RESEARCH ARTICLE

HOSPITALS AS A LEARNING ORGANIZATION MODEL IN HEALTH SERVICES

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ABSTRACT

All businesses that survive in today's strongly competitive environment are proactive organizations which quickly adapted to change. These companies are organizations which can renew itself quickly when it needs to conversion, having good understanding of surroundings and trying to understand the world. The hospitals are the basis foundations of health services which could define like information extensively or labor-intensive organizations. Public health status is attempted to be upgraded by the use of extensively information in the health services. The basic elements of learning organizational culture are investment in human resources and use human resources efficiently. The organizations which constantly open to innovation should keep in line the personal development of employees and organizational goals. The hospitals which finds application area of new and innovative information are one of the finest examples of knowledge-based learning organization. Being related with human health which provided in the hospitals is the most important factor of knowledge and learning organization. The aim of this study is illuminate the working area of aforementioned which there is so few research about it.

INTRODUCTION

In today's world as there is constant change and an uncertain future caused management concepts to be subjected to developments and transforms. As a result organizations have to go through some changes rather than sticking to classical methods and adopt a learning organization structure. In information management, technological process and adaptation of the new techniques into the system in order to effectively use information in line with objectives of organization is the most important element (Çakır and Yükseltürk, 2010). Rapid changes are present intrinsically in information. For that reason learning and change as a result of learning, are the most important properties of information society (Drucker, 2000). Organizational learning has appeared as a concept due to rapidly changing environment, need for innovation and reasons related to human beings which are accepted as intellectual capital. It is commonly accepted that evolution of learning capacity is the main factor effecting efficiency and productivity of organization and innovation. For that reason learning organization and subjects related to organizational learning are trending. In today's competition environment, only businesses that survive this competition are proactive organization which can adapt to changes. This organization can evaluate their environment correctly, try to understand the activities globally and make the necessary changes and adopt them if there is any need.

Hospitals which are defined as organizations with intense technology, information and labour are the basis of health services. Hospitals are organizations where information asymmetry between doctors and patients can be observed. Another distinctive property is that health sector employees should be open to learning, change and innovations. Hospitals where new and creative information is adopted immediately forms the most important example to information based learning organizations. The most important factor showing the importance of learning and information in this sector is hospitals offer a service related with health of individuals. Due to this property of hospital services, learning organization dimension of hospitals deserve more focus. Innovation leaps where new information is presented creatively are appropriate to be applied in health services. New methods such as medication, medical devices and technology, medical supplies and new diagnosis and treatment methods can be adopted to health sector. These innovative inventions can create revolutionary outcomes in health sector and as a result of that diagnosis and treatment can be redefined. Keeping up with the rapid change and handling information which is consumed fast has become more important than anything. Intense information use in health sector tries to increase health status of the society that is used. Foundation of learning organization culture lies in investment to human capital and using it effectively and in a productive way. These organizations where the employees can retake their personal development with the objectives of the organization are organization which is open to innovation.

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Table 4.1.Evolution Steps of Learning Organization

Knowing Organizations	There is always one good way in ant place and any circumstances.
Understanding Organizations	Understand the values of the organization, make everyone comply with it and control it.
Thinking Organizations:	If it is broken fix as soon as you can but do not think about the reason.
Learning Organizations	Learn more than you can at every opportunity.

**Figure 4.1. Five Norms of a Learning Organization**
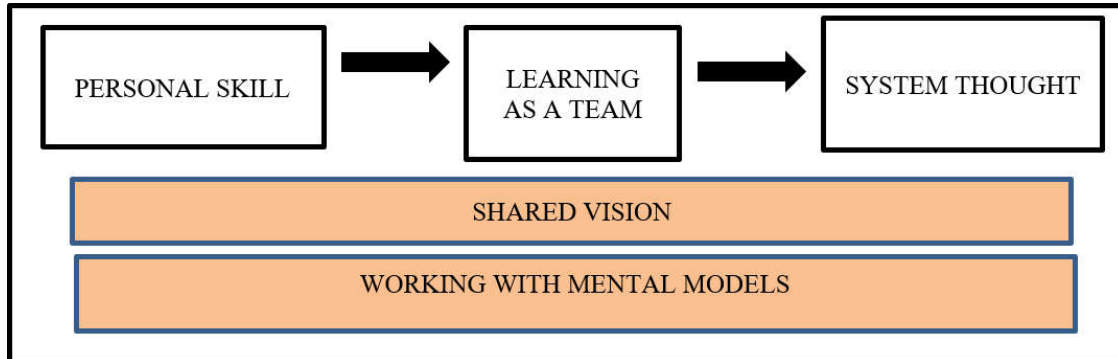
Source: Barutçugil 2004

Table 5.1. Sub Dimensions of Learning Organization Model

Sub Dimensions	Expansion
Constantly Creating Learning Opportunities	Learning is integrated into the work conducted, employees learn when they are working and opportunities are created with constant education and growth.
Supporting Dialog and Asking Questions	Organizational culture supports asking questions, feedback and experiments and develops expression of ideas and questioning skills.
Helping and Supporting to Learn As a Team	The work is constructed according to teams to catch a different thought processes. It is expected that groups work together, learn together and cooperate.
Establishing a System to Share Learning	Technological systems are built, integrated into work to share the learning and the access to the systems are enabled and protected.
Strengthen Individuals for a Common Vision	Individuals play a role in creating, owning and applying the common vision.
Constructing a Relation Between Organization and Surrounding Environment	Individuals take help form others to see their effect on the organization. Individuals observe the environment and share what they have learned.
Model Leader who Supports Learning	Leaders form learning models, support learning and use learning when determining strategies related to work.

Figure 5.1. Learning Cycle
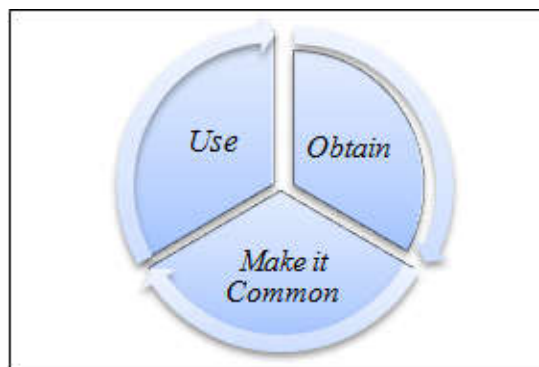
Source: Drew ve Smith 1995

Conceptual framework of learning organizations

Learning Organization concept is first used by Peter Senge in his book The Fifth Discipline (1990) and is defined as in order to develop a common objective within the organization, application of innovation and information among all the members of the organization to create effective and meaningful outcomes. In this process members of the organization are collected around a shared vision and they are encouraged to connect with institution emotionally in long term (Bozkurt, 2003). Learning organization has the properties as the following; learning from past events, adapting to constantly changing environmental conditions in line with skills and knowledge of employees and make necessary s accordingly, self-renewal and developing a high tempo. In another words, high tempo means to be ready for competition (Senge, 1996).For many years various researchers have complained about the complexity of "Learning Organization" concept and stated the need for a more open and broader definition (Örtenblad, 2004, Braham, 1998, Garvin, 1993; Pedler *et al.*, 1991). This situation has bring out various definition for each discipline. The important definitions are as follows:"Learning organization has the skills to change their behavior in order to uncover the information and transfer the information" (Garvin, 1993)."Learning organization is a management system in which it knows the institution it is managing and developing skills to construct a better management system" (Özgen and

Türk, 1996). In another words "learning organization makes it easy to learn for it's members and constantly renews and develops itself" (Pedler *et al*., 1991). But learning organization method is a new management aspect expressing the management philosophy rather that being a model for management (Senge, 1996). To stay in the competitive environment it is necessary to have the skill to implement and adapt management of organizational processes, structures and systems to internal and external changes (Bennis,1994). Accordingly organizational learning can be defined as the process of gathering new information and understanding inside an organization. But there are disagreements on what this process contains and what exactly organizational learning means (Robet *et al*., 2000).

Rise of Information Based Organizations

Intellectual information level of organizations is directly affecting the market value of the organizations. In this process managing information, in other words developing information which has a potential to create value with intellectual capital, in competitive environment has become the key point for individuals, businesses and even for nations. In information economy, the gap between market value and book value of the businesses highlighted the intellectual capital. Assets which are not shown on financial charts of the businesses are explained as "Intellectual Capital" of businesses as a value creator in information economy (Kara, 2005). If individuals, businesses and nation desire to use information economy, it is depended to human capital of the country. In other words the capital depends on education, quality, skills and creativity of individuals. In today's world individuals and institutions which can use information in individual and organizational level can be successful. This new approach emphasized that human capital is more important than physical capital. In this process human capital which is the total of knowledge, skill, ability and behavior of an individual, leads to skill management between businesses as the main factor of competition (OECD, 2007). For that reason, the most important competition in global business word occurs as finding a qualified employee rather than capital, latest technology or change in market share. The companies which are successful in service based information economy are the ones with skilled employees. During this process businesses find it hard to attract skilled people and keep them in the company. These changes bring new dimensions to the relationship between the employer and employee and the companies which comprehend this transformation survive. In this content information based learning organization concept is highlighted. These organizations can protect themselves against drastic changes and by adopting the reforms they can gain higher status (Ceylan, 2007).

Reasons of evolution to learning organizations

Reasons of organizational change during the management of the change can occur internally and externally. Organizations need to adapt to changes both form inside and outside in order to maintain their presence (Hedberg, 1981). Learning organization approach as an adaptation easy to change is the result of it. The reasons to make the organization change are the same reasons to evolve into learning organizations. (Şerbetçi, 2001). The most important reasons are listed below: (Savi, 2003). Slocum and McGrill (1993) conducted comprehensive researched on learning organization structure and they stated important points. Learning organizations are

classified into 4 categories as understanding, knowing, learning and thinking organizations. These categories are briefly explained:

- Globalization,
- Change Factor,
- Competitor and Competition,
- Customer Needs and Expectations,
- Suppliers,
- Change In Work Structure and Labour,
- Change in Demands of Employee,
- Technological Change,
- Change in Laws and Legislations
- Transform in Information and Transaction to Information Society,
- Transformation in Information Management,

Knowing Organizations

These are the oldest definitions of organizational model. Management theorists who played an important role in classical organizational theories thought that there is only one way in every condition and every place. The right way to organize and manage the employees is found. The methods which known as the best method should be known by managers and these organization adopting this method are classified as knowing organizations. Knowing organizations conduct highly controls behaviors without any risk factor therefore they are the contrary of learning organizations. All the learned things are experiences. This organization can be successful if there is no need for flexibility.

Understanding Organizations

In 1980s when there is rise in global competition, change in service demand and technological developments, the best way is one way understanding has become invalid. Especially in 1980 organizational culture became a mainstream and fundamental values are accepted by various organizations. Main principle is that, understanding the values of organization by each member and applying these values. Employees of understanding organizations use the culture of the organization as a guide. Since they can only deal with environmental changes that are suitable to their norm not the spontaneous ones, these organizations do not create learning.

Thinking Organizations

These are organizations formed to find new solutions to problems and form a mentality to prevent possible problems that can occur in the future. But thinking organizations only focus on determination of problems and finding solutions. But the more important point is to uncover the reasons of the problems and eliminating them. Main philosophy of thinking organization is "if it is broken fix as soon as you can but do not think about the reason".

Learning Organizations

Main idea of a learning organization is to learn as much as you can learn. These organizations constantly seek for learning way and for that reason stakeholders are in contact all the time and develop learning and teaching relationship. The responsibility of the managers in learning organization is to create an environment to support learning and sustaining the environment. When learning organizations are compared with

knowing, understanding and thinking organization the main difference is the attitude towards change. Learning organizations consider change as a continuous event. For that reason change is considered as the main input to guidance of learning and the opportunity creator.

Learning organizations substantially support the participation and systematic structure of thinking organizations but they have a more comprehensive understanding. It is the structure where employees can be creative, can take risks and can achieve constant personal development. These organizations aim to change both the environment and themselves. Employees have become the part of the learning process and they create the vision of the organization together (Luthans, 1995).

Properties of Learning Organizations

Marquardt (1996) defines learning organizations as organizations which can manage information in changing environment with successful ability to use technology and transforming the ability to learn into a structure. Fast learning organizations can adapt rapidly and gain advantages against their competitors. These organizations are rapid, solid and flexible organization where they can gather information. The stakeholders will benefit more as they rapidly adapt to the environment. Comprehensive research conducted on related are showed some evident properties of learning organizations. These properties are stated below: Reacting and adapting to changing environmental effects. Increase in development of the process, new product and service. Learning more form other organizations via corporation or competition. Increase in transfer rate of the information inside the organization and learning effectively and in a right way. Decrease in time to apply strategic changes. Effective and productive use of the employees in the organization. Sustainability of the development of the organization in every branch (Marquardt, 1996). Senge (1996) explains learning organizations as organizations which increase their capacity to achieve desire objectives, where there is innovative and developing though and where there is constant learning among the individuals. According to Senge learning organization should have the 5 fundamental disciplines such as mind models, personal skill, learning as a team, system though and shared vision (Senge, 1996).

i. Personal Skill: Foundation of infrastructure of learning organizations. It contains gaining clarity according to personal ambition, getting deeper, and patience, focusing on energy, developing determination and seeing the truths objectively.

ii. Mind Models: It is defined as being open minded to the effect and suggestions from other individuals while determining ideas and investigation methods. Mind models are philosophical approaches which determine how the world gains meaning. At the same time they lead to individuals actions.

iii. Shared Vision: It plays a role to state the planned objectives constructed with joint contribution of members of organization into common values and beliefs to connect with the organization and actively play a role within.

iv. Learning as a team: Eliminating any conflict, defense or other negative interaction as group or individually which

prevent learning and developing habits and skills to contribute it.

v. System Thought: Uncovering secret bonding between all the activities constructing the system and clarifying all the effects on each other to develop skills. Main idea of system though that it is a structure that combines organizational norms.

According to Senge (1990) it is important to form the five norms to create learning organization. Figure 4.2.1 shows the schematically expressed the model evaluating the five norm. Dimensions integrating the disciplines are schematically represented. But the application and integration of the disciplines is a hard process on its own (Senge, 1990). At this stage Marquardt (1996) expressed the benefit of the 6th norm, dialog. Dialog states listening and sharing as a high quality and leveled expression and dialog makes it easy to combine disciplines. If dialog is not enough, the structure of learning organization will be hard to achieve. According to Senge (1990) it is important to form the five norms to create learning organization. Figure 4.2.1 shows the schematically expressed the model evaluating the five norm. Dimensions integrating the disciplines are schematically represented. But the application and integration of the disciplines is a hard process on its own (Senge, 1990). At this stage Marquardt (1996) expressed the benefit of the 6th norm, dialog. Dialog states listening and sharing as a high quality and leveled expression and dialog makes it easy to combine disciplines. If dialog is not enough, the structure of learning organization will be hard to achieve.

Main skills of learning organizations

Some basic skills are needed to form learning organizations. The main skills are listed below: Systematic Problem Solving, Trial of New Approaches, Learning form Past Experiences, Learning from Other Users Experiences Information Transfer Organizational learning is a systematic problem solving approach with restoration infrastructure. The aim of this approach is to create new problem solving methods. In learning organizations problems are solved using a decision mechanisms based on scientific methods (Yazıcı, 2001). Systematic problem solving process is followed by trial of new approaches. This is a relatively harder process. The difficulty depends on the willingness of the organization. New approaches and their application should be debated and a common ground should be found (Koçel, 2011). Learning from past experiences contain evaluating past experiences whether successful or unsuccessful, and finding the underlying reasons and using the outputs (Koçel, 2011). It includes learning from new and strong ideas of the individuals in addition to evaluating learning systematic. This is a comparison skill. Comparison is the way to benefit from experiences of others. Learning should be spread inside the organization rapid and effectively in order to be productive and permanent. Information is a growing concept when it is shared by others (Garvin, 1993).

Process of creating a learning organization

If the literature on learning organization is investigated it can be seen that researches such as Senge (1996), Argyris and Schön (1978) and Huber (1991) mainly conducted their research on theoretical side rather than practice but by only taking conceptual framework of organizational learning into consideration, does not answer the question how can a learning

organization be designed. For that reason a guideline to design a learning organization or activities should be investigates differing form these researches. Garvis as a researcher on learning organization explained the subject as "organization which is specialized in creating, gathering and taking forward the information to transfer it into organizational behavior as a new belief and information". Besides to reach the learning organization level five ways can be followed; systematic problem solving, gathering experience with new approaches, learning from past experiences, learning from other individuals experiences or application and transferring the information in a rapid and effective way. Systematic problem solving is the first step of Garvin's model (1993) and is mainly structured acting according to scientific ideas and data to create quality activities.

In this content predictions leave their places to scientific methods, hypothesis leave into acting according to data and interpreting the data using basic statistical techniques. The important point here about learning is the precision and accuracy. Employees can become more disciplined and clear individuals with problem solving skills. Gaining experience as the second step contain systematic investigation for gathering new information and testing the results. Third step which is the learning from past experiences contains evaluating every successful and unsuccessful action in the past systematically. In addition the results obtained form the evaluation are recorded and are preserved in a location where every employee can have an easy access. Learning form past mistakes is an effective method. Forth step contains learning from others. Organization learns a lot from the surrounding environment. Here learning is not due to individual analysis or reflections. Organizations can learn both from the organizations in their sector or others. Many innovations and success in today's world can be achieved through imitation not only with new inventions. Fifth and last step is the transfer of the information. It is the spread of information within the organization so that learning will not stay local. Ideas and information can multiply when they are shared (Watkins and Marsick, 1993). Organizational model with holistic and integrating methods is presented. According to this model learning organizations are the organizations that constantly learn and change themselves.

Learning in this organization is a sustainable, strategic process integrated into the work By doing that intellectual capital capacity of the organization will contribute to create and manage information. BesidesWatkisn and Marsick (1997) considered that there are seven dimensions evaluated separately but in relation with each other to define learning organization at individual, team and organizational level. This model evaluates organizational structure together with employees who constantly learn and subjected to change.In the model stated by DiBella and Nevis, learning organization is defined as three staged cycles (Figure 5.1). In the cycle of this model information is gained, spreaded and used respectively. Learning is achieved after the cycle is completed.

Organizations use past experience of employees or other organizations to form information. The critical point of creating information by employees can generally cause various problems when the information is taken outside. Different ways and method can be used when information is spreaded. Newspapers, conferences, production reports or computer based information systems can help to spread the information inside the organization. Accordingly organizational information of an employee becomes as a shared information and organizational learning occurs. Information can be created within the organization and transferred to the receiver with suitable ways or right channels but if this information is not applied to behaviors or decisions, organizational learning does not occur. For that reasonin order to complete the cycle and learning, information should be used on the right place and time. Drew and Smith (1995) defined learning way of the learning organization as shown in Figure 5.1. In the path "focus" can be defined as realizing the vision and the path to be followed. Focusing can occur as a result of strategic planning, thinking and gathering information by decision makers and key actors. Top level focusing can only be achieved when the details of the work are known and the keyactor has the necessary knowledge. Passion as another component expresses a more strategic intension. The most significant property of passion is that it causes to be focused on objectives and face the problems in both managerial and individual level. Passion is affected by every level of management not only from the upper management.

Figure 5.2. Connection Between Key Elements in Learning
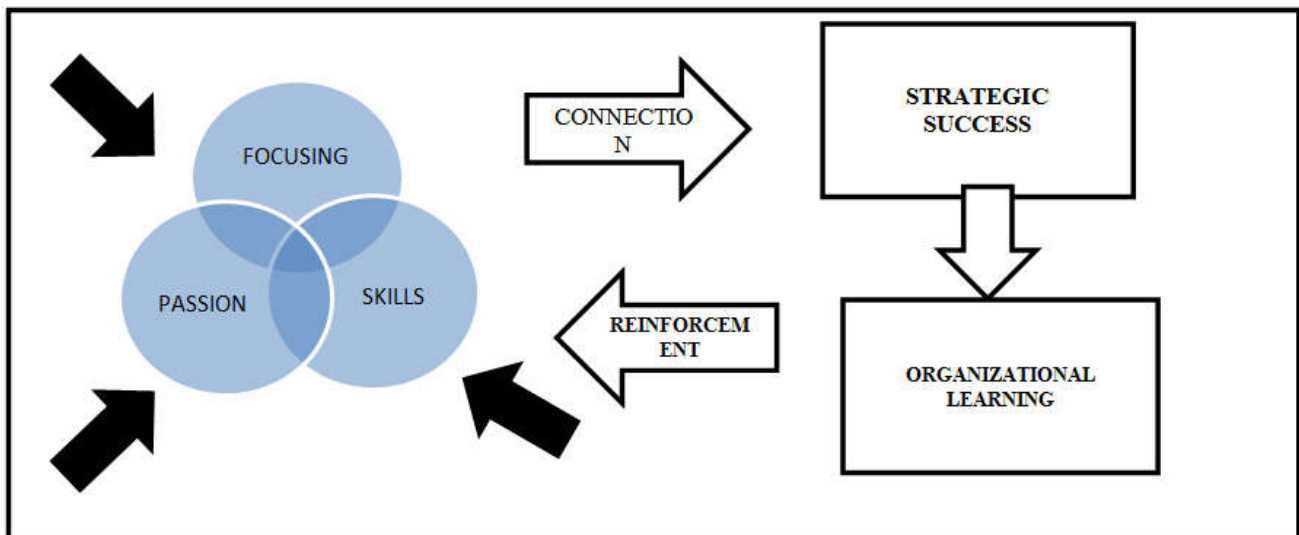
Source: Drew ve Smith 1995

Ability term in the figure shows the ability gained by the organization at a certain time and is special for the organization. Ability is more than just the assembly of skills. It contains of drive the individuals to take some actions. These three factors will together form an appropriate and efficient way of learning. In this ground learning framework and strategic success are directly connected. Strategic success supports the organizational learning. Organizational learning increases this compatibility and helps to complete the cycle.

Limitations faced by learning organizations

Although there is a rapid change in framework of the organization, it is a hard, trying, complex and even utopia to achieve a learning organization. Main factor related with the organization can limit these efforts. The most important way to overcome this situation is to determine difficulties and insufficiency of the organization before starting the process. Reformative precautions can be taken. Learning organization teaches to adapt to new and rapid changes inside the system. In this was organization can take precautions against changes. The obstacles that limits to transform into a learning organization can be stated as follow: (Barutçugil, 2004). Giving too much time on system and processes at micro level in strategic management, Non-systematic and non-analytic approaches to spontaneous problems, desire to take fast solutions and change your mind to apply them when the results are ready, Becoming a learning organization is a changing process in the structure and culture of the organization and prisoning it into repetitive system and process applications, Devaluation of original ideas and insisting on traditional ideas, Giving reward to letter by letter work rather than intelligent work where analytic systems are used, Application of authorization less than it should be. According to Kline and Saunders (1998) is a promotion is desired in learning organization these action should be conducted; positive human interactions should be formed ans developed, learning culture of the organization should be determined, securing the thought process of the organization for everyone, creating a helping environment, applying knowledge and applying organizational vision after it can be clearly seen. If the relationship between employees and the environment of the organization creates opportunities for employees to learn and develop, new information is comprehended (Rosen, 1996). The effective way to do it is to create learning environments where employees can develop skills, gather new information openly. In a learning organization, employees can learn without any limits inside the company with cooperation.

RESULTS

The world is at the edge of transferring into innovation era which is accepted as leap of information. Learning organization approach aims for clarity, creativity, analytic thinking, being proactive, rationality, continuity and learning for life time. Besides it contains the concepts like individual and organizational enthusiasm and sensitivity (Fedai, 1998). Establishing a learning organization is a complex process. The way to create a constantly learning organization lies in individuals with lifelong learning and development of learning organizations. Learning of individual will lead to the team to learn and this will lead to the organizational learning. These are institutions which see the development of the employee as a contribution to success of the organization. Study shows that in the future the most successful organization will be the fast

adapting and learning organizations. In another words, the success of the organization will be measured according to speed and capacity. For that reason the main objective of an organization is to construct an organization culture with the infrastructure and maintain sustainability. Main idea of learning organization is to invest in human resources who compose intellectual capital and to encourage the desire to learn in the individuals. Only organization who can adopt organizational learning can be successful and survive in the future. Hospitals are the organizations where the information is intensely used and transferred. Hospitals have to adapt to changes in a short period of time. For that reason hospitals are the most adequate example to learning organizations. Since the half-life of information is getting shorter, high technology should be used in the health sector to answer all the changing needs. Hospitals are matrix organization with complex structure, high functionality bonds (Şengün Haluk, 2016). When every patient is considered as a project, it is important for the actors in the treatment to be subjected to high level change and development. Success of organizational development comes from the synergy occurred as a result of cooperation among all the employees (Marquardt, 2000). This situation requires devotion and integration. Employees find the most effective and secure environment for learning in the learning organization culture (Popper and Lipshitz, 2000). Hospitals should preserve the position which the information flow is constantly managed. Rapid changes in hospital are adding new branched among health personnel. Health employees need to keep their knowledge at high levels. This can achieved with an organization which adapts learning organization culture. Learning organizations needs the fundamental key, human resources. This can be achieved through an organization culture which is open to innovation. This culture can be developed in organizations where the employees seek for information freely and can achieve personal development. Learning organization is the organizational method to form this culture. Learning organizations which are formed as evolution of information based organizations are the easiest way to adapt change. Health services based on intense information can lead the organization structured as learning organizations into perfection. The interest to learning organizations which are accepted as a well-formed example for new generation organizations has been increasing.

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