The learning organization is an ideal, towards which organizations have to evolve in order to be able to respond to the various pressures they face. It is characterized by a recognition that individual and collective learning are key.
The learning organization

Three definitions of a learning organization

• Learning organizations are organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together. (Senge 1990: 3)

• The Learning Company is a vision of what might be possible. It is not brought about simply by training individuals; it can only happen as a result of learning at the whole organization level.

• Learning organizations are characterized by total employee involvement in a process of collaboratively conducted, collectively accountable change directed towards shared values or principles.
Learning organizations:
- Provide continuous learning opportunities.
- Use learning to reach their goals.
- Link individual performance with organizational performance.
- Foster inquiry and dialogue, making it safe for people to share openly and take risks.
- Embrace creative tension as a source of energy and renewal.
- Are continuously aware of and interact with their environment. (Kerka 1995)

https://www.pexels.com/photo/top-view-of-people-at-the-meeting-3184287/

The learning organization: principles, theory and practice - infed.org: education, community-building and change
Bersin Research, an independent HR-focused analyst group at Deloitte, has done extensive research on high-impact learning organizations. According to his High-Impact Learning Organization Maturity Model, businesses can fall into one of four distinct levels as a learning organization:

- Level 1: Episodic/Programmatic
- Level 2: Responsive/Contextualized
- Level 3: Continuous/Empowering
- Level 4: Anticipatory/Flow
Levels Of Learning Organization

The Evolution of The High-Impact Learning Organization
Growth mindset as a vehicle to developing a Learning Organization – Lisa Danels
Defining The Maturity Levels

- **Level 1: Episodic/Programmatic**
  Organizations at this level seek to simply make work more productive through incidental training that is often tactical or reactive.

- **Level 2: Responsive/Contextualized**
  At level two, companies are focused on training excellence, led by a centralized Learning and Development (L&D).

- **Level 3: Continuous/Empowering**
  Organizations that mature to level three are characterized by their focus on organizational performance. As a result, they make talent development a core competency of management throughout the company and use key performance indicators.

- **Level 4: Anticipatory/Flow**
  At the highest level of maturity, a learning organization is characterized by business executives and employees throughout the organization aligned around continuous learning.
Leverage Growth Mindset As A Way Of Build A High-impact Learning Organization

**Learning Mindset**
- Have a passion, dedication, and belief that new skills and talents can be developed over time.

**Mistakes**
- See failure and making mistakes is part of the learning process to grow and improve performance.

**Challenges**
- Seek out challenges that push you beyond your comfort zone and enable you to learn and grow.

**Obstacles**
- Is willing to confront difficulties, stay focused, and be creative in finding new innovative solutions to setbacks.

**Effort**
- Use focus, energy, and discipline to attain mastery and achieve personal and professional goals.

**Feedback**
- Seek and give feedback regularly and see constructive criticism as a way to grow and improve performance.

**Success of Others**
- Is inspired by others and sees their success as a driving force to develop and take risks.

**Allow Help & Support**
- Courageously asks for help in order to progress forward and avoid being stagnant.

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Growth mindset as a vehicle to developing a Learning Organization – Lisa Danels
Some problems and issues

Focuses mainly on the cultural dimension

To transform an organization it is necessary to attend to structures and the organization of work as well as the culture and processes. ‘Focussing exclusively on training activities in order to foster learning… favours this purely cultural bias’.

Favours individual and collective learning processes

Popular models of organizational learning (such as Dixon 1994) assume such a link. It is, therefore, imperative, ‘that the link between individual and collective learning and the organization’s strategic objectives is made’ (ibid.: 147). This shortcoming, Finger and Brand argue, makes a case for some form of measurement of organizational learning – so that it is possible to assess the extent to which such learning contributes or not towards strategic objectives.

Remains rather vague

The exact functions of organizational learning need to be more clearly defined.
The Role of Leadership

Leader as Designer
- Creating a common vision with shared values and purpose.
- Determining the "policies, strategies, and structures that translate guiding ideas into business decisions."
- Creating effective learning processes which will allow for continuous improvement of the policies, strategies, and structures.

Leader as Teacher
The leader here is seen as a coach that works with the mental models present in the organization. He must understand the (usually tacit) concepts of reality and restructure these views "to see beyond the superficial conditions and events [and] into the underlying causes of the problems.

Leader as Steward
This is the vaguest of the three and refers largely to the attitude of the leader. He emphasizes the importance of a leader that feels he is part of something greater; whose desire is first and foremost not to lead, but to serve this greater purpose of building better organizations and reshaping the way businesses operate.

Leadership and "The Learning Organization" - By Knowledge Management Tools
Leaders may think that getting their organizations to learn is only a matter of articulating a clear vision, giving employees the right incentives, and providing lots of training. This assumption is not merely flawed—it’s risky in the face of intensifying competition, advances in technology, and shifts in customer preferences.

Organizations need to learn more than ever as they confront these mounting forces. Each company must become a learning organization. The concept is not a new one. It flourished in the 1990s, stimulated by Peter M. Senge’s The Fifth Discipline and countless other publications, workshops, and websites. The result was a compelling vision of an organization made up of employees skilled at creating, acquiring, and transferring knowledge. These people could help their firms cultivate tolerance, foster open discussion, and think holistically and systemically.

Is Yours a Learning Organization? - David A. Garvin, Amy C. Edmondson, and Francesca Gino
Systems thinking: The notion of treating the organization as a complex system composed of smaller systems. This requires an understanding of the whole, as well as the components. Some of the key elements here are recognizing the complexity of the organization and having a long-term focus.

Personal mastery: Senge describes this as a process where an individual strives to enhance his vision and focus his energy, and to be in a constant state of learning.

Mental models: "Deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, or even pictures and images that influence how we understand the world and how we take action".

Building shared vision: Shared vision is a powerful motivator. A leader’s vision does not necessarily become shared by those below him. The key here is to pass on a picture of the future.

Team learning: The state where team members think together to achieve common goals. It builds on shared vision, adding the element of collaboration.
Systems theory and the learning organization

• Systems theory’s ability to comprehend and address the whole, and to examine the interrelationship between the parts provides.

• First, systems theory looks to connections and to the whole. In this respect it allows people to look beyond the immediate context and to appreciate the impact of their actions upon others.

• Second, while the building blocks of systems theory are relatively simple, they can build into a rather more sophisticated model than are current in many organizations. When we add these two points together it is possible to move beyond a focus on the parts, to begin to see the whole, and to appreciate organization as a dynamic process.

• Third, systemic thinking, allows us to realize the significance of feedback mechanisms in organizations.
Building Blocks of the Learning Organization

• Organizational research over the past two decades has revealed three broad factors that are essential for organizational learning and adaptability: a supportive learning environment, concrete learning processes and practices, and leadership behavior that provides reinforcement. We refer to these as the building blocks of the learning organization. Each block and its discrete subcomponents, though vital to the whole, are independent and can be measured separately. This degree of granular analysis has not been previously available.

• As you shall see, organizations do not perform consistently across the three blocks, nor across the various subcategories and subcomponents. That fact suggests that different mechanisms are at work in each building-block area and that improving performance in each is likely to require distinct supporting activities. Companies, and units within them, will need to address their particular strengths and weaknesses to equip themselves for long-term learning. Because all three building blocks are generic enough for managers and firms of all types to assess, our tool permits organizations and units to slice and dice the data in ways that are uniquely useful to them.

Is Yours a Learning Organization? - David A. Garvin, Amy C. Edmondson, and Francesca Gino
An environment that supports learning has four distinguishing characteristics.

- **Psychological safety**: To learn, employees cannot fear being belittled or marginalized when they disagree with peers or authority figures, ask naive questions, own up to mistakes, or present a minority viewpoint. Instead, they must be comfortable expressing their thoughts about the work at hand.

- **Appreciation of differences**: Learning occurs when people become aware of opposing ideas. Recognizing the value of competing functional outlooks and alternative worldviews increases energy and motivation, sparks fresh thinking, and prevents lethargy and drift.

- **Openness to new ideas**: Learning is not simply about correcting mistakes and solving problems. It is also about crafting novel approaches. Employees should be encouraged to take risks and explore the untested and unknown.

- **Time for reflection**: All too many managers are judged by the sheer number of hours they work and the tasks they accomplish. When people are too busy or overstressed by deadlines and scheduling pressures, however, their ability to think analytically and creatively is compromised. They become less able to diagnose problems and learn from their experiences.
Building Block 2: Concrete learning processes and practices

• A learning organization is not cultivated effortlessly. It arises from a series of concrete steps and widely distributed activities, not unlike the workings of business processes such as logistics, billing, order fulfillment, and product development. Learning processes involve the generation, collection, interpretation, and dissemination of information.

• For maximum impact, knowledge must be shared in systematic and clearly defined ways. Sharing can take place among individuals, groups, or whole organizations. The knowledge-sharing process can, for instance, be internally focused, with an eye toward taking corrective action. Right after a project is completed, the process might call for post-audits or reviews that are then shared with others engaged in similar tasks. Alternatively, knowledge sharing can be externally oriented—for instance, it might include regularly scheduled forums with customers or subject-matter experts to gain their perspectives on the company’s activities or challenges.

• Perhaps the best known example of this approach is the U.S. Army’s After Action Review (AAR) process, now widely used by many companies, which involves a systematic debriefing after every mission, project, or critical activity. This process is framed by four simple questions: What did we set out to do? What actually happened? Why did it happen? What do we do next time? In the army, lessons move quickly up and down the chain of command, and laterally through sanctioned websites.
Building Block 3: Leadership that reinforces learning

- Organizational learning is strongly influenced by the behavior of leaders. When leaders actively question and listen to employees—and thereby prompt dialogue and debate—people in the institution feel encouraged to learn. If leaders signal the importance of spending time on problem identification, knowledge transfer, and reflective post-audits, these activities are likely to flourish. When people in power demonstrate through their own behavior a willingness to entertain alternative points of view, employees feel emboldened to offer new ideas and options.

- The three building blocks of organizational learning reinforce one another and, to some degree, overlap. Just as leadership behaviors help create and sustain supportive learning environments, such environments make it easier for managers and employees to execute concrete learning processes and practices smoothly and efficiently. Continuing the virtuous circle, concrete processes provide opportunities for leaders to behave in ways that foster learning and to cultivate that behavior in others.
If organizational learning is still seeking a theory, there can be no agreement on the dimensions of the learning organization. Even if the dimensions were understood, the connection between learning and performance remains unclear. However, regardless of the disputed state of the art, a multilevel, practical but necessarily exploratory and simple framework of common and individual variables associated with learning and change follows. Here as elsewhere, experimentation has an important role to play. **Individual and collective learning are not about finding out what others already know, even if that is a useful first stage—it is about solving problems by doing, reflecting, connecting, and testing until a solution forms part of organizational life.**
Why Become A Learning Organization

Dimensions of the Learning Organization - Olivier Serrat
Learning Management Systems

Key Functions

Dimensions of the Learning Organization - Olivier Serrat
Adaptive And Generative Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Human Resources Practices</th>
<th>Adaptive</th>
<th>Generative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Performance appraisal system</td>
<td>Rewards stability</td>
<td>Flexibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Basis for rewards</td>
<td>Short-term financial rewards</td>
<td>Long-term financial and human resource development</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Focus of rewards</td>
<td>Distribution of scarcity</td>
<td>Determination of synergy</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Status symbols</td>
<td>Rank and title</td>
<td>Making a difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Mobility patterns</td>
<td>Within division or function</td>
<td>Across divisions or functions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Mentoring</td>
<td>Not rewarded</td>
<td>Integral part of performance appraisal process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Culture</td>
<td>Market</td>
<td>Clan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<tr>
<th>Managers’ Behaviors</th>
<th>Adaptive</th>
<th>Generative</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Perspective</td>
<td>Controlling</td>
<td>Openness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Problem-solving orientation</td>
<td>Narrow</td>
<td>Systemic thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Response style</td>
<td>Conforming</td>
<td>Creative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Personal control</td>
<td>Blame and acceptance</td>
<td>Efficacious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Commitment</td>
<td>Ethnocentric</td>
<td>Empathetic</td>
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</table>
Social capital is the stock of active connections among people, that is, the mutual understanding, shared values and behaviors, and trust that bind members of networks and communities, making cooperation possible. The social cohesion that results is critical for societies to prosper and for development to be sustainable. The literature on social capital is vast but the idea of looking at social capital in organizations, not society, is relatively new.
Organizational learning must be understood as a pattern in a stream of decisions. How does strategy form in organizations? The various types of strategies uncovered in research can be located somewhere between the ends of a continuum along which real-world strategies lay. The most common might be labeled “planned,” “entrepreneurial,” “ideological,” “umbrella,” “process,” “unconnected,” “consensus,” and “imposed.” The results will either be intended or realized.
Ultimately, learning must be customized to the circumstances of an organization and the work it conducts. Each organization is different, but the work styles of any organization fall under four models: process, systems, network, and competence.
Idealism And Reality

Without denigrating concepts of systemic thinking—since a better appreciation of the whole and the interrelationship between the parts will lead to more pertinent action—development agencies have a long way to go before they reach the ideal of learning organizations.

### Dimensions of the Learning Organization - Olivier Serrat

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discipline 1: Personal Mastery—individual growth and learning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Operational staff members feel undervalued by the organization; there are few individual incentives for learning.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• National staff members and local actors are important sources of local knowledge and vital for learning but are often excluded from learning efforts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Southern knowledge is incorporated ad hoc at the tactical, rather than strategic, level.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Discipline 2: Mental Models—explicit articulation of tacit knowledge (ingrained assumptions) about the organization and how it works in the wider world</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Tacit knowledge is all-important at the field level, with field staff shewing a bias toward informal learning and social networking.</td>
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<td>• Explicit knowledge is seldom in the right form or in the right place at the right time—it is always in catch-up mode.</td>
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<th>Discipline 3: Shared Vision and consensus inspiring and motivating staff members</th>
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<tr>
<td>• The aid sector lacks clarity and consensus about objectives, responsibilities, relationships, and outcomes at all levels. This carries through to the reference points and frameworks necessary for understanding and assessing performance, and can diminish staff motivation for learning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<th>Discipline 4: Team-Based Mastery—learning through improved communication, and openness to creative thinking through reflective conversation and dialogue</th>
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<tr>
<td>• There is inadequate support for management and leadership in the field. High staff turnover and inadequate procedures result in constantly changing teams.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Continual demands from head office for information &quot;from the field&quot; create tensions that make learning difficult in many organizations.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Discipline 5: Systems Thinking—focusing on interrelationships between parts of an organization</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The learning cycle of reflection before, during, and after activities is poorly developed and unsupported at the field level, which creates problems for systems-based approaches.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Most aid agencies make no attempt to learn from recipient populations—a fundamental omission.</td>
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Dialogue and the learning organization

• It is easy to see why proponents of the learning organization would place a strong emphasis upon dialogue. As Peter Senge has argued, for example, team learning entails the capacity of members of a team to suspend assumptions and enter into a genuine “thinking together” (1990: 10). Dialogue is also necessary to other disciplines e.g. building a shared vision and developing mental models. However, there are significant risks in dialogue to the organization. One factor in the appeal of Senge’s view of dialogue was the promise that it could increase and enrich corporate activity. It could do this, in part, through the exploration and questioning of ‘inherent, predetermined purposes and goals’ (Bohm et. al. 1991). There is a clear parallel here with Argyris and Schön’s work on double-loop learning, but interestingly one of Bohm’s associates has subsequently suggested that their view was too optimistic: ‘dialogue is very subversive’
The learning culture in the organization contributes to the organizational learning and the transfer of knowledge to the workplace. **Hence, the learning culture has a very important role to play in the performance of the organization.**
## Quality Features Of The Organizations With And Without Learning Culture

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Organization with learning culture</th>
<th>Organization without learning culture</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Management believes that learning provides energy to the employees for their and organizational growing.</td>
<td>Management believes that energy comes from ‘success of the organization’.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Management encourages continuous experimentation.</td>
<td>Employees proceed with work only when they feel certain of the outcome.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior management involves itself in training programmes designed for new or high-potential employees.</td>
<td>Senior management only appears for starting the training and development programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior management is willing to explore their basic values, assumptions, beliefs, and expectations.</td>
<td>Senior management is defensive and unwilling to explore their basic values, assumptions, beliefs, and expectations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversations in management meetings constantly explore the values, assumptions, beliefs, and expectations underlying proposals and problems.</td>
<td>Conversations tend to move quickly to blaming and finding scapegoat with little attention to the process which led to the problem or how to avoid it in the future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer feedback is sought, actively examined, and included in the planning process.</td>
<td>Customer feedback is not sought and is normally ignored when it comes on its own.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• **Commitment of the top management** – Learning culture in the organization cannot be developed without the commitment and a deep involvement from the top management. It is to be top down in the organization. It flows in the organization when it is stated as one of the key performance indicator of the organization and included in the organizational annual objectives.

• **Learning culture as part of business plan** – The training and development programmes in the organization are to be part of the business plan and are to ensure that they are inspiring the learning in the organization. Management is to make the employees aware that learning is aligned to the business plan. Managers are to regularly talk with the employees under them about the issues and problems they are facing and enable the employees to find solutions through the learning process.

• **Setting of clear objectives** – The organization is to set clear and firm goals and objectives which are to be achieved. Learning culture is to be part of the corporate goal and it is to be stated at the highest level of objectives so that it flows down the organization and becomes a part of the employees’ personal goals. The strategic nature of the job is required to be reflected through development plans. Best plans are developed not in isolation but through joint involvement of employees, customers, and other stakeholders of the organization.

• **Personalized learning** – In performing organization, learning is work and work is learning. The learning content is to be appropriate and timely for every employee. The learning content as well as outcome and objective need to be customized for each employee. The learning needs can be identified through performance appraisals or competency based assessments. Employees are to be made to analyze their learning needs in relation to their performance for achieving the organizational objectives.

• **Creation of an environment for learning** - A learning environment is needed in the organization for building a learning culture. It is essential to cultivate active learners by creating a learner centric environment in the organization. Employees are to be provided with necessary tools and the relevant content to become self-learners. Refining the employees’ approach to learning is
Requirements for the development of effective learning culture

- **Developing learning as part of employment** – In developing a learning culture, the employees are expected to play a role in their career development. The ownership and accountability for learning is also to be on the employees. As a part of their employment, the employees are to be clear about what is expected from them towards continuous learning. The learning can be self-learning, learning on the job, or learning arranged through training and development programmes depending on the situations.

- **Removing barriers in learning** -The main feature in self-learning is that the learner does not tolerate any obstacle. The obstacles, if any, existing in the organization are to be removed and the working environment is to become hassle-free for the employees to embrace the process of learning. The learning process is to be intuitive and the materials for learning are to be available readily and are to be easily accessible.

- **Building of learning culture in the organization** – Management may come across many barriers particularly the reluctance of employees to change their behaviour. These barriers can be removed by developing coaches and mentors in the organization to help the employees’ development. Coaches and mentors need to be rewarded for their services. The coaches and mentors are motivated to perform the tasks when they find personalized rewards available to them for the tasks. In building of a learning culture in the organization, the work culture is important. The coaches and mentors are to be assessed about their attitudes.

- **Encourage the mindset which promotes experiments** – Employees are to be encouraged to experiment with new ideas and to take calculated risks. The organization is required to encourage employees to take advantage of changes taking place in the environment. In fact, employees are required to be able to foresee changes and be prepared to conquer the changes.

- **Listen to the feedback** – The management is to listen to and consider the feedback from the learners about the effectiveness of the learning process practiced in the organization. It is better to have an online assessment tool and conduct surveys to find out the employees’ views on the learning process and build an improvement plan based on the feedback.
The organization which has a good learning culture facilitates the career enhancement of the employees. The good learning culture in the organization (i) improves employees’ engagement, (ii) makes the talented employees available in the organization for filling senior positions, (iii) helps in retaining of the talented employees, (iv) helps in meeting the present and the future needs of the talent and skills in the organization, (v) equips the employees better for the changes in the environment in which the organization is functioning, (vi) improves the performance of the employees, and (vii) increases the overall performance of the organization. The good learning culture in the organization makes the employees understand better how their work improves the performance of the organization and this in turn keeps them motivated towards their work.

There are many benefits of a cultivated learning culture in the organization. These include, but are not limited to (i) increased efficiency, productivity and profit, (ii) increased employee satisfaction and decreased turnover, (iii) an improvement in the mindset of the employees, (iv) a developed sense of ownership and accountability, (v) ease in succession/transition, (vi) a culture of knowledge inquiry and sharing, and (viii) availability of committed and result-focused employees with greater ability to deal with change.

The implementation of a learning culture in the organization results into (i) superior performance, (ii) better quality of product and services, and (iii) better customer satisfaction.
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-Dimensions of the Learning Organization - Olivier Serrat
-Learning Culture and Organizational Performance - Satyendra

Thank you