

# Analysis of Organizational learning Obstacles and How to Make Organizations Learn

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**ABSTRACT:** *Organizational learning is one of the most important core competitiveness of today's enterprises, and it is the source of the survival, development and maintenance of lasting competitive advantages for enterprises. However, various obstacles in organizational learning will hinder the learning and growth of the organization, and affect the competitiveness of the organization. The article first starts with the connotation of organizational learning disorders, analyzes the obstacles of organizational learning from the organizational learning process, and proposes countermeasures to overcome various obstacles of organizational learning and how to make organizations learn.*

**KEYWORDS** - *Organizational learning, Organization-learning Disorders*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Since the late 1980s, management experts have been advocating that, through individual learning and organizational learning, corporate culture and awareness can advance with the times, and furthermore, continue to maintain a competitive advantage (Fauske & Raybould, 2005). If the organization is unwilling to learn together and change together, it will hinder the sustainable development of the enterprise. In order to cope with changes in the environment, more and more organizations and enterprises are building a learning organization. They founded their own corporate university, organized staff training and study, invested a lot of time and money, but the effect was not obvious. The lifespan of large companies rarely exceeds half of human life. In the 1970s, one-third of the companies listed on the Fortune 500 list have disappeared. Most failed companies have different problems, but the fundamental problem is actually the same: poor learning ability (Robinson, 2001, Lipshitz, 2000).

There are reasons for poor organizational learning ability. Organizational design, organizational culture and management methods, the way people define work, and the way employees are educated and interacted with are all basic learning obstacles. For an organization, learning disabilities are fatal (Boreham & Morgan, 2004).

## II. ANALYSIS OF OBSTACLES TO ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING

Organizational learning is a continuous process. It is a process in which an organization continuously acquires knowledge, transfers knowledge within the organization, and creates new knowledge through various channels and methods, so as to enhance the organization's capabilities and bring about improvements in behavior or performance.

Organizational learning is a complex process, including many links. Problems in any link will affect the normal progress of organizational learning. Most organizations have learning disorders. This is due their inherent culture, structure, management model, and power distribution caused (Argyris & Schön, 1997). From the perspective of Pathology, it is believed that at every stage of the organizational learning process, there may be some factors that make organizational learning unsuccessful; "Why can't the organization learn effectively?" or "How to remove the learning barriers of the organization?" (Boreham & Morgan, 2004). From the literature point of view, obstacles to organizational learning can be divided into the individual, group, and organizational levels. At the individual level, it is mainly the error in the information processing process, which makes it difficult to change the existing mental models, such as overconfidence, over-reliance on past experience (Russo & Schoemaker, 1992; Brown & Starkey, 2000; Crossan & Berdrow, 2003). At the group level, it is mainly the obstacles encountered in the implementation of organizational learning, such as defense, argument, excessive

protection of oneself and others, competition for rights, distrust of each other, discouragement of reflection and questioning (Argyris & Schön, 1989). They hinder people's ability to see and process things in different ways. At the same time, Argyris also explored how organizational culture can enhance the regular defensive behavior of its members, which becomes an obstacle to organizational learning. Such conventional defensive behavior maintains itself in an organizational culture that ascribes the blame to external factors and generates despair and cynicism (Argyris, 1989; Brix, 2017; Pereira & Spallina, 2020).

According to the literature review, obstacles to organizational learning can be divided into 7 categories. (1) Limited thinking refers to not considering the problem from the overall situation, the whole, and the general connection of things, but to consider the problem one-sidedly, locally, and in isolation. Employees are often used to only doing what is in front of them. This is because they only focus on their own positions and have different opinions. Lack of perception and responsibility for the causal connection between positions (Garcia-Morales & Verdu-Jover, 2007); (2) Attributable to the outside, what's more, fatal for an organization's development is that employees often find reasons from the outside, thinking that "the opponent is outside." A mistake in a decision is not to find the reason from its own management, nor to strictly demand oneself; it is to blame others, push others and be objective, and refrain from reflection. Because they lack a systematic understanding of the entire organization, they cannot see the impact of their actions outside the scope of their position, and when these actions have systemic consequences that in turn hurt them, they will make mistakes. It is believed that these new problems are caused by outsiders and caused by others. If we cannot find the key leverage point from within, we will never be able to effectively solve the external and internal systemic problems (Berta, & Estabrooks, 2015); (3) Lack of proactive and overall thinking, everything in the world is connected. The economy, politics, and culture of society also interact and influence each other. In the course of an organization's operation, once a problem arises, there must be a precursor. Resolve the problem when it first appears. This kind of proactive action often solves the problem. However, when dealing with complex issues, one must not lose sight of the other. If there is a lack of systematic overall thinking, the problem will often be enlarged and even greater crises will appear; (4) Focus on individual events refers to some busy business activists in general. These people do not consider the long-term development of the organization from a strategic perspective. They can only predict specific events and make the best response before they occur, but they still cannot learn how to create (Brown & Starkey, 2000); (5) Slow response to the gradual process, regardless of the fierce market competition and changes in the market environment, the organization has no crisis awareness and early warning mechanism, and always feels good about itself. Once the situation changes suddenly, it will be caught off guard and serious problems will occur; (6) The illusion of learning from experience, there is an effective scope for learning from experience. When our actions go beyond the scope of time and space, we cannot learn from experience. In other words, no matter how good the experience is, it must be adapted to the current and local conditions. If any organization does not add distance to experience, does not combine the practicality of the unit, copy the relocation package, it will inevitably appear "the illusion of learning from experience" (Crossan & Berdrow, 2003). (7) Transfer burden model means that when it is difficult to solve the problem fundamentally, some other short-term and quick-acting methods are adopted. Although these methods seem to be very effective, they only relieve the superficial symptoms, and do not change the deep-seated problems, and may even make the deep-seated problems more and more serious (Fauske & Raybould, 2005).

Is it possible to break the mental dilemma shaped by the management system? Of course, in order to cope with this situation and make a rigid organization come alive and become an "artificial intelligence" capable of autonomous learning, Senge proposed the "five disciplines". He believes that in order to break the limitations of the old management model to people's thinking, five disciplines should be done. The basic unit of learning has also changed from an individual to a team. When an organization has a large number of learning teams can it develop into an organization that is good at learning. The practice of team learning requires team members to surpass themselves, overcome defensive psychology, learn how to learn from each other and work, and form a common thinking. The purpose of team learning is to make the team's IQ greater than the individual's IQ, and make the individual grow faster. The key to learning is to conduct in-depth discussions (Senge, 2014).

### III. HOW TO MAKE ORGANIZATION LEARN

The development of an enterprise is faced with many changes and challenges. If the organization is unwilling to learn together and change together, it will hinder the sustainable development of the enterprise. In an era of knowledge revolution, only by continuous learning, persisting in change, and learning to innovate can we create the future (Gomes & Wojahn, 2017). From the East to the West, in the current human society, there are actually all kinds of resistance that hinder our true learning. Senge provides many methods and tools in "The Fifth Discipline". For example, the Five Disciplines are five techniques in themselves; other useful ones are "Dialogue", "System Prototype", "Learning Lab", and "Thinking Ladder", etc (Senge, 2006). The main points will be briefly introduced below.

The first practice is personal mastery. This practice is from a personal perspective. If the organization is to be particularly capable of learning, first of all, everyone in the team must be capable of learning. To allow an individual to have the ability to learn is to have the motivation to learn, self-transcendence means the desire to constantly surpass one's own abilities, and the enthusiasm and motivation to learn. For example, you are dissatisfied with your existing technology in your professional field, you are dissatisfied with your own management ability, etc. With these dissatisfied motivations, you can devote your energy to continuous improvement. Therefore, the transition from being content to self-transcendence, is the first ability we want to cultivate (Senge, 2014).

The second ability to improving mental models. It actually means that everyone has some fixed thoughts, opinions, and ways of thinking about the world. Different people's cognition and interpretations of the world are actually different, and all the actions of a person, Practices are all produced under the influence of mental models. The reason why people behave the same every time is that the mental model has not changed. Therefore, if you want to drastically improve your behavior and enhance your abilities, in fact, what you really want to change is your mental model. The key is to make yourself understand and understand the world in a more reasonable way (Collinson & Cook, 2007; Garvin, 1993).

The third practice is building shared vision. The shared vision is actually to build the enthusiasm for learning from the level of the team, that is, everyone has to think about it. Everyone in the team has a common goal, so that the team is motivated to learn. So the team organization must learn, the first step is to let everyone reach a consensus and have a common goal. Only by turning this common vision into something that everyone recognizes and is willing to support from the heart, can we truly stimulate everyone's motivation. Therefore, the establishment of a common vision is the third practice of a learning organization (Senge & Dutton, 2012; Senge, 2006).

The fourth practice is team learning. With a common vision that everyone recognizes, everyone is also required to have the ability to realize this vision. In most cases we have encountered, everyone in the team may have an IQ exceeding 120, but the IQ of the entire team added together is less than 60 points. The fourth discipline is actually to solve this problem. Team learning is to allow everyone in the team to show their own mental models, communicate with and inspire each other, so that the team can learn and progress quickly (Senge, 2006).

The fifth item is systems thinking. To master and apply the ability of systems thinking is simply to find a relationship. Usually the habit of solving problems is to find the cause, and system thinking is to sort out the relationship between various things in the system. The seemingly complicated things in this world have only three relationships in the final analysis: positive feedback, negative feedback, and delay. Let's look at positive feedback first. Positive feedback is like a snowball, it is an escalating structural model. For example, customers who are satisfied with the use of a new product will actively share it with other potential customers, and after using it, potential customers will continue to share it with more people, making the product a big hit. Of course, this magnification effect will also manifest itself in bad ways. For example, there is news that a certain stock is about to fall sharply, which will cause market panic and trigger a wave of selling. The virtuous circle, the Matthew effect, etc., which we usually call, are all manifestations of positive feedback. Although positive feedback will gradually amplify the original development trend, it will not be endlessly amplified. This is because there is also negative feedback at play. Negative feedback is a self-regulating mechanism, mainly used to maintain a certain goal, but compared to positive feedback, negative feedback is very concealed and illegible

(Fiol & Lyles, 2005). Once there is a situation of “very busy, but things are not moving” in the work, it means that some kind of negative feedback is at work (Engström& Käkälä,2019). This situation often occurs in reforms. Traditional standards and methods are a goal, and various resistances will always drag reform back to its origin. If the role of negative feedback is ignored, reforms will go around in place. In this case, leaders with leadership skills will identify the source of resistance and act on invisible habits and standards. It should be noted that actions will not produce immediate results, there is a delay between the two. We often say that there is always a reward for giving, and the word “total” indicates the delay between action and result. It can be said that almost all feedback is delayed. For example, today’s investment is for tomorrow’s return; the medicine that has been taken has to wait for gastrointestinal digestion to take effect, and so on. Whether it is positive feedback, negative feedback or delay, it is just the basic module of the system operation mode, and it is the basic method for us to find the relationship between things. If you master this method, you can perform a simple analysis of the problem, but to solve the problem, you also need to find a suitable entry point. If this point is found, even small actions can sometimes lead to continuous improvement. Just like the steering wheel of a car, it can turn the car with little force. This is the power of the lever. The point where leverage works is called the point of leverage. To find the point of leverage, the key is to learn to observe the structural pattern behind the event. These patterns are called “system basic patterns”, and they are the concise laws behind complex problems. In short, if you want to master the ability of system thinking, you must learn to discover the relationship between various things in the system, and then through the application of the basic model of the system, find out the point of leverage, find out the essence of the problem and the key to the solution, and make the right decision (Senge,2014, Spicer & Sadler-Smith, 2006; Field,2020).

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The five disciplines proposed by Senge, whether it is personal mastery, improving mental models, building shared vision, team learning, and systems thinking, in the final analysis, are from a human perspective to solve various problems encountered in organizational development. No matter how correct strategies and tactics are, if there is no one to implement them, they must be nothing but a piece of paper; similarly, if there is a lack of capable people, first-class strategies can only be reduced to second-rate, third-rate, or even influx. Senge’s five disciplines are precisely the key factor of identifying the “people” in management. Through broadening horizons, setting goals, team learning and other means, creating a learning organization, and continuously promoting the development of team organization with individual progress. Realize the combination of the whole being bigger than the part. This is undoubtedly a cure for innovation-driven contemporary enterprise organizations, which can greatly release the unlimited potential of people and give full play to the overall advantages of the team.

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