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## MODEL OF LEARNING ORGANIZATION IN BROADCASTING ORGANIZATION OF ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

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### Abstract

This article tries to present a model of learning organization for Iran Broadcasting Organization which is under the management of the spiritual leader of Iran. The study is based on characteristics of Peter Senge's original learning organization namely, personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, team learning and systems thinking. The methodology was a survey research employed questionnaire among sample employees and managers of the Organization.

Findings showed that the Organization is fairly far from an effective learning organization. Moreover, it seems that employees' performance in team learning and changes in mental models are more satisfactory than managers. Regarding other characteristics of learning organizations, there are similarities in learning attempts by employees and managers. The Organization lacks organizational vision, and consequently there is no shared vision in the Organization. It also is in need of organizational culture. As a kind of state-owned organization, there is no need of financial support which affect the need for learning organization. It also does not face the threat of sustainability because there is no competitive organization.

Findings also show that IBO need a fundamental change in its organizational learning process. In this context, the general idea is to unfreeze the mindset of leadership of IBO and creating a vision and organizational culture based on learning and staff development. Then gradually through incremental effective change and continual organizational learning process in individual, team and organization levels engage in development and reinforcement of skills of personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, team learning and systems thinking, should lead IBO to learning organization.

*Keywords:* Organizational learning, Learning Organization, Personal Mastery, Mental Models, Shared Vision, Team Learning, Systems Thinking, Reinforcement, State-owned organization.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The learning organization idea is one of the most helpful ideas for the management of organization in a complicated and variable environment of today world, in which we can ask a question in such condition, Moreover, the rapidly changes and developments observed at almost every field today are the fruit of knowledge that reached us through the history of humanity. Knowledge, which aggregated first slowly and then rapidly under the influence of increasing knowledge since primitive civilizations led to the transformation of societies into knowledge societies. Organizations which are involved with technological changes, such as radio and television broadcasting organizations are more sensitive to such changes than other organizations. In this context, one of the very crucial and effective tools is learning organization concept. Therefore, in this study, we have tried to see how Iran Broadcasting Organization (IBO) can perform more effectively. Inceler (1998) argues that a social and economic system, which is not based on knowledge, is out of the question. Peter Senge (1994) believes that, we will have two kinds of organizations in future, those who have failed and will be vanished gradually and the second group are learning organizations. If organizations want to be successful, they should improve their knowledge and the staff should try to increase their level of abilities and this can be done just by learning, and the manager have to prepare conditions in which all the staff can upgrade, increase and reinforce their own level of knowledge.

Gardiner & Whiting (1997) believe that most successful organizations are the learning organizations so that centrality of

new paradigm is “learning “. It means the organizations that learn faster than their competitors are more successful. The only advantage of competition is fitness and capability of organization for quick learning and replication to changing environment (Pedler, 1998; Umukoro et al., 2009). Marquardt (2002) says that: important changes that are occurred because of technology and being globalization, forces the organization to make important transformation to adapt and maintain itself in the modern world. Organization with great minds and the ability of quick learning will be universal leaders. Drucker (1999) believes that in today economy, knowledge as the result of learning process isn't a same and equal resource with other product resources, but also, is the only meaningful resource in the contemporary period. Schein (1993) emphasizes that learning isn't an optional action of managers, it's a necessity and the purpose of attempts aimed at being learning organization is necessary for permanence of organization.

Each organization in any point of extension and learning in respect of its potential including insight, knowledge and ability can gait to ward being a learning and start out in this way. It's important for an organization to understand that learning organization is one of the determinant factor in an organizational work (Perez & Manuel, 2005). Now there is a question that will learning occur in any organizational frame or we should prepare an appropriate background for it? We should say that all the organizations learn to adapt themselves to the around environment, and some of them learn more effective and those organizations are ones that are moving toward accessing to the characteristics of a learning organization. But the role of top management of any

organization is to provide conditions in which every employee becomes motivated to increase his or her knowledge, experience and skill, and eventually gets involved with personal mastery, and the organization should support such effort. Therefore, in this study, we have tried to examine the extent to which Iran Broadcasting Organization is exposed to factors or principles of learning organization, and how the Organization can be persuaded to learn more compared to its present state. In fact, today, management is the management of learning organizations. People should be encouraged to look beyond their own organizational walls for ideas and support.

### **1.1. Learning and organizational learning**

Requirement of contingency approach to management, the ability of organization is in exposing new behavior on new conditions. In other words, an organization should "learn" that in new conditions it should have new patterns of behavior. Learning is reinforcement of knowledge (explicit and implicit) and causes a change in the way of thinking, attitude, behavior and performance of staff leading to an effective behavior in different situations (Dodgson, 1993; Stefanovic et al. 2010). Fiol and Lyles (1985) believe that organizational learning is the development of new knowledge or insights that have the potential to influence behavior. Argyris and Schon(1996) indicate that organizational learning is discovery and correction of errors and share the knowledge and beliefs among personnel and team.

### **1.2. Process of learning organization**

Huber (1991) believes that the process of

learning organization include:1) obtaining knowledge from external and internal environment of organization, 2) distribution of information, means that organization can share the obtained information with its departments and members, 3) information interpretation, in order to make the distributed information find collective understandable meanings, 4) organizational memory, it means that it's a store in which knowledge is storing for use in the future.

### **1.3. Levels of organizational learning**

Learning have three levels, individual learning, team learning and organizational learning. Individual learning should aim at changes in skills, sights, beliefs and variation in individual knowledge. Senge(1990), Argyris and Schon(1996), believe that individual learning is necessary but it's not adequate for organizational learning. In fact, it is the team learning which creates organizational wealth, and helps organizations to face innovation. Senge (1990) and Pawlowsky (2000) say that team learning is the gate way of organizational learning. The third level of learning is the organizational learning that is derived through sharing the insights, knowledge, experience and mental models of organization's members and it's established on the basis of knowledge and experiences that exist in the organization memory.

### **1.4. Types of organizational learning**

Organizations learn through the agency of individual members, in single- loop learning, errors are detected and corrected in a "continuous improvement" process which may fail to question and challenge taken for granted assumptions. In double - loop

learning, the success formulas and theories of the organization are questioned and challenged, leading to a “deeper” level of collective understanding of values and assumptions in the organization. Triple – loop learning where there is questioning of essential principles on which the organization is based on, and where the organization’s mission, vision, market position and culture are challenged. Senge in his development of the learning organization distinguishes difference between adaptive and generative learning. Adaptive learning is concerned with developing capabilities to manage new situations by making improvements and amendments; generative learning focuses on developing new perspectives, options, possibilities and definitions. Marquardt (2002) added action learning to this classification. He believes that learning will not occur without exploit and there is no action without acquisition of learning. In his idea, this kind of learning will improve the learning culture.

## 2. EFFECTIVE FACTORS IN ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING

The effect of postural factors of structure, environment, strategy, culture, leadership and technology in organizational learning and learning organization are emphasized by researchers:

1. *Structure*: Marquardt (2002) says that learning will be stopped by long and serious hierarchy accompanied by impervious departments. They prevent the quick and in time flow of knowledge which is based in competition. Bureaucratic limitations prevent learning, instead of the horizontal structure, maximizes the knowledge flow and learning. Mechanical and centralized

structure reinforces the past behaviour and single-loop learning, whereas organic and dynamic structure improves double-loop and triple-loop learning (Fiol & Lyles, 1985). Daft (1998), Robbins (2003), Burns and Stalker (1994) believe that mechanical structure for constant or with a little change environments and organic structure for variable environment are appropriate and increase the effectiveness of organizations.

2. *Environment*: Today's variable environment won't allow the organization to be managed traditionally against impact of competitor's skills, capabilities and technology. Marquardt (2002) believed that in today competition world an organization that adapts to the changes of surrounding environment and access to the competitive advantage, has the chance to be durable. Obtaining the constant competitive advantage in the age of being globalization, emphasis is on continuum learning of staff with maximum effectiveness, so that organizations can learn better and faster and react faster than other competitors (Stewart 2001).

3. *Technology*: Information systems can influence organizational learning through effect on background factors of structure and environment. Technology not only proceeds to produce new flow of information, but also shifts the gravity centre from managers to employees. Employees equipped with appropriate and correct information will be more powerful and can show more effective action. (Marquardt, 2002).

4. *Organizational culture*: Organizational culture defines the identity of learning and the method of its realization. Schein (1994) believes that learning in bureaucratic culture is in its minimum position. Bureaucratic structure represents inflexibility against environment and because in this kind of

structures, thinking about details has dominant and staff just think about their own unit. In such an organization, learning is minimized. Learning organization culture facilitates and encourages the organizational learning, so that as, ever we more from Bureaucratic culture to ward culture of learning, rate of organizational learning will be increased.

5. *Strategy*: In Marquardt,s (2002) idea, by assumption of mindfully policy and strategy, learning will become consciously. Indeed, organization management should show its eagerness and intention to the management of conscious learning clearly and expressly. This should be expressed in strategies and vision of organization and the strategies related to learning. It's clear that, realization of a learning organization vision can be done through designing and performance of different strategies of organization.

6. *Leadership*: Belief, idea, opinion and leader's behaviour are culture markers that learning should be accomplished in such an environment. Senge (1996), mentions that a leader facilitates and encourages atmosphere for freedom of action. Morgan (1991) says that, by encouraging group discussions, leaders should discover multiple view points of each question and by finding creative responses show the generator learning skills to the staff.

### 3. CONCEPTS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF LEARNING ORGANIZATION

Any researchers have adapted Senge's original learning organization model, prescribing how to create a particular learning organization or describing already

formed ones as blueprints for managers to follow. The learning organization is defined by Senge (1990) as one where: people continually expand their capacity to create results the truly desire, new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, collective aspirations are set Free, people are continually learning to learn together. Senge (1990) visualises the learning organization to continually expand it capacity to create its future. His five disciplines constituting a learning organization, namely, personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, team learning and systems thinking, have received much attention. This research has attempted, with considering these five disciplines, study their application in the organization of Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting.

#### *Personal Mastery*

Senge (1990) says: organizations can't learn unless their members begin to Learn. Learning develops personal abilities of people to achieve desired results. Personal abilities and competences means to be active able to, to have a creative attitude toward life, to live actively and not to be passive.

#### *Shared Vision*

Consists of the capacity to create a shared image and view of a future which we pursue it. Senge (1990) believes that action and reaction with people shape a shared vision. The shared vision and insight is created only via the awareness of organization goals and compatibility between individual visions and developing these visions, towards general purpose.

#### *Mental models*

Mental models determine how a person thinks and acts. Even though people always don't act according to their mental models,

their behaviours are based on a mental image (Senge 1990). Mental models cause we base our functions upon them. In the learning organization, mental models are the discipline of consideration, discussion, dialogue and study. With this discipline people try to reach some agreement about suitable and realistic mental models.

### ***Team learning***

As Senge says, the world is full talented people, but it is important that they should know how to work and act together. Senge (1990) suggests two important components in team learning, the first, conversation and the second Practice. Team learning, is seen to be crucial because team, not individuals, are the fundamental teaching unit in modern organization. (Senge 1990).

### ***Systems Thinking***

Systems thinking is a way holistic. It is a framework that emphasize on understanding of internal relations of phenomena, not on identifying them one by one. Senge sees systems thinking at the heart of his "learning organization" models, where all of organization members develop an understanding of the whole rather than just fractional parts of organization in terms of structures, processes, thinking and behaviour.

Given the mentioned definition, learning organization can be defined as follows: "An organization, which support knowledge transfer encouraging learning, makes use of knowledge, provides support for its staff and creates an environment suitable for permanent development, encourages the staff who has personal development responsibility to unite their potential powers and to use this power for the permanent development of the organization." (Agaoglu

and Oktaylar, 2003). In fact, the essence of organizational learning is to transform all organizations into a learning organization in order to survive and cope with the great changes encountered in almost all fields in the 21st century (Deming, Perkins, 1992; Schwartz, 1993).

## **4. RESEARCH METHOD**

The study follows a survey approach, and the research tool is a questionnaire that has been prepared with 25 questions based on five-point Likert Scale. Its validity is credited by a panel. experts, three professors with experience in statistics, surveys studies, and learning organization and its reliability, is admitted based on Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, by the software of SPSS with 0.936 validity.

### **4.1. Statistical population of the research**

All managers and employees of the IBO form the statistical population of research. Sample of population of 375 employees participated in the study, and Kokaran formula was applied, by using stratified random sampling method, each stratified includes 325 employees and 50 managers. From total sample population, information of 301 collected questionnaires was applicable (262 of employees and 39 of managers).

### **4.2. Research Hypotheses**

#### ***Main Hypotheses:***

H1. There is a difference between present situation and effective situation in characteristics of learning organization in IBO

H2. There is a difference between managers and employees concerning characteristics of learning organization.

**Secondary Hypotheses:**

H3. There is a difference between managers and employees of the IBO in characteristics of personal mastery.

H4. There is a difference between managers and employees of the IBO in characteristics of mental models.

H5. There is a difference between managers and employees of the IBO in characteristics of team learning.

H6. There is a difference between managers and employees of the IBO in characteristics of shared vision.

H7. There is a difference between managers and employees of the IBO in characteristics of system thinking.

**5. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS**

Techniques of descriptive and deductive statistics have been used to analyse data. To test hypotheses; t-test one sample and independent samples test techniques with SPSS software applied.

Specifications of statistical samples are summarized in the table 1.

In addition, general information of the questionnaire indicated that 39.5% of staff

*Table 1. Distribution of sample population in accordance with organizational position*

Descriptive statistic		Statistical population
Percentage	Frequency	
87%	262	Employees
13%	39	Managers
100%	301	Total

are women and 60.5% are men under 10 years of length of service. with 66% have the highest frequency and 87% of staff have Bachelor's degree, (B.A), or higher.

The test of research's first hypothesis is shown in the table 2.

H (1): There is a difference between present situation and effective situation in characteristic of learning organization in Islamic republic of IBO.

H (o): There is no difference between present situation and effective situation in characteristics of learning organization in Islamic republic of IBO.

Since estimated (t) is larger than (t) in table (1.96) with 95% confidence level, H (o) is rejected and alternative hypothesis is approved so, the characteristics of learning organization are not in a effective level in IBO.

The test of second hypothesis and secondary hypotheses is shown in the table 3.

*Table 2. Test of research's first hypothesis*

One-sample test Hypothesis	Estimated T	df	Sig (2-Tailed)	Mean Difference	Std.Error mean	Result
Hypothesis (1)	59/31	300	0/000	44/993	0.758	Accepted

Note: p<0/05

Table 3. Test of second hypothesis and secondary hypothesises

Hypothesis	Independent sample test Estimated t	df	Sig (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std-Error Difference	Result
Hypothesis (2)	2/349	299	0.019	5/265	2/242	Accepted
Hypothesis (3)	1/489	299	0/138	0/790	0/530	Rejected
Hypothesis (4)	5/304	299	0/000	2/762	0/531	Accepted
Hypothesis (5)	0.015	299	0/98	0/009	0/583	Rejected
Hypothesis (6)	2/477	299	0.014	1/307	0/528	Accepted
Hypothesis (7)	1/28	299	0/201	0/680	0/531	Rejected

Note:  $p < 0.05$

H (2): There is a significant difference between managers and employees of IBO.

H (o): There is no significant difference between managers and employees of IBO.

Since estimated (t) is larger than (t) in table (1/96) with 95% confidence level, H (o) is rejected and alternative hypothesis is approved.

H (3): There is a significant difference between managers and employees of IBO in personal mastery.

H (o): There is no significant difference between managers and employees of personal mastery.

Since estimated (t) is smaller than (t) in table (1/96) with 95% confidence level, H (o) is approved and alternative hypothesis is rejected.

H (4): There is a significant difference between managers and employees of IBO of mental models.

H (o): There is no significant difference between managers and employees of IBO of mental models.

Since estimated (t) is larger than (t) in table (1/96) with 95% confidence level, H (o) is rejected and alternative hypothesis is approved.

H (5): There is a significant difference between managers and employees of IBO in characteristics of shared vision.

H (o): There is no significant difference between managers and employees of IBO in characteristics of shared vision.

Since estimated (t) is smaller than (t) in table (1/96) with 95% confidence level, H (o) is approved and alternative hypothesis is rejected.

H (6): There is a significant difference between managers and employees in team learning.

H (o): There is no significant difference between managers and employees of IBO in team learning.

Since estimated (t) is larger than (t) in table (1/96) with 95% confidence level, H (o) is rejected and alternative hypothesis is accepted.

H (7): There is a significant difference between managers and employees in systems thinking.

Since estimated (t) is smaller than (t) in table (1/96) with 95% confidence level, H (o) is approved and alternative hypothesis is rejected.

The result shows that the Organization isn't in a suitable and effective situation with respect to having the learning organization characteristics in dimensions of personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, team learning, systems thinking, and it is almost in an average level. The average of learning

organization characteristics between managers and employees has a meaningful difference. Employees are better than managers in characteristics of mental models and team Learning; in other dimensions they have almost same performances.

learning organization. Other supporting points revealed from the study indicate that certain reinforcement in five characteristics of learning organizations need to be taken into consideration.

## 6. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

This part includes the findings obtained by the analysis of the data collected through questionnaire. The results show that IBO is far from satisfactory in terms of a learning organization.

With respect to research findings, to lead the organization into a changing enterprise and decrease the distance to effective situation, reinforcement of characteristics of learning organization in dimensions of personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, team learning and systems thinking in IBO. We are aware of the nature of IBO and as a state-owned organization, its sustainability is not threatened, but IBO should develop learning projects in order to facilitate changing ability of the staff for upgrading organizational effectiveness, their future, conform and respond to uncertainty. Given mentioned definitions, learning organization can be defined as an organization which supports knowledge transfer encouraging learning, makes use of knowledge, provides support for its staff and creates an environment suitable for permanent development. Change in mindset of top managers of IBO facilitates change of conditions for improving staff knowledge and persuade them to become self development. The data also indicate that IBO organizational culture based on organizational vision can make a fundamental change in IBO to become a

### 6.1. Reinforcement of personal mastery

Considering research results that showed the performances of managers and employees of organization in that characteristic are similar, reinforce this characteristic in the organization it is suggested that:

-Using techniques of evaluating effective performance, abilities and weak points of employees to be identified and evaluated. By identifying abilities and deficits, using a suitable learning method in action learning through teaching with theory and practice skills, learning by interaction with others and exchange of knowledge, experience and intelligence of colleagues and with management support, the development of abilities and masteries in employees to be obtained.

### 6.2. Reinforcement of mental models

With respect to research results that showed performances of organization's employees are in a better status to reinforce this characteristic it is suggested that:

In organizational learning process by learning technique of interaction with others and skills of consideration, (discussion, conversation and exchange of information, knowledge, thoughts, and open organizational climate to be prepared, so that and flexibility in reviewing thoughts among employees especially managers of organization be reinforced and their defensive habits be reduced, therefore

suitable mental models continually be identified, reinforced and developed in the organization.

### **6.3. Reinforcement of shared vision**

Considering the research results that showed the performances of managers and employees are similar in characteristic, to reinforce this characteristic, it is suggested that:

Support and develop individual visions in the organization and employees, managers, and leader of organization acquire a shared insight through use of learning method of interaction with others, conversation, sharing thoughts, opinions, wishes and goals and their development. Managers inform clearly organizational object to all of employees, then by increasing organizational commitment via partnership and more freedom in organizational decision-making try to unite individual and organizational goals and explain the role and influence of general goals achievement on individual goals to employees.

### **6.4. Reinforcement of team learning**

The research shows that managers' work performance seem in terms of team learning, employees seem to be better than managers. But there is no significant difference between these two groups. The data also indicates that employees need management guidance to practice team work and team learning. Perhaps this is due to not having organizational vision which could affect employees' shared vision.

### **6.5. Application of system thinking**

The study also shows that system thinking among employees and managers is not known. Actually, this concept needs to be introduced, described and elaborated to the both groups and particularly the results and the effect of system thinking at IBO performance. Introducing and training of managers and employee with the concept and importance of system thinking. The impact of the factor on each part of IBO, and looking at the organization as a total system.

## **7. SUGGESTED MODEL**

This model shows present situation of IBO, as well as a process leading to learning organization and eventually organizational learning. The general idea is to unfreeze the mindset of leadership of IBO and creating a vision and organizational culture based on learning and staff development. Then gradually through incremental effective change and continual organizational learning process in individual, team and organization levels engage in development and reinforcement of skills of personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, team learning and systems thinking, should lead IBO to learning organization.

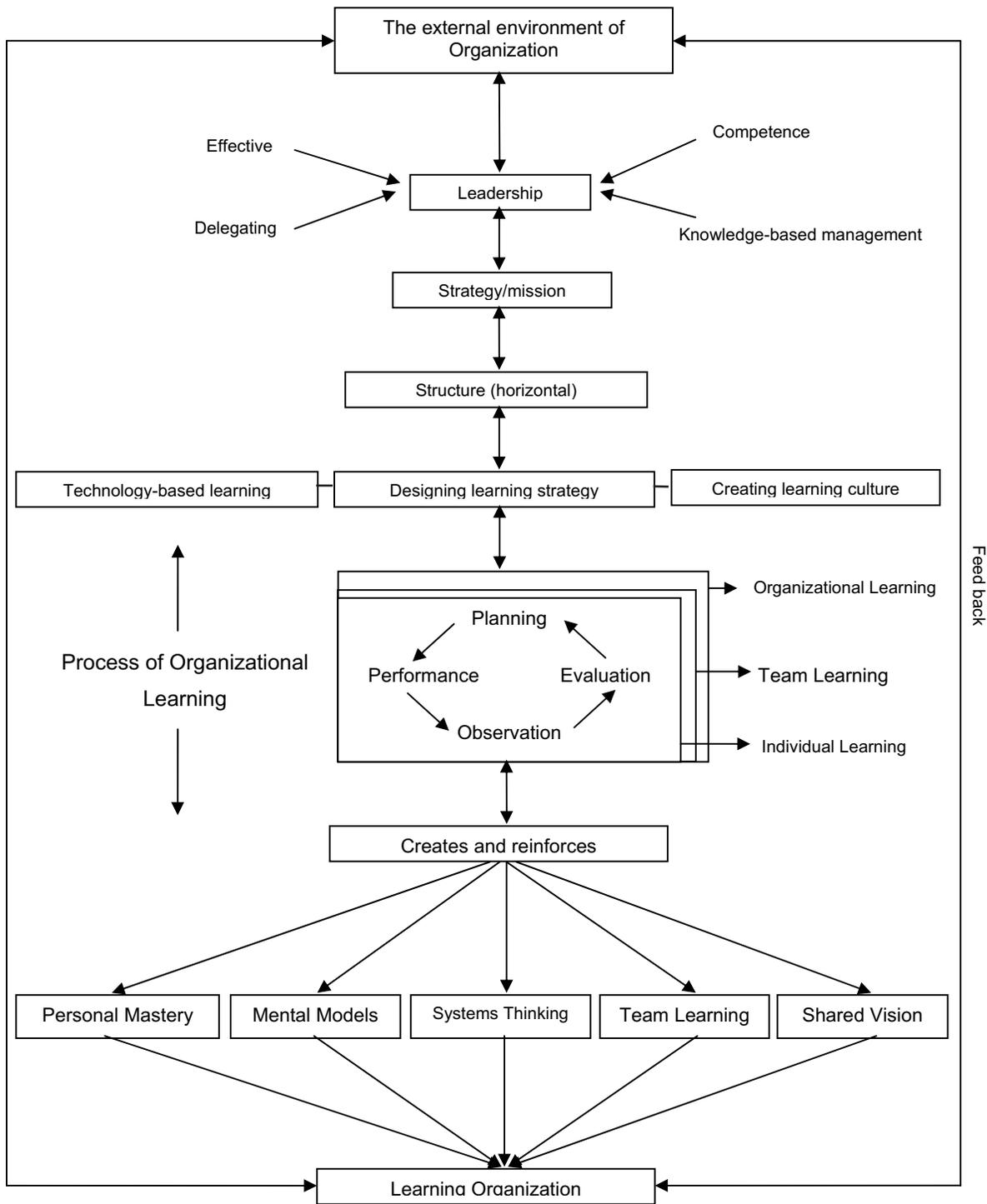


Figure 1. Model of Learning Organization for Iran Broadcasting Organization (IBO)

## МОДЕЛ ОРГАНИЗАЦИЈЕ КОЈА УЧИ У РАДИОДИФУЗНОЈ ИНДУСТРИЈИ РЕПУБЛИКЕ ИРАН

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### Извод

Овај рад покушава да представи формирање модела организације која учи у оквиру иранске радиодифузне организације, која је под директном управом духовног вође Ирана. Студија се заснива на карактеристикама организације која учи према Петер Санге-у, укључујући лична усавршавања, менталне моделе, заједничку визију, тимско учење и системско размишљање. Методологија истраживања је укључивала коришћење упитника за анкетирање случајног узорка запошљених и менаџера ове организације.

Постигнути резултати истраживања показују да је разматрана организација далеко од ефективне организације која учи. Такође, показано је да су перформансе запошљених у тимском учењу и променама у менталним моделима на вишем нивоу него код менаџмент структура. Што се тиче осталих карактеристика организација које уче, постоје сличности у покушајима учења запошљених и менаџера. Разматрана организација нема организациону визију, и самим тиме не постоји заједничка визија у организацији. Такође, постоји потреба за организационом културом. Обзиром да је у питању организација у државном власништву, не постоји потреба за финансијском подршком која утиче на промене у организацијама које уче. Такође, не постоји ни претња одрживости јер је у питању организација без реалне конкуренције.

Истраживања су такође показала да ова организација (ИБО) захтева фундаменталне промене у својем процесу организационог учења. У овом контексту, основна идеја је одмрзнути размишљање руководства ИБО-а и створити визију и организациону културу засновану на учењу и развоју људских ресурса. Потом, посетпено, кроз периодичне ефективне промене и континуални процес организационог учења, укључити тимове и појединце у развој и побољшање вештина личног усавршавања, менталних модела, заједничке визије, тимског учења и системског размишљања. Ово би ИБО трансформисало у праву организацију која учи.

*Кључне речи:* Организационо учење, Организација која учи, Лично усавршавање, Државна организација

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