



**Beyond Lectures:**  
**Insights from Business Discipline-**  
*(Reflections, Transformations, and the Human*  
*Side of Teaching)*

Chief Editor  
Dr. Azila Jaini



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## **BUILDING A LEARNING ORGANIZATION IN THE CLASSROOM**

*Khairunnisa Rahman, Rudza Hanim Mohamed Anuar, Nazihah Omar, Yuslizawati Mohd Yusoff*

### **Introduction**

Education is an important aspect of a country's development and a pillar of societal development, producing individuals competent in various aspects of life (Manaksia & Anggraeni, 2018). To achieve sustainable progress and development, educational innovation is crucial. In an era of rapid development, educational innovation has become a necessity.

The fundamental management course is often considered by students to focus on the basic management concepts of planning, organizing, leading, and controlling process. In the increasingly challenging organizational world, it is very important to give students an understanding that they need not only to understand the definition and management function but also to see management as a dynamic process that involves organizational members, organizational values, and the whole organizational system. Memorising concepts and theories is not enough to learn the management concept; they must be accompanied by a learning reflection, a creative, and systematic way of thinking.

Realizing this challenge made the author think about how to make the classroom not only a place to learn theoretical knowledge, but also a real organization. The classroom as a learning organization, where students not only receive knowledge but also actively learn, think, and grow together, aligns with Senge's concept of a learning organization. The Fifth Discipline emphasizes that members in the organizations learn continuously through five main disciplines: personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, team learning, and system thinking. Although the concept introduced by Peter Senge was developed for an organization, it is relevant to higher education, especially in the study of fundamental management. The classroom can be seen as a 'small organization' with its own structure, culture, goals, and continuous interaction among its members. Emphasizing the concept of a learning organization in the classroom helps students understand fundamental management concepts directly.

### **LEARNING ORGANISATION**

Senge (1994) defines a learning organization as one in which employees continuously improve their capacity to produce desired results, where new ways of thinking are seeded, there is freedom to pursue group ideals, and members learn how to learn together and continuously. Learning Organization is defined by Mike Pedler et.al (1988) as an organization that can facilitate the learning of each of its members and change itself continuously.

According to Watkins and Marsick (2000), in building a learning organization, the organization needs to create continuous learning opportunities, improve communication, support teamwork and collaboration, introduce a system for sharing information, empower employees toward a collective vision, and connect the organization with its environment.

Personal mastery.

It refers to an individual's commitment to self-development through continuous learning (Senge, 1990). Personal mastery in the organisation focuses on an employee's ability to create desired results, solve problems, communicate, collaborate, and engage in continuous learning through creativity and enthusiasm. In addition, clear goals within the organization, participation in training programs, conveying ideas to colleagues, and understanding the work and responsibilities are measures of personal abilities. In the context of a learning organisation in the classroom and in a learning situation, this element can be implemented through

reflection activities after completing each topic. In this way, students can make a self-assessment from the aspect of understanding the topic being studied.

For example, when students learn about planning, they are asked to conduct a learning reflection by assessing a plan. At first students thought that this topic only focused on organizational planning and also the responsibility of a manager in making plans but it can also be applied to daily life where students are able to make plans in their personal lives and daily activities such as managing study schedules, setting goals such as setting targets to improve communication skills and the ability to voice opinions and ideas. Through this process of reflection, students can relate theoretical learning from the lecture room to personal experience (Kolb, 1984).

#### Mental models

The mental model in the organisational setting is that an employee learns new skills and that there are changes in the distribution of responsibilities within a wider context. Employees are not bound to a single view or perspective. They always strive to maximize success and minimize failure. Management takes employees' views and ideas into account and puts them into practice to drive organizational change.

It involves how assumptions, beliefs, and thoughts shape each individual's perception and interpretation of reality (Senge, 1990). In the classroom, students perceive the manager in the organization as someone with the power to give instructions and control, and responsible for punishing mistakes. This bias can affect students' understanding of modern management, which is now more flexible and dynamic. Students are given the opportunity to discuss openly, role-play the given scenario, and the lecturer acts as a facilitator to clarify and foster open dialogue. They are also given the opportunity to evaluate and correct existing perceptions and frames of mind to achieve a correct understanding.

#### Shared Vision

The shared vision among employees is unification in organizational decisions and actions, understanding of the organization's goals and objectives, open communication channels, commitment to the organization's vision and mission, and encouragement of innovation and renewal through shared opinions and ideas.

It is a process of giving meaning to members and emphasizing the building of shared aspirations. This approach can be implemented in the first week of lectures, when students are introduced to the course, the topics to be studied, the learning outcomes to be achieved, and the evaluation method used to assess them. The discussion is conducted openly, with the lecturer setting the rules to be followed and students given the opportunity to express their hopes and concerns. The discussion is carried out openly, and the agreement between the lecturer and the student to comply with the 'do and don't,' or classroom rules, is considered a mutually agreed learning contract. Each student has a commitment to the class vision, and agreement is considered a commitment to that vision.

Academic goals influence students' behavior in the classroom and drive them to achieve a series of objectives in their academic lives (De la Fuente, 2004). This indirectly implements the principle of shared vision, which is not only appropriate and relevant for an organization but also practiced in the classroom. When students are committed to preparing their tasks, they will cooperate with one another, which may benefit student motivation and learning (Johnson & Johnson, 2005). Each group must list their goals for completing the assignment and have been given the opportunity to present them in class, related to the topic of planning in fundamental management.

### Team learning

Team learning is studied through the sharing of vision and personal skills through discussion and exchange of opinions among organizational members. The use of skills in teamwork, holding discussions to make decisions, implementing a project as a team, and working together are measures of team learning. Focusing on collective learning and emphasizing the group's ability to think (Senge, 1990). It is very important for the students to have a conducive environment for effective team learning. Mendo-Lázaro, S. (2022). In the fundamental management course, the group project is one of the assessment components. To ensure this principle is implemented, students are given the freedom to form their own groups and choose appropriate group members. Group leaders are appointed and given the opportunity to plan the group's objectives, identify activities, and ensure each group member carries out assigned responsibilities.

The leader is given the opportunity to carry out his managerial functions and also develop a control method, for example, ensuring that tasks are completed on time. After the project is completed, students are given space to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the management process implemented. If there is a conflict or difference of opinion, students should learn to communicate and make important decisions to ensure that the planned objectives are achieved. This process gives them real experience and a deep understanding of management concepts, rather than just learning the theory from books. According to Nisa et al. (2023), collaborative learning can improve critical thinking and students' interpersonal skills. Collaborative Learning as a model of educational innovation in learning emphasizes cooperation and collaboration between students to achieve joint learning goals that can encourage social interaction, active involvement, and joint knowledge construction

### SYSTEM THINKING

Systematic thinking involves examining things thoroughly and holistically, emphasizing the organization's long-term goals. It is also measured through the activities and involvement of various parties, as well as through its connection with other matters, as reflected in feedback that flows upwards and downwards within the organization.

It is the core of all learning organization disciplines, helping individuals see the relationships and connections within a system (Senge, 1990). In the course of fundamental management, students can see that the concepts of planning, organizing, leading, and controlling are interconnected. Students are given the opportunity to participate in group discussions in tutorial activities for specific topics. For example, if there is a mistake in planning an activity, it can affect the organizing process, and a weakness in leading can affect the effectiveness of controlling the activity. Students are asked to identify cause-and-effect relationships between the decision and organizational outcomes. This activity provides students with an opportunity to understand that systematic thinking is essential for tackling a complex organisational challenge.

### Conclusion

Applying a learning organization approach in the lecture room is a creative way to implement teaching methods. Through the application of the five disciplines built by Senge (1990), this course is able to form students who have creative thinking and have an identity as potential managers who are competent in line with Personal mastery helps students get to know themselves; mental models challenge old assumptions; shared vision builds mutual commitment; team learning strengthens collaboration; and systems thinking develops a holistic perspective. This approach shows that effective management teaching is not just about teaching about organization but modelling the learning organization in the classroom itself. With that, students not only understand management theory, but also experience and appreciate it as a lifelong learning process

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