We often become frozen in inaccurate and disempowering views of reality because we lack the capability to see our assumptions, and to continually challenge and improve those assumptions. This requires fostering managerial skills in balancing inquiry and advocacy.
- *Team Learning*: Ultimately, the learning that matters is the learning of groups of people who need one another to act (the real meaning of team).
- *System Thinking*: The most important learning in contemporary organizations concerns gaining shared insight into complexity and how we can shape change. But early in life we are taught to break apart problems. The resulting fragmentation leaves us unable to see the consequences of our own actions, creating an illusion that we're victims of forces outside our control and that the only type of learning that is possible is learning to react more quickly. Systems thinking are about understanding wholes, not parts, and learning how our actions shape our reality.

SUMMARY

Learning organizations are both generative and more adaptive than traditional organizations. Because of their commitment, openness, and ability to deal with complexity, people find security not in stability but in the dynamic equilibrium between holding on and letting go--holding on and letting go of beliefs, assumptions, and certainties. What they know takes a second place to what they can learn, and simplistic answers are always less important than penetrating questions. They proceed to *unlearn*

However, as we have seen, there are a number of shortcomings to the model – it is theoretically underpowered and there is some question as to whether the vision can be realized within the sorts of dynamics that exist within and between organizations in a globalized capitalist economy. Learning Organization is an ideal, a vision. Various organizations or parts of organizations achieve this in varying degree. Within a capitalist system the vision of companies and organizations turning wholehearted to the cultivation of the learning of their members can only come into fruition in a limited number of instances.

There is no shortage of ways by which learning may become an inescapable aspect of organizational life, once the nature of the commitment to learning is understood, and once appropriate tools are available. For HRD profession to grow stages, we shall need highly skilled, critical and reflective practitioners with a dearth of skills and competencies, within or outside learning. Scholars too have jumped on the bandwagon, beating the drum for “learning organizations” and “knowledge-creating companies.” Pharma industry is no exception.

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