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Conditions of a Learning Organization: A Preliminary Examination

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Conditions of a Learning Organization: A Preliminary Examination

Abstract
The purpose of this preliminary investigation is to examine key aspects of a learning organization such as knowledge sharing, mentoring, and teamwork. Specifically, the study examines importance and satisfaction levels of ten conditions which may or may not exist in a work environment reported by 53 Human Resource Development (HRD) professionals. These ten conditions were developed from a content analysis of related literature. To assess the likelihood of the existence of these conditions in organizations, HRD professionals were asked to complete a survey and report importance and satisfaction levels for ten defining conditions of a learning organization. The findings showed that the mean response rate for levels of importance was higher than the mean response rate for the levels of satisfaction for every condition.

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Conditions of a Learning Organization:
A Preliminary Examination

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Abstract

The purpose of this preliminary investigation is to examine key aspects of a learning organization such as knowledge sharing, mentoring, and teamwork. Specifically, the study examines importance and satisfaction levels of ten conditions which may or may not exist in a work environment reported by 53 Human Resource Development (HRD) professionals. These ten conditions were developed from a content analysis of related literature. To assess the likelihood of the existence of these conditions in organizations, HRD professionals were asked to complete a survey and report importance and satisfaction levels for ten defining conditions of a learning organization. The findings showed that the mean response rate for levels of importance was higher than the mean response rate for the levels of satisfaction for every condition.
Chapter One

Introduction

It is becoming increasingly difficult for businesses to differentiate themselves based on information alone. All companies in a given marketplace have access to the same information. The critical strategic advantage for the 21st century will be the capability of the members of an organization to learn from that information and to apply it to create a strategic advantage (Thompson, 1994). These objectives—learning and applying—are easier said than done.

Intense and global competition, an explosion in information technology, and the emergence of a knowledge-based economy are continually reshaping the world's business environment (Thompson, 1994). As never before, global competition requires corporations to become learning organizations. A company's ability to learn and innovate is a direct driver of that organization's capability to increase revenues, profits, and economic value. In order for organizations to increase their market value to customers, they must acquire the ability to learn on a continuously ongoing fashion.

The rapid rate of change, combined with what is happening to our global economy, has brought corporations worldwide to a crisis of unprecedented proportions. Organizations no longer have the luxury of conducting business as usual. They must learn in order to adapt and change and they must change in order to survive.

A corporation that intends to become a learning organization must create the conditions within the organization that leads to what Dr. Edward Deming (1994) termed "profound knowledge." In this context, profound knowledge involves the acquisition of new knowledge and competence, as well as the ability to transfer that understanding to
others so that they can come to have the same level of knowledge together with the ability to pass it on to others (Thompson, 1994). This essential ingredient is what changes individualized learning into organizational learning. Unfortunately, these pre-conditions which promote knowledge and growth, are generally not occurring in many organizations.

A key to achieving business goals for corporations is effective sharing of knowledge of all company employees (Tobin, 1998). What's needed now is a system for teaching the entire organization to function with respect to the creativity and uniqueness of all its members, a system that gives new tools for thinking and communication, while exciting them with the new challenges their organization must face (Kline & Saunders, 1993). Unfortunately, people have taught themselves to hoard knowledge over the years to achieve power. In the United States, individuals are socialized and conditioned to learn through the acquisition and use of knowledge. However, people are not taught how to share knowledge. In the future, the most powerful individuals will be those that become a source of knowledge by voluntarily sharing the knowledge, skills, and attributes that they have acquired with others. Together, they become what is referred to as a "Learning Organization" (Tobin, 1998).

David Garvin (1993) defines a learning organization as "an organization skilled at creating, acquiring and transferring knowledge, and at modifying its behavior to reflect new knowledge and insights" (p. 24). All employees need to understand that in order for them and the organization to grow as a whole, knowledge must be acquired, and then shared with other co-workers. Learning in organizations means the continuous testing of
experience, and the transformation of that experience into knowledge, accessible to the whole organization (Senge, Ross, Smith, Roberts, & Kleiner, 1994).

There are many reasons why organizations should strive to become learning organizations. This study focuses on three. First, in order to achieve superior performance, corporations need not only to keep up with the competition, but stay ahead of it. As people learn to help themselves and others in their own learning, continuous improvement for the organization is guaranteed (Kline & Saunders, 1993).

Second, organizations should strive to become learning organizations to improve quality. There is always room for improvement in products and services an organization makes and provides. Improved quality will enhance a company's reputation to satisfy consumer demands.

Third, organizations should strive to become learning organizations in order to increase the level of self-validation and recognition. Self-validation and recognition refers to the clear understanding that one's own performance is valuable and valued. It's an opportunity to tell yourself and the groups you work with what you've accomplished. Self-validation is a celebration of accomplishments, in which the story of your achievement plays a central role (Kline & Saunders, 1993). Thus, accountability sets the stage for reward and recognition.

The learning organization of the future will incorporate diversity into its internal processes by encouraging the expression of different points of view (Heil, Parker, & Tato, 1994). Diversity of experience, education, gender, and expertise will aid any organization in attempting to understand customers, competitors, suppliers, and provide a challenging workplace for employees.
Purpose

The purpose of this preliminary study is to examine key aspects of a learning organization such as knowledge sharing, encouragement and incentive to learn, and mentoring. Specifically, the study examines ten conditions which may or may not exist in a work environment. These ten conditions were developed from an analysis of related literature and placed in survey format. To assess the likelihood of the existence of these conditions in organizations, HRD professionals were asked to report importance and satisfaction levels for ten defining conditions of a learning organization.

This paper offers a five part discussion. Chapter 1 presents the background of the study. Chapter 2 provides a review of related literature establishing the theoretical framework. Here, the concept of a "learning person," principles that promote learning, and strategies toward becoming a learning organization will be discussed. Chapter 3 discusses the methodology followed to conduct the study. The population, sample, and analysis techniques that were employed are described. Chapter 4 reports findings and results of the study. Finally, Chapter 5 offers a discussion about what the results mean, the implications of these results, and recommendations for further research based on the findings. The following chapter provides a review of related literature that focuses the context of the study with regard to the conditions which need to be in place for an organization to become a learning organization.
Chapter Two

Review of Related Literature

The purpose of this pilot study is to examine importance and satisfaction levels of a learning organization such as knowledge sharing, encouragement and incentive to learn, and mentoring. Specifically, the study examines ten conditions which may or may not exist in a work environment. To assimilate the context of the research reported in this study, Chapter Two offers a review of related literature. First, the basic concept of a learning organization is presented. Second, the definition of a "learning person" is discussed and how it is a key component of the learning organization. The following component offers the principles that promote learning in organizations. The next section focuses on organizational tools for learning. Systems thinking, teamwork, and knowledge management are discussed in the next section. The final section of this chapter focuses on the responsibilities of the CEO and the management team as far as endorsing the learning organization mindset throughout the corporation.

The Basic Concept

In 1958, Heider said that learning occurs when three conditions are met: (1) the learners can learn whatever it is we ask them to learn; (2) the learners want to learn it; and (3) the learners, because they believe that they can succeed, will try to learn. Even though this may be an older concept, the principles remain the same for today's corporations which aspire to become learning organizations. Therefore, organizations that are engaged in workplace learning initiatives, for example, are taking one step toward becoming a learning organization (Watkins, 1996).
The premise is that learning organizations should be able to forecast changes and quickly react to changes that do occur. Research suggests that they are more inclined than other corporations to adjust easily and be flexible (Goh, 1998). These types of organizations encourage their employees to expand their knowledge and seek additional responsibility (Redding, 1997). Within such entities, individual workers and groups learn, so that the entire organization has the capability of learning as an entire body (Watkins & Marsick, 1993).

A company is a learning organization to the degree that it has purposely built its capacity to learn as a whole system and woven that capacity into all aspects (Collins & Porras, 1994). These aspects include vision and strategy, leadership and management, structure, culture, and processes.

The learning organization concept challenges a company to use knowledge as a basis for its competitive strategy and to see organizational learning as the bedrock for its ability to be truly global (Craig, 1996). As a foundation for organizational transformation, the learning organization holds great promise challenging the very individuals who make up the corporation in a direct way.

The learning person. In a learning organization, the most important element in training is to help people make the transition from "performers" to "learners" (Collins, 1999). Becoming a learning person certainly involves responding to every situation with learning in mind. A true learning person creates a "to-learn" list, and the items on that list carry as much weight as the traditional "to-do" list. Appropriate emerging knowledge should be integrated into the strategic development of the organization (Bill, 1997).
Principles that promote learning. In a global economy where the only certainty is uncertainty, the one sure source of competitive advantage is knowledge. Organizations must use knowledge to continue to develop their employees and provide new products and services. From a company perspective, Tobin (1998) asserts that the key to creating knowledge and skills that support its goals is creating a positive learning environment where three conditions exist:

- All employees recognize the need for continuous learning to improve their own performance and that of the company as well.
- The company develops a culture that facilitates and encourages learning and open sharing of knowledge and ideas.
- The company provides coaching and reinforcement of newly acquired knowledge and skills. (p. 22)

A company's projects provide the key to accommodating the learning person's aspirations (Arthur & Defillippi, 1998). More broadly, a company's adoption of project-based enterprise determines its capacity to attract and retain talented knowledge workers. Project-based enterprise also involves the exchange of brought knowledge, and the pursuit of new knowledge, through collective learning endeavors. Learning persons can flourish in an organization that embraces project-based enterprising.

Many industries have also embraced the concept of "mutual learning." (Kelner & Slavin, 1998). Although mutual learning can involve formal training, its hallmark is that people learn together and from each other rather than solely from an instructor or a computer program (Kelner & Slavin, 1998). Some concepts of mutual learning include: (a) teaching people how to talk in a manner which provides meaningful dialogue; and (b)
establishing a culture that's inclusive and that enables people to work together across boundaries.

To ensure your employees' skills are on par with the competition's, create a corporate culture that supports continual learning. For decades, technology giant IBM has created a continuous learning culture. The company offers at least forty hours a year of training per employee. (This amount of training is exceptional when compared to an average of 32 hours of training, according to the 1997 American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) benchmarking forum (Solomon, 1999). In today's competitive business environment, people can learn all of the skills they need to be successful, but that learning could be wasted if they don't see the value in skill development.

There are other factors which make it necessary to create a learning environment that supports development. Two of these factors are the stiff competition for high-quality employees and the need to improve organizational performance. With tight labor markets, organizations have to maintain job satisfaction in their leaders and high-potential employees.

Facilitators and inhibitors in the learning environment can determine whether the continuous learning cycle is reinforced or disrupted. Senge (1991) says that a positive learning environment is made up of the following four principles:

1. Individuals are aware of the "big picture." They have a shared understanding of what the organization is trying to accomplish and how their unit and their job relates to others in the organization (Senge, 1991).

2. Individuals are assigned tasks where they can apply what they have learned and where they are stretched and challenged (Dubin, 1990). Unfortunately, many individuals
are assigned tasks that do not allow them to utilize newly acquired skills (Ford, Quinones, Sego, & Sorra, 1992).

3. Mistakes are tolerated during learning and early application, when individuals are trying new ideas and skills (Gundry, Kickul, & Prather, 1994). In contrast, in some organizations, tasks are assigned strictly to avoid the likelihood of mistakes and never to promote learning. Fear can inhibit learning, initiative, and innovation (Suarez, 1994).

4. Supervisors and co-workers provide support allowing individuals to learn and attempt to implement new ideas. For example, do people reschedule work so that an employee can attend training? Does the supervisor discuss upcoming training programs (Hall, 1986)? When people return from training, do they share what they have learned with others?

Organizational tools for learning. Merriam and Caffarella (1991) conclude that adults engage in learning for the sake of learning, and holistic development essentially involves giving adults the space and support to learn. The ultimate challenge in organizations is to harness adult learners' propensity to be self-directed learners and not create barriers that prevent or discourage it (Bierma, 1996).

For over ten years, instituting Total Quality Management (TQM) programs has been a focus of intervention for many practitioners (DiBella, 1997). Building on the notion of continuous improvement, an essential ingredient of TQM, many HRD practitioners now focus on creating learning organizations. Staff members must be involved by quality practitioners in learning interventions. The International Consortium for Executive Development Research devised a tool known as The Organizational Learning Inventory (OLI) (DiBella, 1997), which is designed as a participatory group exercise by members.
of an organization. With the assistance from a trained facilitator, groups generate their learning profile and recognize unique resources and capabilities. As organizations seek to establish the conditions for learning, there is an emerging need for tools that measure or assess organizational learning.

Belasco (1998) asserts that organizations do not learn, rather the people inside them do. There are three concepts which Belasco (1998) argues promote learning. First, organizations must get serious about earning top financial returns by investing in learning. Here, corporations should ask themselves, "Are we investing sufficiently in learning to generate the growth and return we need?" Second, organizations should try to imagine what their customers really want to buy. Building on-the-job learning experiences is one way to foster this. The best learning occurs on the job between a coach or mentor and a specific person with a desire to master a specific skill, behavior, or thought process. Once all employees enhance their knowledge and skills, they can effectively produce the products that their customers need. Third, education is based on doing a better job for the customer and involves specific on-the-job activities. Again, this idea focuses on individuals becoming a coach in order to help people move from one place to another. In organizations, a coach helps a person move from one capability or emotional, psychological, or physical "place" to another. The coach helps individuals progress from one skill or performance level to another.

Black and Synan, (1997) contend that there are seven learning virtues which must be in place within organizations in order for individuals to learn and increase their work outputs:
1. Motive. This entails working toward the same objective without hidden agendas. 2. Spirit. Enthusiasm and a positive outlook help the process of finding good solutions. 3. Detachment. Holding any preconceived ideas, positions, or answers conflicts with finding new solutions. 4. Attraction. Having an eagerness to hear the contributions of others brings forth better ideas. 5. Moderation. Helps in consultation, arrogance or patronizing attitudes undermine it. 6. Patience. Poise under stress allow the best solutions to develop. 7. Helpfulness. Having an attitude that the group comes before self. Everyone in the organization should be encouraged to contribute. (p. 70)

Other organizations tend to emphasize the use of action learning, a systematic process that requires that project teams and other units not only solve problems and complete projects, but reflect on learning from each episode, and bank this learning in institutional memory (Brenneman, Keys, & Fulmer, 1998). In some learning organizations, action learning focuses on business results, the engagement of senior leadership, and the involvement of personnel at all levels.

Before starting to assess whether they have the knowledge and skill base needed for future success, companies must first define the desired end result. Basically, what knowledge and skills must the company have to succeed in the future? Only with this information can companies start to assess their current stocks and, as a result, determine what they need to do to get from the current state to the desired future state (Tobin, 1996). In order for companies to translate their goals into knowledge and skill requirements, they must ask questions such as: Is the company planning to "go global"? What new knowledge and skills will employees need to do business in the global community? Are the company's future products or services going to be based on new
materials or technologies? As organizations start their journey, they must know their starting point and desired destination before selecting the best route to get from here to there. Without a sense of purpose, HRD practitioners may successfully complete many projects or activities but may never know how they are contributing to the organization or to improvements in job performance. Having industry awareness, which is an understanding of the vision, strategy, and goals of the organization, will help HRD professionals keep their corporations competitive and ready to overcome obstacles.

**Systems Thinking, Teamwork, and Knowledge Management**

Learning in organizations may be thought of as a system or, perhaps more precisely, a flow process that often needs to be unlocked or released within individuals and organizations (Fullmer, Gibbs, & Keys, 1998). Systems thinking is a discipline for seeing the "structures" that underlie complex situations (Senge, 1990). Systems thinking helps individuals see patterns and creates the ability to reinforce or change these patterns when needed. This approach clarifies the "big picture" and assists in understanding the patterns of interrelationships.

Organizations can create contexts in which they enable individuals to seek and acquire new knowledge (Fullmer, et al., 1998). However, it's the individual who has the skill or the competence to be enabled to do something; to create action and achieve results. A corporation must recognize that the collective knowledge and skills of its employees provide the company's only source of sustainable competitive advantage. The knowledge and skills of all employees regardless of level, will help meet individual and overall company goals.
The ability to learn faster becomes even more significant as organizations become more knowledge-based. The first step is to develop a strategy that creates a stimulating climate for a faster learning organization (Guns, 1998). Openness to learning is necessary for faster learning. Individual and team learning demands competence, reflection, and transformation that can thrive only in a faster learning climate, stimulated by challenging and supporting leaders. When a reawakening of interest in learning is established, the critical first step in creating a faster learning organization has been accomplished.

Teamwork is also extremely critical to successful use of talent, skills, and competencies. All members of a team and organization have something to share with others and something to learn (Kaye & Hogan, 1999). Team members who want to build a successful learning organization must learn to function in a tumultuous environment that includes constantly changing priorities, technology, and the basic skills just to get the job done. Unfortunately, many organizations fail not only to meet the needs of team members at the precise time they need help, but also to equip employees with the ability to effectively seek their own information, guidance, and resources. The workplace is changing too rapidly and the stakes are too high not to take advantage of the "intellectual capital" possessed by all employees.

The knowledge management process is another principle which promotes and encourages learning among individuals and teams in organizations. Knowledge management relies heavily on the use of "learning communities" which involve informal groups of people that cross organizational boundaries and come together to discuss best practices, issues or skills that the group wants to learn about (Martiny, 1998). Hewlett-Packard's Chairman and CEO, Lew Platt, endorsed the knowledge management concept
and found that employees are willing to share and reuse knowledge if they feel it is a desirable and expected behavior (Martiny, 1998).

When employees have acquired much knowledge, skills, and attributes but do not share them with one another, it's very difficult for an organization to grow and prosper. Knowledge sharing occurs when people are genuinely interested in helping one another develop new capacities for action, it is about creating learning processes (Senge, 1998). These expectations need to be made clear to all employees by senior management so they are not perceived as "quick fixes." Much of the knowledge that exists within corporations is just like the chemistry of a fine football team. It's a group of people who have learned what it means to function together. This attitude takes a certain mindset and a lot of patience and practice.

**Concepts which promote learning.** The use of facilitating factors in organizations also promote learning. Facilitating factors are normative, that is, the more each is prevalent in an organizational unit the more opportunity for learning exists. Facilitating factors are the practices or conditions that promote learning within all kinds of organizations (DiBella & Nevis, 1998). The presence of these factors determines the efficiency and effectiveness of learning systems within corporations.

Organized learning principles enhance an employee's capacity to act, and help companies adapt quickly and set achievable goals to remain competitive (Bencivenga, 1995). The principles require companies to change their culture, challenge previously held assumptions, and eliminate the "we've always done it this way" approach. By using these principles, employees in learning organizations are given a role in determining goals and must be able to communicate honestly, without being ridiculed.
Disciplines toward becoming a learning organization. Given the infancy in the overall understanding of the theory and practice of the learning organization, corporations would make a serious error in thinking that becoming a learning organization is simply a matter of implementing what has been learned already. Organizations must remember that there is not a "blueprint" to follow in order to become a learning organization. A blueprint does not exist because all companies have different customers, suppliers, and employees.

People's understanding of the learning organization needs to be viewed as a progression of approaches that begins with "T" (training) groups in the 1950's and proceeds through such initiatives as MBOs (management by objectives) in the 1960's, strategic planning in the 1970's, and Quality Circles in the 1980's (Craig, 1996).

Senge (1994) describes five disciplines which are necessary for an organization to become a learning organization. The purpose of the disciplines is to increase capacity of individuals, teams, and, by extension, the entire organization to create a community realizing a deeply held vision shared by the members.

1) Personal Mastery. Personal mastery is the discipline of continually clarifying and deepening personal vision, of focusing energies, of developing patience, and of seeing reality objectively.

2) Mental Models. Mental models are deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, or even pictures of images that influence how we understand the world and how we take action. They explain our biases, our tendency toward stereotyping.

3) Building Shared Vision. This discipline takes individual visions and ties them into a shared vision, galvanizing a group to achieve its goal.
(4) Team Learning. Team learning starts with dialogue. Teams, not individuals, are the fundamental learning unit in modern organizations; unless the team can learn, the organization cannot learn.

(5) Systems Thinking. This is called the fifth discipline because it ties all the previous four disciplines together. Systems thinking is a framework for seeing interrelationships rather than things, for seeing patterns of change rather than static snapshots (Galagan, 1991).

Identifying the learning agenda requires planning and personal organizational commitment. The decisions that are agreed upon will determine how dedicated the company is to becoming a learning organization and how much benefit can be derived from its practice (Caffarella, 1994). It is a question of priorities: Does the company place greater value on the answers it receives to questions or on discovering how the organization processes information to arrive at those answers?

Responsibilities of the CEO and the management team. The enterprise leader, the CEO, and the management team are guides to the future. To develop a distinctive point of view about the future, a senior management team must be willing to spend 20-50 percent of its time working towards that vision (Jamieson & O’mara, 1991). The CEO must have a clearly thought out and easy to understand plan for turning the organization into a learning organization. He or she must develop and sustain an environment favorable to learning at every level, to reawaken and stimulate the power and joy of learning in all the members of the organization (Kline & Saunders, 1993). The CEO must be willing to continually revisit that point of view, elaborating and adjusting it as the future unfolds.
The CEO has a special responsibility to have the executive team engage in learning (Kolberg & Smith, 1992). He or she must do more than just endorse the learning organization concept. It means that the executive team needs to address issues that prepare the organization for the future. For example, the executive team could spend at least one week per quarter examining a major issue that will have strategic impact on the organization's future. Timely meetings can be an overall part of getting the organization ready to compete well into the next millennium.

Managers usually have direct contact with their subordinates, so instilling in them the desire to learn and seek knowledge can be attainable. How supervisors choose to manage either will release the energies of their associates in the pursuit of a common vision or will inhibit their ability to perform and contribute (Nadler, 1980). Effective managers tend to be people-oriented individuals who thrive on personal contact. Most supervisors take great pride in developing their workers so that they in turn can set clear performance goals.

The learning organization is dependent on everyone in it. In the past, an organization could be successful if it had a sustainable core of motivated, intelligent individuals to steer it. Today, however, the high-performance organization depends on everyone (Rothwell & Sredl, 1992). Everyone must learn about customers, competitors, and the company’s own aspirations, not just top management.

Developing competence in the practice of the learning organization requires some fundamental shifts in our understanding of how learning influences the way work is organized and how work is to be accomplished (Tracey, 1994). HRD professionals have seen that work is becoming more open and therefore more public; it is always in progress.
and therefore subject to new influences. Therefore, all participants in organizational work are called to develop an ongoing dedication toward their continued development.

Significant change towards becoming a learning organization will require imagination, perseverance, dialogue, and a willingness to change on the part of everyone in the corporation (Gephart, Marsick, & Van Buren, 1996). Everyone must be willing to deal with the obstacles and challenges which pose themselves by working as a team in pursuit of common goals and ideals. These challenges cannot be met solely by senior leaders who work with the CEO. They will require a unique mix of different people, in various positions, who are committed and dedicated.

When implementing learning organization initiatives, corporations should start out slow and incorporate several low-risk pilot tests. Through trial and error, a company can discover its own path towards becoming a learning organization. Failures can then be viewed as learning opportunities and successes celebrated and leveraged throughout the company. To be successful, a learning organization initiative has to be institutionalized and made a way of life in a company (Nevis, Dibella, & Gould, 1995).

The learning organization requires systems to ensure that its own ideas and processes can be challenged and reviewed (Burgoyne, 1999). In principle, it must be continually improving itself. Initiatives must be open for review to make sure that the proper steps toward becoming a learning organization are being implemented. Managers and supervisors ought to be clearer about where the collective learning process takes place and where the consequent knowledge is located. This knowledge is in people's heads, in technology, databases, and training programs.
Gaining a competitive edge through learning is a strategy more and more organizations are turning to in order to enhance their standing in today's globally competitive business environment (Bierma & Berdish, 1999). Organizations can achieve a competitive edge by: cultivating a supportive learning culture, promoting learning organization awareness, building capacity and involvement, and learning faster than the competition.

Inviting a leader of a learning organization to speak at one's corporation can help all employees get first-hand knowledge of the strategies and obstacles that must be used and overcome in order to become a learning organization. Corporations can also invite a leading consultant or researcher in organizational learning theory and practice to come and present his or her ideas (Dixon, 1994). The concept here is to promote the idea of a learning organization to employees so that they can see and literally hear from peers the overall benefits.

Becoming a high-performance learning organization is the best practice needed to navigate through the turbulent future, but the transformation does not come easily. It requires a change in culture, particularly as it relates to information and relationships. Organizations with traditional cultures are typically organized as bureaucracies, command-and-control structures or functional silos (Weathersby, 1999). In these corporations, the sharing of knowledge among people is not deemed important as long as the "job gets done." These organizations fail to realize that eventually, the job won't get done if employees cannot find quicker and better ways to satisfy customers. For organizations to become learning organizations, they must adopt a people-centered
approach. That is, providing a caring community that nurtures, values, and supports the well-being of every individual.

The process of changing from "business as usual" to embracing organizational learning as a way of life requires an unusual degree of commitment, because it insists that large numbers of people change the way they think and act (Fulmer & Keys, 1998). To understand this dynamic, consider that you are never going to bring about change in every part of a large organization at the same time. There will be certain areas where people are predisposed to change and, others, who are not.

The role of all leaders in organizations is to set the necessary conditions for the organization to develop an effective learning capability. That is, managers need to take strategic action and make specific interventions to ensure that learning can occur (Shaw & Perkins, 1991). Hopefully, when these conditions are in place, those individuals who initially were reluctant to change, will embrace learning. Enhancing the learning capability of organizations is a must in order for them to compete and stay ahead of the competition. In learning organizations, leaders should also be willing to accept criticism without being overly defensive and learn from it (Goh, 1998). When leaders and employees can work together to help the organization remain competitive, learning becomes accepted and possibly even fun.

Learning to see people as vital resources is a major mind shift for some line managers, and learning to focus on business results is a major shift for some HRD professionals (Rothwell, Sanders, & Soper, 1999). Both of these elements must come together so everyone in the corporation can make strides towards becoming a top-notch learning organization. Everyone should realize that, without people, a business is nothing,
and without business results, people may lose their jobs. People must realize that the issue is not whether learning will occur, but how well that learning will achieve beneficial results for individuals and organizations.

Conclusion

Learning in the workplace is often problem oriented or problem driven. Few people in the workplace have the time to pursue learning for its own sake (Rothwell, et al). They are more likely to pursue learning when it helps them confront and address life and work challenges. Organizations, supervisors, and co-workers can support or impede learning. A learning organization creates environmental conditions that support learning (Marquardt, 1996).

The proper use of support systems in organizations which aspire to become learning organizations can aid in overcoming obstacles. Sound systems for performance support and management support can provide rewards that promote learning and knowledge (Marquardt & Reynolds, 1994). For example, these systems can provide indicators of the organization's progress, identify areas of improvement, and track employees' individual development and contributions.

Memory and learning are intertwined so that they influence one another. Many people feel that learning is the acquisition of knowledge, and memory is the retention of knowledge (Kim, 1993). So, therefore, in order to deal with the continuous nature of change, learning in the workplace must remain a major focus of adult educators. Dialogue will continue to be an important component of organizational learning, as corporations embrace greater diversity and place bigger emphasis on the creation of knowledge by workers (West, 1996).
To assimilate the context of the research reported in this study, Chapter Two presented a review of the related literature. The review discussed what a learning person is and its correlation with organizational learning. The following component offered the ideas and principles that promote learning in organizations. Finally, the last portion of the literature review focused on the strategies towards becoming a successful learning organization. A description of the research methods employed in this study follows in Chapter Three.
Chapter Three

Methodology

The purpose of this preliminary study is to examine key aspects of a learning organization such as knowledge sharing, encouragement and incentive to learn, and mentoring. Specifically, the study examines ten conditions which may or may not exist in a work environment. These ten conditions were developed from an analysis of related literature. To assess the likelihood of the existence of these conditions in organizations, HRD professionals were asked to complete a survey and report importance and satisfaction levels for ten defining conditions of a learning organization. The research reported here focuses on HRD professionals' opinions and impressions regarding issues such as workplace learning and performance improvement. Chapter Three describes the research methods followed to conduct this investigation. First, the target population and sample are described. Second, a description of the data collection is presented. Third, variables used in this study are defined. Finally, how these data were analyzed is detailed.

Target Population and Sample

The target population consists of HRD professionals currently employed in the field. To access a wide range of HRD professionals, the sample is comprised of members of the Rochester, New York Chapter of the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) organization and members of the TRDEV-L listserv. The ASTD Rochester Chapter consists of 178 members. Founded in 1944, ASTD is a professional association formed to provide leadership to individuals, organizations, and society, to achieve work-related competence, performance, and fulfillment to HRD professionals. A listserv is a web-based open discussion forum targeted toward specific groups or professions. The
TRDEV-L listserv has more than 5,000 members in the training and development field around the world. This listserv is designed to target HRD managers and professionals, college professors in HRD relevant disciplines, and college students studying in HRD relevant programs.

Data Collection and Sampling Technique

The Process

Data were collected through the use of survey research in two phases: (a) from the ASTD Rochester Chapter, and (b) from the TRDEV-L listserv. Members of the sample were contacted to access an online questionnaire. This online questionnaire allowed respondents to complete the survey through electronic media. This media is designed to automatically compile responses into a database. Here, the number of responses are observed. These data can then be downloaded from its online website into an Excel spreadsheet in preparation for analysis. Data were then analyzed and results reported.

Phase 1—Group One. For the purposes of this study, 178 ASTD Rochester participants were contacted through a formal letter of invitation asking them to complete a self-administered online questionnaire (See Appendix A). Participants were instructed to access the questionnaire through the St. John Fisher College Graduate Human Resource Development web page at http://home.sjfc.edu/~hrd/index.htm (See Appendix B). These respondents were able to access the online survey for a period of six weeks. At the end of the six weeks, the survey was inaccessible. The number of responses were calculated and data were downloaded into an Excel spreadsheet where analysis was conducted. Eleven responses were collected thus the rate of return (ROR) in Phase 1 was 3%.
Phase 2—Group Two. The invitation was posted once on the TRDEV-L listserv. At this time, the survey was accessible for a period of ten days. At the end of this period of time, the number of responses was calculated, data were downloaded into an Excel spreadsheet where analysis was conducted. In Phase 2, 41 responses were collected.

Sampling

Non-probability sampling techniques were employed. Specifically, Purposive Judgement Sampling was utilized. This type of non-probability sampling is appropriate in the early stages of an exploratory study when the researcher wishes to select a biased group for screening purposes (Cooper & Schindler, 1998). The rationale is that one would expect that the target audience would be more favorably disposed to an idea or product (e.g., the content or direction of a survey; the desired approach to a training or organization development program). In this type of situation, if the idea or product does not pass this group, it does not have the necessary prospects for success. Purposive Judgement Sampling is appropriate for this examination because it is a pilot for a larger study seeking to identify pertinent data with respect to the existing status and conditions of a learning organization. This study seeks only to establish survey content for the larger study. The foundation and impetus for the larger study rests on the results of this pilot.

Survey Instrument

The survey was developed and administered as an self-administered online web-based questionnaire. Here, ten conditions were created for respondents to rate levels of importance and satisfaction (See Appendix A). To create these conditions, an extensive literature review was conducted. Here, sixty research-based and non-research-based articles were examined. The intent of this examination was to uncover conditions
described as necessary or essential for an organization to be considered a “learning organization.” To conduct the examination, content analysis was employed. Content analysis examines the frequency with which certain characterizations or descriptions are used (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). To conduct this form of analysis, “the emphasis is on adjectives, adverbs, descriptive phrases and qualifiers rather than the targets of these parts of speech” (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990, p. 107). In the central idea of content analysis, text is reduced to categories consisting of a word, set of words, or phrases on which the researcher can focus. Specific words or patterns are indicative of the research question and determine levels of analysis and generalization. To conduct this analysis, a conceptual model was applied:

Traditionally, content analysis has most often been thought of in terms of conceptual analysis. In conceptual analysis, a concept is chosen for examination, and the analysis involves quantifying and tallying its presence. Also known as thematic analysis the focus here is on looking at the occurrence of selected terms within a text or texts, although the terms may be implicit as well as explicit. While explicit terms obviously are easy to identify, coding for implicit terms and deciding their level of implication is complicated by the need to base judgments on a somewhat subjective system. To attempt to limit the subjectivity, then coding such implicit terms usually involves the use of either a specialized dictionary or contextual translation rules.

(http://gopher.colostate.edu/Depts/WritingCenter/references/research/content/page2.htm)

In this phase, eight steps recommended by Colorado State University were followed.
Figure 1. Content analysis process utilized to develop the ten conditions for the learning organization assessment and climate study survey: Steps followed and resulting outcomes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps Followed</th>
<th>Resulting Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Determine level of analysis.</td>
<td>• Primary and secondary descriptors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Decide how many concepts to code for.</td>
<td>• 10 most relevant categories were determined based on a preliminary assessment of the literature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Decide whether to code for existence or frequency of a concept.</td>
<td>• Frequency of occurrence of concept.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Decide on how you will distinguish among concepts.</td>
<td>• Create categories based on topics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Develop rules for coding your texts.</td>
<td>• Concepts may be coded exactly as they appear or in different forms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Decide what to do with &quot;irrelevant&quot; information.</td>
<td>• Descriptors focused on organizational learning only. Irrelevant information ignored.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Code the texts.</td>
<td>• Manually writing down concept occurrences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Analyze your results.</td>
<td>• 10 conditions confirmed with substantial amount of extrapolated information.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Using this method, primary and secondary descriptors were counted and documented. In this study, a descriptor is defined as a word, a series of words, a phrase, or a statement that (a) describes observable conditions; or (b) details observable characteristics of a
learning organization. A primary descriptor is one that was observed in the literature ten or more times. A secondary descriptor is one that was observed and counted between five to nine times. These descriptors became the basis of the ten conditions presented in the questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed and piloted by eleven volunteers. These volunteers were HRD professionals. This pilot study was conducted to confirm or discount any of the ten conditions and to assess the ease-of-access of the online presentation of the survey.

Unsupervised self-administered questionnaire. This type of questionnaire is one that is designed to be completely self sufficient or able to stand alone, and is self-administered by the respondent because there is no official administrator available (Fink, 1995). The advantages to this type of data collection include lower costs compared to other methods (e.g., in-person and telephone interviews), consistent stimulus to all respondents, and the possibility of more representative samples. The disadvantages include no control over who responds, no direct information on answerability of questions, and the questionnaire must stand alone. These disadvantages also become limitations of the study. The online questionnaire, or survey, asked respondents to make two judgments for ten specific conditions relating to learning and knowledge sharing (See Appendix B).

Web-based surveys. Web-based surveys have many advantages over traditional methods. First, there are no interviewers involved. Respondents can complete the survey without feeling uncomfortable or embarrassed because anonymity is ensured (McCullough, 1998). Second, with a web-based survey, the questionnaire is posted on a secure Web site. Respondents can visit the web-site on their own time and submit their replies. Third, Web-based surveys significantly reduce the need for paper, postage,
mailout, and data entry costs (Dillman, 2000). Fourth, on-line research is fast. You can start surveying people and begin receiving results within twenty-four hours. Finally, Web surveys not only have a more refined appearance to which color may be added, but also provide survey capabilities far beyond those available for any other type of self-administered questionnaire.

Survey completion instructions. To complete the survey, participants were asked to respond in three areas. First, respondents were asked to rate the level of importance of each condition statement. Second, they were asked to indicate how satisfied they were with the condition as it currently exists in their organization. To capture the characteristics of the sample, biographical information was also collected. This information includes age, race/ethnicity, gender, and size of organization.

Data Analysis

Variables. The variables measure levels of importance and levels of satisfaction on a five point rating scale for ten conditions. Zero indicates that a respondent views a condition statement as not important or is not at all satisfied with that condition. A rating of four is the highest rating on the questionnaire, and indicates that a specific condition is very important or that the level of satisfaction for that condition is extremely high. Figure 2 illustrates an example of the rating scales.
Figure 2. Example of importance and satisfaction level rating scales.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance Level Judgements</th>
<th>Of no Importance</th>
<th>Of little Importance</th>
<th>Of moderate Importance</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How important is this condition to you?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satisfaction Level Judgements</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Hardly</th>
<th>Moderately Satisfied</th>
<th>Very Satisfied</th>
<th>Extremely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How satisfied are you with the current status of this condition in your organization?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once the data were collected, frequencies and means were computed for both Phases 1 and 2. These calculations determined the frequency of responses and the average response for each of the ten conditions. Mean responses of Phase 1 and Phase 2 were compared. This comparison was conducted to determine similarities or differences between the two groups. This comparison will provide a preliminary determination of validity of the condition statements prior to more rigorous analysis techniques. This output provides a foundation on which a more sophisticated questionnaire will be created.
The goals of that questionnaire are beyond the scope of this study and this immediate discussion.

To assimilate the context of the research reported in this study, Chapter Three presented a description of the research methods employed. Chapter Four presents the findings of this study.
Chapter Four

Findings

The purpose of this preliminary study is to examine key aspects of a learning organization such as knowledge sharing, encouragement and incentive to learn, and mentoring. Specifically, the study examines importance and satisfaction levels of ten conditions which may or may not exist in a work environment reported by 53 HRD professionals. To assess the likelihood of the existence of these conditions in organizations, HRD professionals were asked to complete a survey and report importance and satisfaction levels. As a pilot to a larger study in progress, the research reported here focuses on HRD professionals' opinions and impressions regarding issues such as workplace learning and performance improvement.

The population and sample consisted of HRD professionals currently employed in the field. The study was conducted in two phases collecting data from two distinct groups. Group One was comprised of members of the Rochester, New York Chapter of the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) organization. Group two consisted of members of the TREDEV-L listserv. The ASTD Rochester Chapter consists of 178 members. The TREDEV-L is an internationally utilized discussion group serving an excess of 5000 HRD professionals.

Data were collected through the use of survey research. Participants were contacted through a formal letter of invitation which asked them to complete a self-administered questionnaire online (See Appendix A). The questionnaire was accessed through the GHRD web page at http://home.sjfc.edu/~hrd/index.htm (See Appendix B). The online questionnaire asked respondents to make two judgements for ten specific conditions.
relating to learning and knowledge sharing. The following portion of the chapter shows the results of the online survey. Table 1 shows analysis results of Phase 1—Group One of the study by condition.

Phase 1—Group One

Table 1 shows the importance and satisfaction levels, frequencies and means, for Group One by condition. Table 1 begins on page 36.

Condition 1. Senior management is committed to making learning capability a key part of its ongoing competitive advantage: The mean importance level response was 3.45. The most frequently selected response was Very Important (6). The mean satisfaction level response was 2.55 with the most frequently selected response being Moderately Satisfied (5).

Condition 2. A compelling vision of the desired learning organization that people feel part of and excited by: This condition resulted in 3.55 as the mean response for the level of importance and 2.18 as the mean response for level of satisfaction. Here, the ratings Important (6) and Moderately Satisfied (5) yielded the highest number of responses.

Condition 3. Multiple feedback structures exist: The mean importance level response was 3.55. The most frequently selected response was Very Important (6). The mean satisfaction level response was 2.45. The most frequently selected response was Very Satisfied (5).

Condition 4. There is a sense of urgency, but no quick fixes: The mean importance level was 3.18 and the mean response for the level of satisfaction was 2.45. Here, the ratings Important (5) and Very Important (4) and Moderately Satisfied (5) and Very Satisfied (4) yielded the highest number of responses.
Condition 5. There is encouragement and incentive to learn: This condition resulted in 3.45 as the mean response for the level of importance and 2.45 as the mean response for the level of satisfaction. The most frequently selected responses were Very Important (7) and Very Satisfied (5).

Condition 6. Teamwork, quality, and creativity are strongly supported: This condition resulted in 3.82 as the mean response for the level of importance and 2.00 as the mean response for the level of satisfaction. Here, the ratings Very Important (4) and Important (4) and Moderately Satisfied (4) and Very Satisfied (4) yielded the highest number of responses.

Condition 7. Employees are trusted to choose the predetermined training courses that they believe they need: The mean importance level response was 3.09. The most frequently selected response was Very Important (4). The mean satisfaction level response was 2.09 with the most frequently selected response being Very Satisfied (4).

Condition 8. Job rotation and mentoring are the rule, not the exception: This condition resulted in 3.00 as the mean response for the level of importance and 1.55 as the mean response for the level of satisfaction. Here, the ratings Important (6) and Moderately Satisfied (4) yielded the highest number of responses.

Condition 9. All individuals, regardless of position, have equal access to learning: The mean importance level response was 3.55. The most frequently selected response was Very Important (8). The mean satisfaction level response was 2.55 with the most frequently selected response being Very Satisfied (3).

Condition 10. Mistakes are treated as learning opportunities: This condition resulted in 3.55 as the mean response for the level of importance and 2.27 as the mean response
for the level of satisfaction. Here, the ratings Very Important (7) and Moderately Satisfied yielded the highest number of responses.

**Phase 2—Group 2**

Table 2 shows the importance and satisfaction levels, frequencies and means, for Group Two by condition. Table 2 begins on page 43.

**Condition 1.** Senior management is committed to making learning capability a key part of its ongoing competitive advantage: This condition resulted in 3.47 as the mean response for the level of importance. The most frequently selected response was Very Important (26). The mean satisfaction level response was 1.75 with the most frequently selected response being Moderately Satisfied (24).

**Condition 2.** A compelling vision of the desired learning organization that people feel part of and excited by: This condition resulted in 3.23 as the mean response for the level of importance and 1.45 as the mean response for the level of satisfaction. The ratings Very Important (19) and Hardly Satisfied (21) yielded the highest number of responses.

**Condition 3.** Multiple feedback structures exist: The mean importance level was 2.98. The most frequently selected response was Important (23). The mean satisfaction level response was 1.70 with the most frequently selected response being Moderately Satisfied (16).

**Condition 4.** There is a sense of organizational urgency, but no quick fixes: This condition resulted in 2.95 as the mean response for the level of importance and 1.35 as the mean response for the level of satisfaction. Here, the ratings Important (16) and Moderately Satisfied (21) yielded the highest number of responses.
Table 1. Importance and Satisfaction Levels: Frequencies and Mean Response Level by Condition For Group One

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition 1. Senior management is committed to making learning capability a key part of its ongoing competitive advantage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>How important is this condition to respondents?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Frequency of Responses</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of No Importance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Condition 2. A compelling vision of the desired learning organization that people feel part of and excited by.

| **How important is this condition to respondents?** | **Mean Response** | **How satisfied are respondents with the current status of this condition in their organization?** | **Mean Response** |
| **Frequency of Responses** | **Of No Importance** | **Of Little Importance** | **Of Moderate Importance** | **Important** | **Very Important** | **Not at all Satisfied** | **Hardly Satisfied** | **Moderately Satisfied** | **Very Satisfied** | **Extremely Satisfied** | **2.18** |
| Of No Importance | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 5 |

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Importance and Satisfaction Levels: Frequencies and Mean Response Level by Condition For Group One

Condition 3. Multiple feedback structures exist.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of Responses</th>
<th>Mean Response</th>
<th>Frequency of Responses</th>
<th>Mean Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Of No Importance 0</td>
<td></td>
<td>Not at all Satisfied 0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of Little Importance 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hardly Satisfied 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of Moderate Importance 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Moderately Satisfied 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Very Satisfied 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Important 4</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>Extremely Satisfied 4</td>
<td>2.45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Of No Importance 0     |               | 0                      |               |
| Of Little Importance 1 |               | 2                      |               |
| Of Moderate Importance 2|               | 5                      |               |
| Important 3            |               | 6                      |               |

Condition 4. There is a sense of organizational urgency, but no quick fixes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of Responses</th>
<th>Mean Response</th>
<th>Frequency of Responses</th>
<th>Mean Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Of No Importance 0</td>
<td></td>
<td>Not at all Satisfied 0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of Little Importance 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hardly Satisfied 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of Moderate Importance 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Moderately Satisfied 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Very Satisfied 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Important 4</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>Extremely Satisfied 4</td>
<td>2.45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Of No Importance 0     |               | 0                      |               |
| Of Little Importance 1 |               | 1                      |               |
| Of Moderate Importance 2|               | 5                      |               |
| Important 3            |               | 4                      |               |
Importance and Satisfaction Levels: Frequencies and Mean Response Level by Condition For Group One

**Condition 5. There is encouragement and incentive to learn.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How important is this condition to respondents?</th>
<th>Mean Response</th>
<th>How satisfied are respondents with the current status of this condition in their organization?</th>
<th>Mean Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of Responses</td>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency of Responses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of No Importance 0</td>
<td>Of Little Importance 1</td>
<td>Of Moderate Importance 2</td>
<td>Important 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Condition 6. Teamwork, quality, and creativity are strongly supported.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How important is this condition to respondents?</th>
<th>Mean Response</th>
<th>How satisfied are respondents with the current status of this condition in their organization?</th>
<th>Mean Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of Responses</td>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency of Responses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of No Importance 0</td>
<td>Of Little Importance 1</td>
<td>Of Moderate Importance 2</td>
<td>Important 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Importance and Satisfaction Levels: Frequencies and Mean Response Level by Condition For Group One

**Condition 7.** Employees are trusted to choose the pre-determined training courses that they believe they need.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How important is this condition to respondents?</th>
<th>Mean Response</th>
<th>How satisfied are respondents with the current status of this condition in their organization?</th>
<th>Mean Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of Responses</td>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency of Responses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of No Importance</td>
<td>Of Little Importance</td>
<td>Of Moderate Importance</td>
<td>Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Condition 8.** Job rotation and mentoring are the rule, not the exception.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How important is this condition to respondents?</th>
<th>Mean Response</th>
<th>How satisfied are respondents with the current status of this condition in their organization?</th>
<th>Mean Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of Responses</td>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency of Responses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of No Importance</td>
<td>Of Little Importance</td>
<td>Of Moderate Importance</td>
<td>Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Importance and Satisfaction Levels: Frequencies and Mean Response Level by Condition For Group One

**Condition 9. All individuals, regardless of position, have equal access to learning.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How important is this condition to respondents?</th>
<th>Mean Response</th>
<th>How satisfied are respondents with the current status of this condition in their organization?</th>
<th>Mean Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of Responses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of No Importance</td>
<td>Of Little Importance</td>
<td>Of Moderate Importance</td>
<td>Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Condition 10. Mistakes are treated as learning opportunities.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How important is this condition to respondents?</th>
<th>Mean Response</th>
<th>How satisfied are respondents with the current status of this condition in their organization?</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of Responses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of No Importance</td>
<td>Of Little Importance</td>
<td>Of Moderate Importance</td>
<td>Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Condition 5. There is encouragement and incentive to learn: The mean importance level response was 3.47. For this condition, the most frequently selected response was Very Important (25). The mean satisfaction level response was 1.62 with the most frequently selected response being Moderately Satisfied (15).

Condition 6. Teamwork, quality, and creativity are strongly supported: This condition resulted in 3.45 as the mean response for the level of importance. The mean response for the level of satisfaction was 1.93. For this condition, the ratings, Very Important (22) and Moderately Satisfied (19) yielded the highest number of responses.

Condition 7. Employees are trusted to choose the pre-determined training courses that they believe they need: This condition resulted in 2.70 as the mean response for the level of importance and 1.73 as the mean response for the level of satisfaction. Here, the ratings Important (19) and Moderately Satisfied (16) yielded the highest number of responses.

Condition 8. Job rotation and mentoring are the rule, not the exception: The mean importance level response was 2.20. The two most frequently selected responses were Of Moderate Importance (15) and Important (15). The mean satisfaction level response was 1.34 with the most frequently selected response being Hardly Satisfied (15).

Condition 9. All individuals, regardless of position, have equal access to learning: This condition had a mean response rate of 3.25 for the level of importance and 1.65 for the mean response level of satisfaction. For this condition, the ratings Very Important (19) and Hardly Satisfied (14 ) yielded the highest number of responses.

Condition 10. Mistakes are treated as learning opportunities: The mean importance level response was 3.30. The most frequently selected response was Very
Important (20). The mean satisfaction level response was 1.68 with the most frequently selected response being Moderately Satisfied (15).

Comparison of Means by Group and By Condition

Table 3 (page 48) presents mean results by group and by condition. The condition which had the highest level of importance for Group One was 6. Conditions 2, 3, 9, and 10 had the second highest level of importance. The two conditions which had the highest level of satisfaction for Group One were 1 and 9. Conditions 3, 4, and 5 had the second highest levels of satisfaction for Group One. The conditions which had the highest level of importance for Group Two were 1 and 5. Condition 6 had the second highest level of importance for Group Two. Condition 6 had the highest level of satisfaction for Group Two. Condition 1 had the second highest level of satisfaction for Group 2.

Table 4 (page 48) displays the common mean response rate for the levels of importance and satisfaction for Group One and Group Two. Only condition 6 had the highest common importance level response for Group One and Group Two. There were not any common mean satisfaction level responses for Group One or Group Two.

Synthesis

The five conditions which had the highest levels of importance for Group One were 2, 3, 6, 9, and 10. The five conditions which had the highest levels of satisfaction for Group One were 1, 3, 4, 5, and 9. The five conditions which had the highest levels of importance for Group Two were 1, 5, 6, 9, and 10. The five conditions which had the highest level of satisfaction for Group Two were 1, 3, 6, 7, and 9.

These findings indicate that one Conditions 6, 9, and 10 were the most important for both sets of respondents. Condition 6 states that teamwork, quality, and creativity are
Table 2. Importance and Satisfaction Levels: Frequencies and Mean Response Level by Condition For Group Two

| Condition 1. Senior management is committed to making learning capability a key part of its ongoing competitive advantage. |
| --- | --- |
| How important is this condition to respondents? | Mean Response | How satisfied are respondents with the current status of this condition in their organization? | Mean Response |
| Frequency of Responses | 3.47 | Frequency of Responses | 1.75 |
| Of No Importance | 0 | Of Little Importance | 0 | Not at all Satisfied | 5 |
| Important | 7 | Very Important | 26 | Hardly Satisfied | 6 |
| Important | 7 | Moderately Satisfied | 24 | Moderately Satisfied | 4 |
| Very Important | 4 | Very Satisfied | 4 | Extremely Satisfied | 1 |

| Condition 2. A compelling vision of the desired learning organization that people feel part of and excited by. |
| --- | --- |
| How important is this condition to respondents? | Mean Response | How satisfied are respondents with the current status of this condition in their organization? | Mean Response |
| Frequency of Responses | 3.23 | Frequency of Responses | 1.45 |
| Of No Importance | 0 | Of Little Importance | 3 | Not at all Satisfied | 3 |
| Important | 4 | Important | 14 | Hardly Satisfied | 21 |
| Very Important | 4 | Very Important | 19 | Moderately Satisfied | 13 |
| Extremely Satisfied | 4 | Extremely Satisfied | 2 | Very Satisfied | 1 |
Importance and Satisfaction Levels: Frequencies and Mean Response Level by Condition For Group Two

Condition 3. Multiple feedback structures exist.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of Responses</th>
<th>Mean Response</th>
<th>How satisfied are respondents with the current status of this condition in their organization?</th>
<th>Mean Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Of No Importance</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Not at all Satisfied 0</td>
<td>1.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of Little Importance</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Hardly Satisfied 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of Moderate Importance</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Moderately Satisfied 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Very Satisfied 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Important</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Extremely Satisfied 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Condition 4. There is a sense of organizational urgency—but no quick fixes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of Responses</th>
<th>Mean Response</th>
<th>How satisfied are respondents with the current status of this condition in their organization?</th>
<th>Mean Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Of No Importance</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Not at all Satisfied 0</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of Little Importance</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Hardly Satisfied 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of Moderate Importance</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Moderately Satisfied 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Very Satisfied 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Important</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Extremely Satisfied 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Importance and Satisfaction Levels: Frequencies and Mean Response Level by Condition For Group Two

**Condition 5.** There is encouragement and incentive to learn.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of Responses</th>
<th>Mean Response</th>
<th>Frequency of Responses</th>
<th>Mean Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Of No Importance 0</td>
<td>Of Little Importance 1</td>
<td>Of Moderate Importance 2</td>
<td>Important 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Condition 6.** Teamwork, quality, and creativity are strongly supported.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of Responses</th>
<th>Mean Response</th>
<th>Frequency of Responses</th>
<th>Mean Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Of No Importance 0</td>
<td>Of Little Importance 1</td>
<td>Of Moderate Importance 2</td>
<td>Important 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Importance and Satisfaction Levels: Frequencies and Mean Response Level by Condition For Group Two

**Condition 7.** Employees are trusted to choose the pre-determined training courses that they believe they need.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How important is this condition to respondents?</th>
<th>Mean Response</th>
<th>How satisfied are respondents with the current status of this condition in their organization?</th>
<th>Mean Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of Responses</td>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency of Responses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of No Importance</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Not at all Satisfied</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of Little Importance</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hardly Satisfied</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of Moderate Importance</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Moderately Satisfied</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Very Satisfied</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Important</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Extremely Satisfied</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Condition 8.** Job rotation and mentoring are the rule, not the exception.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How important is this condition to respondents?</th>
<th>Mean Response</th>
<th>How satisfied are respondents with the current status of this condition in their organization?</th>
<th>Mean Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of Responses</td>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency of Responses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of No Importance</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Not at all Satisfied</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of Little Importance</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hardly Satisfied</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of Moderate Importance</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Moderately Satisfied</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Very Satisfied</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Important</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Extremely Satisfied</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Learning Organization 46
Importance and Satisfaction Levels: Frequencies and Mean Response Level by Condition For Group Two

**Condition 9.** All individuals, regardless of position, have equal access to learning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of Responses</th>
<th>Mean Response</th>
<th>How satisfied are respondents with the current status of this condition in their organization?</th>
<th>Mean Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Of No Importance 0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Not at all Satisfied 0</td>
<td>1.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of Little Importance 1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Hardly Satisfied 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of Moderate Importance 2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Moderately Satisfied 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important 3</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Very Satisfied 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Important 4</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>Extremely Satisfied 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Condition 10.** Mistakes are treated as learning opportunities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of Responses</th>
<th>Mean Response</th>
<th>How satisfied are respondents with the current status of this condition in their organization?</th>
<th>Mean Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Of No Importance 0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Not at all Satisfied 0</td>
<td>1.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of Little Importance 1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Hardly Satisfied 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of Moderate Importance 2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Moderately Satisfied 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important 3</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Very Satisfied 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Important 4</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>Extremely Satisfied 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.
Comparison of Mean Importance Levels and Mean Satisfaction Levels by Group and Condition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>Group 2</th>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>Group 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>1.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>1.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>1.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>1.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>1.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>1.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>1.68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.
Common Mean Importance Levels and Common Mean Satisfaction Levels by Group and Condition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Mean Importance Level</th>
<th>Mean Satisfaction Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>Group 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>3.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>3.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>2.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>2.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>3.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td><strong>3.82</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.45</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>2.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>3.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>3.30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
strongly supported. Condition 9 states that all individuals, regardless of position, have equal access to learning. Finally, condition 10 states that mistakes are treated as learning opportunities. One could also conclude that conditions 1, 3, and 9 had the highest level of satisfaction for both sets of respondents. Condition 1 states that senior management is committed to making learning capability a key part of its ongoing competitive advantage. Condition 3 states that multiple feedback structures exist. Condition 9 states that all individuals, regardless of position, have equal access to learning.

To assimilate the context of the research reported in this investigation, Chapter Four presented findings which included mean response rates for levels of importance and satisfaction. Table One and Table Two showed the results for Group One and Group Two. Table Three showed the comparison's between Group One and Group Two in regard to mean importance and satisfaction levels. Target population and data collection were also discussed. A Final Discussion, Limitations, and Recommendations for further research are presented in Chapter Five.
Chapter Five

Discussion, Limitations and Recommendations

The purpose of this exploratory study is to examine key aspects of a Learning Organization such as teamwork and creativity, encouraging employees to make on-the-job decisions without worrying about mistakes, and a commitment to learning everyday while at work. This chapter presents a summary discussion regarding the results and limitations of the study. In addition, recommendations for further research are given.

Discussion

Based on the HRD professionals' responses to the questionnaire, it is clear that all of the ten conditions were important to them. The results of this exploratory study also showed that for every condition, there was a lower level of satisfaction than for each level of importance. These results indicate respondents believe that there is substantial room for improvement in their respective organizations.

Rothwell, Sanders, & Soper (1999) assert that conditions in the organization or external environment can help or hinder learning. Organizations, supervisors, and coworkers can support or impede learning. This study indicates respondents agree that a learning organization creates environmental conditions that support learning. Unfortunately, these conditions do not seem to be prevalent within their organizations.

Kline and Saunders (1993) suggest that managers responsible for the implementation of new projects and products are the ones who can most effectively introduce a new, more positive prevailing climate into the daily work activity. "A prevailing climate is a group mindset, a collection of beliefs deeply entrenched in the culture of an organization (Kline & Saunders, 1992, p. 14)."
If senior managers do not support learning in the workplace, then knowledge sharing may be restricted. This restriction could lead to low levels of employee development and growth as well as other negative consequences (such as low levels of satisfaction and motivation.) These conditions have the potential of decreasing productivity and revenue.

This study concludes that both sets of respondents report a lower level of satisfaction for each of the ten conditions. This finding implies that senior managers may not be communicating to their subordinates the need to constantly seek better and quicker ways to accomplish tasks and solve problems. This implication relates to Senge's (1991) assertion that supervisors and senior managers should provide support by allowing individuals to learn and attempt to implement new ideas. For example, a supervisor should reschedule work so that an employee can attend training and learn new concepts; or managers might encourage workers to share new knowledge and skills that they have acquired with others by establishing open forums as a follow up activity to a training experience.

If organizations are going to become learning organizations, the change must come from senior management. Otherwise, it will not be deemed important by everyone else in the organization. Top level executives and managers must push their subordinates to learn as much as possible everyday. An example of this would be when the organizational culture shifts toward one that embraces and expects learning.

Condition 6 reports the highest mean response level of importance for Group One (3.82) and the second highest mean for Group Two (3.45). This finding indicates that teamwork, quality, and creativity are very important to both groups. When teamwork and
open dialogue exist among all employees, organizations can flourish. These outcomes are in alignment with Senge’s (1990) thoughts.

The two conditions which had the highest level of importance among HRD professionals in Group Two were 1 and 5. These findings infer that Group Two feels that (a) senior management making learning capability a key part of its ongoing competitive advantage, and, (b) employees receiving encouragement and incentive to learn, are very important. These results correlate with what Black & Synan (1997) assert as the seven virtues of learning:

- First, there must be motive to learn.
- Second, spirit and enthusiasm.
- Third, detachment from thinking one knows all the answers.
- Fourth, attraction and eagerness to learn new concepts and ideas.
- Fifth, moderation regarding the amount of new learning that one can undertake.
- Sixth, patience to listen and allow the best solutions to develop.

Seventh, helpfulness and a desire to sacrifice for the good of the team.

When the seven virtues of learning are combined with support from senior managers, organizations are creating an ideal environment for organizational learning.

From a holistic perspective, this study's results reveal there is some understanding about how important organizational learning is in the workplace, coupled with a realization that there is still much room for improvement. Research indicates that if organizations do not attempt to implement the conditions mentioned in this study, they will not be able to compete, or better yet, remain ahead of the competition (Arthur & Defillippi, 1998; Tobin, 1998; Goh, 1998; Kim, 1993; Senge, 1990).
If organizations become Learning Organizations, they can better serve customers because they have increased worker productivity (Tobin, 1997). Research suggests that when senior managers do not encourage learning, creativity, and knowledge sharing among all employees, corporations will be unable to survive in the global market (Belasco, 1998; Bill, 1997; Craig, 1996; Marquardt, 1996; Tobin, 1996; Watkins & Marsick, 1993). Teaching employees to learn something new at work can be a significant challenge because most people are comfortable doing things the way they've always been done (Kline, 1993).

Shaw (1991) asserts that if individuals and groups effectively reflect on and interpret the outcomes of their actions, organizational learning can occur. Shaw (1991) goes on to say that individuals and groups must disseminate new learning throughout an organization or meaningful dialogue cannot exist. However, if senior executives do not instill a vision of how their organizations should pursue organizational learning, employees will not be able to branch out and make decisions on their own that could help the company.

**Limitations and Recommendations**

Since this study is an early effort to gain knowledge that will become the basis of a larger study, several limitations are present. For the purposes of this study, four limitations will be presented, and recommendations will be made for each.

**Limitation and Recommendation One: Participant Invitation.** In this study, sample members were invited to participate with a formal letter of invitation and follow-up reminder cards, both of which were delivered through ground mail using the United States Postal Service. This form of communication required sample members to log in to
the Web and locate the survey site prior to completion. This action may have been to cumbersome causing sample members to choose not to participate resulting in a low response rate.

Recommendations for future contact experiences include utilizing electronic mail and mass contact via professional listserv groups. Perhaps a hypertext link leading directly to the survey site would expedite the process through a more user-friendly means of connection. This change in the process may result in a higher response rate.

Limitation and Recommendation Two: Level of Inquiry. This exploratory study is solely reactionary inquiry, or Level 1 of Kirkpatrick's 4 levels of evaluation (Rothwell & Sredl, 1992). A more detailed and comprehensive subsequent study would focus on level 2, 3, and 4. Level 2 looks at the learning levels of individuals. Level 3, looks at behavior and how much participant change affects job performance. Finally, level 4, concentrates on results and the outputs produced by behavioral change.

Limitation and Recommendation Three: Validity of Results. Low response rates limited the validity of the study because it was difficult to acquire a fair representation of the target population. HRD professionals possess unique sets of knowledge and skills. More input from this group would have given more meaning to the study.

Limitation and Recommendation Four: Sampling Techniques. The learning organization assessment and climate exploratory study is a pilot to a larger study. Here, the intention is to confirm the content validity of each condition statement as a preamble. So as to accomplish this goal, purposive judgment sampling was employed. Here, bias is intentionally built into the research process: the sample as well as the condition statements in the survey present biases. Respondents are biased because they are HRD
professionals assumed to understand the concept of the learning organization as well as the meaning of the conditions. The condition statements are biased because they present participants with optimal descriptions thus leading respondents to rate the conditions favorably. Here, the importance levels are anticipated to be favorable and satisfaction levels low. In this study, the results imply that the importance ratings indicate rank ordering rather than importance, thus, a flaw in the design. Design improvement is required. This information will guide the development of a conceptual model of the learning organization and a more sophisticated survey for future research.

Continued research into the key issues discussed in this study is important because global competition has forced corporations to find faster ways to compete and meet the ever-changing demands of the customer. Senior executives face the challenge of having to develop all employees, regardless of position, in order for companies to survive. The concept of the learning organization is one way to enable them to meet this challenge. The model presented in this study offers a framework to guide developing organizations toward a more supportive environment which results in the birth of a learning organization.

The newness of such a change can be an exciting experience where all members of an organization are alert to the changes occurring within. It is in this infancy stage that top executives must "communicate to all employees that they have two jobs: their current job, and learning how to do that job better," (Bill 1997, p. 42).
References


Hall, D. T. (1986). *Career development in organizations*. San Francisco: Jossey-
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Hanson, E., & Court, B. (1998). Bridging the leadership gap. *Performance
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Heider, F. (1958). *Maintaining professional competence: Approaches to career


Kaye B., & Hogan, J. (1999). Improve teamwork. *Executive Excellence, 16*(6), 17-
20.

*Training and Development, 26*(11), 72-75.


Kline, P., & Saunders, B. (1993). *Ten steps to a learning organization*. Arlington,
VA: Great Ocean Publishers.

strategies to close the competitive gap*.


Appendix A: Letter of Invitation to Prospective Respondents
Dear Colleagues,

As a Master of Science candidate in the GHRD program at St. John Fisher College currently working on a research project, this study examines how important learning and knowledge sharing are in the workplace among Human Resource Development professionals. To examine this issue, I am inviting HRD professionals to participate in a confidential online survey. "The Learning Organization Assessment and Climate Survey" asks participants to make judgments about ten workplace condition statements. These judgments focus on importance and satisfaction levels.

For example: Teamwork, quality, and creativity are strongly supported.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance Level Judgements</th>
<th>Of no Importance</th>
<th>Of little Importance</th>
<th>Of Moderate Importance</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>how important is this condition to you?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satisfaction Level Judgements</th>
<th>Not at all Satisfied</th>
<th>Hardly Satisfied</th>
<th>Moderately Satisfied</th>
<th>Very Satisfied</th>
<th>Extremely Satisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>how satisfied are you with the current status of this condition in your organization?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The collected responses will be completely anonymous and confidential. The data gathered in this study will be reported only in the form of statistical summaries and will be posted on the designated website for your access after May 1, 2000. To assure anonymity, you will not be asked to sign a consent form. If you choose to participate in this study, your completed questionnaire will serve as your consent. Please take a few minutes of your time to complete the questionnaire. You will need to go to the St. John Fisher College GHRD website in order to complete the survey at http://home.sjfc.edu/~hrd/index.htm. To access the survey, click on the "Learning Organization and Climate Survey Icon." Please plan to complete the survey by February 15, 2000.

Thank you very much for your time and assistance with this project. Please feel free to contact me or my faculty advisor, Dr. Marilyn Butler, with any questions or concerns regarding this questionnaire. My e-mail address is aborr@rochester.rr.com. Contact Dr. Butler by phone at 716-385-8157 or by e-mail at mbutler@sjfc.edu.

Sincerely,

Juan Canto

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Appendix B: Online Questionnaire
Learning Organization Assessment and Climate Survey

Purpose. The purpose of this study is to survey Human Resource Development (HRD) professionals who are working in organizations where learning and knowledge sharing are encouraged and expected. Specifically, the study aims to examine which of these conditions, if any, exist in the HRD professionals' work environment.

Information on the researcher. This survey is being conducted by Juan Canto, a full-time graduate student at St. John Fisher College majoring in Human Resource Development (HRD). If you have any questions or would like to be informed of the results, please contact me via mailto:sabor@rochester.rr.com.

Instructions for completing the survey. The survey should take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete, but may take longer depending on the amount of detail you wish to provide. Please check (by clicking on) the appropriate circles where indicated or type comments in the space provided. When you are finished submitting your responses, please be sure to click on the "submit" icon at the bottom of the survey to submit your responses. Click on the "reset" icon at the bottom of the page to erase your responses.

For each of the ten conditions described below, please make two judgments. First, you are asked to rate whether the condition in the statement is important to you. Second, you are asked to indicate how satisfied you are with this condition as it currently exists in your organization.

Condition:
1. Senior management is committed to making learning capability a key part of its ongoing competitive advantage.

   a. Importance level
      ○ Of no importance ○ Of little importance ○ Of moderate importance ○ Important ○ Very important

   b. Satisfaction level
      ○ Not at all satisfied ○ Hardly satisfied ○ Moderately satisfied ○ Very satisfied ○ Extremely satisfied

2. A compelling vision of the desired learning organization that people feel part of and excited by.

   a. Importance level
      ○ Of no importance ○ Of little importance ○ Of moderate importance ○ Important ○ Very important

   b. Satisfaction level
      ○ Not at all satisfied ○ Hardly satisfied ○ Moderately satisfied ○ Very satisfied ○ Extremely satisfied
3. Multiple feedback structures exist.
   a. Importance level
      ○ Of no importance ○ Of little importance ○ Of moderate importance ○ Important ○ Very impor
   b. Satisfaction level
      ○ Not at all satisfied ○ Hardly satisfied ○ Moderately satisfied ○ Very satisfied ○ Extremely satisfie

4. There is a sense of organizational urgency - but no quick fixes.
   a. Importance level
      ○ Of no importance ○ Of little importance ○ Of moderate importance ○ Important ○ Very impor
   b. Satisfaction level
      ○ Not at all satisfied ○ Hardly satisfied ○ Moderately satisfied ○ Very satisfied ○ Extremely satisfie

5. There is encouragement and incentive to learn.
   a. Importance level
      ○ Of no importance ○ Of little importance ○ Of moderate importance ○ Important ○ Very impor
   b. Satisfaction level
      ○ Not at all satisfied ○ Hardly satisfied ○ Moderately satisfied ○ Very satisfied ○ Extremely satisfie

6. Teamwork, quality, and creativity are strongly supported.
   a. Importance level
      ○ Of no importance ○ Of little importance ○ Of moderate importance ○ Important ○ Very impor
   b. Satisfaction level
      ○ Not at all satisfied ○ Hardly satisfied ○ Moderately satisfied ○ Very satisfied ○ Extremely satisfie
7. Employees are trusted to choose the pre-determined training courses that they believe they need.
   a. Importance level
      ☐ Of no importance ☐ Of little importance ☐ Of moderate importance ☐ Important ☐ Very impor
   b. Satisfaction level
      ☐ Not at all satisfied ☐ Hardly satisfied ☐ Moderately satisfied ☐ Very satisfied ☐ Extremely satisfi

8. Job rotation and mentoring are the rule, not the exception.
   a. Importance level
      ☐ Of no importance ☐ Of little importance ☐ Of moderate importance ☐ Important ☐ Very impor
   b. Satisfaction level
      ☐ Not at all satisfied ☐ Hardly satisfied ☐ Moderately satisfied ☐ Very satisfied ☐ Extremely satisfi

9. All individuals, regardless of position, have equal access to learning.
   a. Importance level
      ☐ Of no importance ☐ Of little importance ☐ Of moderate importance ☐ Important ☐ Very impor
   b. Satisfaction level
      ☐ Not at all satisfied ☐ Hardly satisfied ☐ Moderately satisfied ☐ Very satisfied ☐ Extremely satisfi

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10. Mistakes are treated as learning opportunities.

   a. Importance level
      ○ Of no importance ○ Of little importance ○ Of moderate importance ○ Important ○ Very important

   b. Satisfaction level
      ○ Not at all satisfied ○ Hardly satisfied ○ Moderately satisfied ○ Very satisfied ○ Extremely satisfied

What is your

1. Gender? ○ Male ○ Female


   ○ American Indian or Native American
   ○ Black or African American
   ○ Mexican American

3. Race/Ethnicity ○ Pacific Islander or Asian American
   ○ Hispanic or Latin American
   ○ White or Caucasian
   ○ Other

4. Size of Organization ○ Less than 50 ○ Less than 100 ○ Over 100

Please feel free to add any additional comments regarding the ten conditions asked in the beginning of the survey and their existence, or lack thereof, in your organization.