

**THE LEARNING ORGANISATION CONCEPT: A STUDY  
OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS IN  
NAIROBI**

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**A Management Research Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Award of the Degree of Masters of Business Administration  
(MBA), School of Business, University of Nairobi**


**OCTOBER 2007**



## DECLARATION

### a) Declaration by the student

This research project is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university.

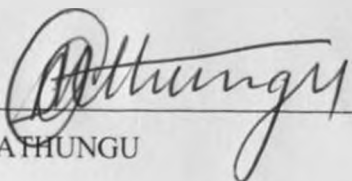
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### b) Declaration by the supervisor

This research project has been submitted for examinations with my approval as university supervisor.

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## DEDICATION

To my late father for his love and dedication to his children's education. *Dad, we did not  
let you down. Rest in peace*

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>NGOs</b>	<b>Non Governmental Organisations</b>
<b>IT</b>	<b>Information Technology</b>
<b>PVO</b>	<b>Private Voluntary Organization</b>
<b>TQM</b>	<b>Total Quality Management</b>
<b>BPR</b>	<b>Business Process Reengineering</b>

## ABSTRACT

The study set to determine the learning organization concept in the non-governmental organizations in Nairobi. The objectives of the study were to establish the extent to which organization learning concept has been adopted by the Non governmental organizations and the challenges in the implementation of the learning concept among the non-governmental organizations.

The study is important because it basically addresses the search for the ideal organizational dynamics for growth, as it attempts to deal with the never-ending quest by organizations seeking to improve themselves while maintaining a position of advantage.

The study is therefore useful to managers as they will install, implementation and use ideas of the findings of this study in their organizations. Trainers and consultants will use this study to change their methodology to learning concept. This study will also benefit the academicians in the field of project management and employees will change their mindset on training and appreciate the place of informal learning for development growth.

The study was survey designed; the population consisted of all NGOs within Nairobi. Stratified sampling procedure was used to select the sample elements of the study. Primary data was collected using semi-structured questionnaires, with four sections. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistical tools of analysis, which included frequencies and percentages.

# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background of Study

Organizations today aim at offering excellent services, being intelligent, flexible and responsive to change, which happens both to public and private organizations. Many factors in society today have brought about rapid changes in the organizations environment and they have to keep pace and cope up with the challenges exposed to them, so as to accommodate the rapid dynamism in their environment.

The challenge facing managers to day is to make the effort needed to learn some of the new skills and techniques, and to put in processes that engage their work force in programmers of continuous capability development. Learning should be integrated as part and parcel of everyday work with the aim of getting the best out of everybody to meet challenges ahead (Farrago, 1995).

Organizations as living entities with a given life span, are expected to learn and as much as possible make it a continuous process. This is because the business environment is very dynamic and for an organization to survive the turbulence, then it must keep itself abreast with the changes and adapt to them. There is a never-ending quest to improve existing products and services and the need for continuous improvement and innovation within organizations is best achieved through human factors, such as skills, attitudes and appropriate organizational culture. There is a stiff competition in the environment and organizations appreciate that they must strive to learn and cope with the changing environment or die (Karash, 1995).

### 1.1.1 Learning Organization

Learning is defined as the acquisition of knowledge or skill, through study, experience or being taught. Nonaka (1991) argues that human knowledge is created and expanded through social interaction between tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge and the

reason why people search for knowledge is to increase their ability to produce results in whichever area they choose. Further, according to (Karash, 1995) tacit knowledge is one that an individual possesses and he can use it, but he cannot describe or transfer it to another. Explicit knowledge on the other hand, is the "how to" information that one can put into tangible formal language. The combination of tacit and explicit knowledge then means that one can do what is necessary and can also convey or pass on the knowledge to someone else who in turn internalizes the same. All this knowledge is gained through learning (Karash, 1995).

Learning is not a one-off activity where an ultimate answer is found, but is a cumulative process, which progresses at a pace dictated by the environment, maintaining a balance between reflection, learning and action. Finally, the definition gives the aspect of experience as a source of learning. While there are many sources of learning, it is useful that attempts are made to exploit an organisation's experience and actions as main sources of learning, at times even to learn from mistakes made along the way. Learning is therefore seen as a proactive activity where one is always looking for a different and hopefully better way to do something. It is the basis for discovery as with creativity, individuals always seek to improve what is or has been the status quo.

Karash (1995), noted that the possibility of achieving extraordinary performance with satisfaction is anchored in the knowledge that learning to do something worthwhile is enormously rewarding and personally satisfying to those involved. Organisations have over the years been providing training programmes to their employees with the intention of equipping them as best as possible to perform their duties effectively. However, entrepreneurs and managers today realize that changes in the environment are very fast and what was new in the previous year, is quickly overtaken by others in the market, therefore, the need to institute continuous acquisition of knowledge and concepts in order to be profitable and competitive (Argrys and Schon, 1978).

While most organizations could argue that they are already learning organizations owing to the fact that they run a variety of training programmes for their staff; and others even have staff development activities linked to the appraisal processes, this might not be true. There is a significant difference between a learning organisation and an organisation that simply pays attention to training, even though the latter is still an important part of every learning organisation.

In a traditional training culture, the programmes are determined, designed and administered by the management and the employees are only asked to attend the sessions as the management sees fit. Training is an activity given to employees by the organisation which through the management and supervisory hierarchy determines the needs to be met, and then fulfils them through training programmers targeted at particular staff cadres. This traditional approach leads to the training activities being seen as punitive or rewards to the employees by the supervisor or employer depending on the relationship or ensuing circumstances. This in effect erodes the expected gains and appreciation of the programme objectives, thereby failing to achieve the desired results (Berry, 2000).

Training is accessed sequentially just like studying from a text or script and most of the time remains physically and mentally separated from the work experience. It therefore requires a clearly defined beginning, middle and ending, even as it places the content responsibility on the educator or administrator. According to the Delphi Group Study on Enterprise E-Learning 2001, training is also seen to convey little, if any sense of relationship between the learner and the material. Training which is loosely defined as any enhancement to an employee's skills is delivered in a classroom seating by an instructor. This method of acquiring knowledge and building skills is normally not systematic but rather ad hoc, and as a result, there is little correlation between who needs the training and who gets trained (Clark, 2005). Due to its ad hoc nature, traditional training is seen as one that perpetuates in some cases, bad habits and in most cases old habits ( Berry, 2000).

Training uses different methodologies for example, lectures, experimentation and others, but their objectives are very much the same. that is to equip the trainee with a desired skill or behavior. It gives the impression that there is only one way to achieve a given result and the trainee is restricted within the given path. This reduces his participation and possible creativity, as all he has to do is follow the prescribed path or steps (Brenda, 1998).

Training to a large extent is reactive in the sense that it is a response by the management to bridge a recognized performance gap in the employees' skills or abilities. When an employee has been hired, it is assumed that he has the prerequisite skills to perform the given function, and training is then offered only if, the performance is not up to the expected level. The ultimate aim of the training is to enable the employee to perform his job as the employer desires.

Employees within a learning organisation are likely to have some degree of self-determination of their own development rather than simply having the training imposed on them. A Learning Organisation is seen as one in which people at all levels, individually and collectively are continually increasing their capacity to produce results they really care about (Karash, 1995). This definition gives two different sides: one that organisations have to increase their performance significantly and therefore, they need to capture and encourage the development of knowledge at all levels in order to keep up with the pace. On the other hand, there is consideration for the individual's needs. Most people tend to derive great rewards and satisfaction when they learn to do something that they themselves are interested in.

The learning organisation is one that achieves remarkable levels of performance while also making it rewarding and satisfying for the people involved (Karash, 1995). In this setting then, employees are not viewed as a collection of passive, hired hands but are seen as the co-partners to the achievement of the firm's mission and objectives. On the other hand, a learning organisation is one that builds and improves its own practice by consciously and continually devising and developing the means to draw learning from it's

own and other's experience (Taylor, 1998). This definition gives four elements for consideration.

One is that a learning organisation is not one that just learns, but one that learns consciously. It is critical to have a conscious intention and commitment to the process of learning, so that the knowledge learnt is captured and used to change and improve future practice. The second element is one of improved practice, which means that the test for whether learning is taking place, lays in the extent to which the practice of the organisation has been improved, thus the implementation of the action required. The third aspect is the ongoing nature of learning required of a learning organisation.

### **1.1.2 Non Governmental Organisation ( NGO)**

A non-governmental organization (NGO) is an organization that is not part of a government and is not founded by a state. NGOs are therefore typically independent of governments. Although the definition can technically include profit corporations the term is generally restricted to social, cultural, legal and environmental advocacy groups having goals that are primary non commercial. NGOs are usually non-profit organizations that obtain at least a portion of their funding from private sources (Korten, 1990). Because the Label "NGO" is considered too broad by some, as it might cover anything that is non-governmental many NGOs now prefer to term private voluntary organization (PVO) (Korten,1990).

A 1995 UN report on global governance estimated that there were nearly 29,000 international NGOs. National numbers are even higher. The United States has an estimated 2 million NGOs, most of them formed in the past 30 years while Russia has 65,000 NGOs and dozens are created daily. In Kenya, 240 NGOs both registered and non-registered come into existence every year (The Economist, 2000).

NGOs operating in Kenya can be categorized into Local and International NGOs. Local NGOs have their operations based only in Kenya. Some of them operate in only one

district while others are spread throughout the country, operating in more than one district. They also tend to draw their workforce from within the country as opposed to going beyond the national boundaries (Campbel, 1987).

International NGOs have their operations in more than one country, like is typical of other international organizations. According to NGO coordinating Bureau, 2004 a number of them operate in more than one sector of the economy such as environment, health and relief. Some of them are for example Care International, World Vision, Action Aid and Plan International. The international NGO workforce is drawn from various countries and the organizations put no limits to nationality as long as the individuals meet the desired qualifications and financial support is extended by development partners.

NGO exist for a variety of purposes, usually to further the political or social goals of their members. Examples include improving the state of the natural environment, encouraging the observance of human rights, improving the welfare of the disadvantaged, or representing a corporate agenda. However, there are a large number of such organizations and their goals cover a broad range of political and philosophical position (Korten, 1990).

## **1.2 Research problem**

There has been a significant growth of the number of Non-Governmental Organisations in Kenya over the last few years and they control a large amount of resources in the country, estimated to be between US\$150 – US\$200 Million per year. This has mainly been occasioned by the ability of the NGOs to reach people groups that the government and other agencies are not able to cover, and the NGOs also play a significant role in the design, preparation and implementation of various development initiatives as an alternative to the efforts made by the government (RoseMarie, 1999). From this then, it is noteworthy, that the NGO community in Kenya is not to be ignored, but an area which



needs attention and encouragement for growth in the right direction, especially as they are funded by donors in form of individuals, associations and governments.

While it is the desire of every organisation to keep abreast with the changing times and demands in its environment, it has been accepted over the years that the only way to acquire the needed skills, competencies and methodologies of working is through traditional training. Employers seem to have accepted that it is one of their duties to provide training programmes to the employees when necessary and when funds are available, and the employees on the other hand have acquired learned helplessness in this situation, where they just wait to receive from the employers' or management hand. While all this is useful, it does not help the organisations to always determine and appropriate the desired skills and competencies at the nick of time, and more often than not, organisations react to their environments' changes instead of proactively anticipating and possibly driving the change. All this is as a result of cultural orientation that calls for a shift from the predominantly training culture to the development of an active learning culture.

As the need to make this shift appears logical, relevant and crucial for growth and survival of organisations, this research is aimed at identifying why there seems to be the lack of will by organisations, to take steps in changing the orientation of people from training to learning. It becomes an area worth of study, with the aim of making the desired outcome, of a learning culture, encouraged and perceived as beneficial to the implementing organisations, so that others will soon follow.

### **1.3 Research questions**

The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- a. To what extent has organization learning concept been adopted by NGOs?
- b. What are the challenges NGOs are facing in implementing the concept of organization learning?

## **1.4 Research Objectives**

- (a) To establish the extent to which organization learning concept has been adopted by NGOs.
- (b) To establish challenges in implementation of learning organization concept among NGOs in the Kenyan context.

## **1.5 Importance of Study**

The interest in learning organisations is basically the search for the ideal organisational dynamics for growth, as it attempts to deal with the never-ending quest by organisations seeking to improve themselves while maintaining a position of advantage.

Organisations now find that carrying out growth activities proactively, gives them a new source of competitive advantage referred to as capabilities-based competition which includes capability of learning (Senge, 1994). The Organisations must then develop a capacity for fast paced innovations and learn to love change. The advantages that these organizations then seek to achieve makes organisation learning a logical step for all companies to follow (Karash, 1990).

It is however, useful that the organisations have a good grasp of what organization learning is all about, before they embark on it and the changeover to a learning organization must be well calculated so that a conducive environment for the change is created.

This study is useful to:

- a) Managers in both private and public organisations who want to keep pace with the development in the market. The managers will be interested in this study, as they will install, implement and use ideas brought out in it.

- b) Trainers who are in effect consultants for change in the society and who now have to change their mode of delivery of subject matter from traditional training methodology to learning concepts.
- c) Academicians, who will be expected to introduce new techniques, influence management styles and also synthesis the ideas presented to develop new ways of impacting knowledge. This is especially true for academicians in the Project Management and Business related fields.
- d) Employees who will have to change their mind set on training and appreciate the place of informal learning for development growth.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Learning

Learning is a process within the organism that results in the capacity for changed performance that can be related to experience rather than maturation. It is now widely recognized that intelligence is not just a cognitive capacity as noted in the theory of multiple intelligence (Gardner, 1985) and the recent interest in emotional intelligence (Pickard, 1999). Learning is not just a cognitive process that involves the assimilation of information in symbolic form as in book learning, but also an affective and physical process (Binsted, 1980). Our emotions, nerves and muscles are involved in the process, too. Learning leads to change, whether positive or negative for the learner. It is an experience after which an individual 'qualitatively changed the way he or she conceived something (Mezirow, 1997). Learning can be more or less effectively undertaken, and it can be more effective when it is paid conscious attention.

The outcomes of a person's learning and development are the way they think, feel and interpret their world (their cognition, affect, attitudes, overall philosophy of life); the way they see themselves, their self-concept and self-esteem; and their ability to respond to and make their way in their particular environment (their perceptual-motor; intellectual, social, and interpersonal skills). Some of the experience of learning can be seen in the description that (Daloz, 1989) gives of development, the journey that starts from the familiar world and moves through 'confusion, adventure, great highs and lows, struggle, uncertainty.... Toward a new world' in which 'nothing is different, yet all is transformed'; 'its meaning has profoundly changed'. Learning and development therefore are significant experiences for individuals and for organizations.

According to Barrow and Loughlin (1993) organizations increasingly need their employees to have:

- a) A high of education, possibly up to degree level, so that employees can operate new technology, understand the contribution of their role to the company, and take decisions appropriate to their jobs;
- b) The ability to learn new skills and adapt to changing circumstances by taking responsibility for their own learning: keeping their skills up to date, learning new processes;
- c) The ability to work in organizations with flatter structures and fewer layers of management – to work without supervision, set their own objectives, monitor their own performance, correct failures;
- d) The ability to manage the interface customers and between departments, requiring a good level of interpersonal skills;
- e) The ability to solve problems, thinking creatively about future possibilities and contribute their own unique ideas.

According to Wisner (1994), among the 'competencies that occur frequently in the most successful clusters of different organizations' are conceptual, 'helicopter' and analytical thinking. Organizations are thus demanding more of their employees in terms of enhanced task skills. They are requiring higher-order thinking skills that are not easily picked up within the constraints of existing jobs, or even, for many people, in every day life. However, there is a long way to go for many organizations. According to Myers and Davids (1992), "Workers are a resource which has not been well understood by management in the past. Blue-collar workers in particular have been regarded as a static commodity incapable of innovation and self-development. Consequently reservoirs of skill and ability remain untapped".

Learning is a natural process in which we all engage. It is not just a cognitive activity, and it affects the person as whole. From birth, humans, like all animals, learn and develop, and this learning and development lead to skillful and effective adaptation to and manipulation of the environment which is one element in a much-quoted definition of intelligence (Wechsler, 1958). Society fosters and facilitates these activities of its

members but also channels and controls them through socialization and education so that they yield outcomes that contribute to and are acceptable to it.

People continue learning throughout life, whether encouraged or not, whether formally taught or not, whether the outcomes are valued or not. They learn at work and at home, in their hobbies and their social lives. Although individuals have a lifetime's experience of being learners, some of their experiences (especially those in formal educational settings) may not have been happy ones, as some of those who responded to the Declaration of Learning (Honey & Mumford, 1992). They may be experienced learners, but not necessarily competent or confident learners.

Lifelong learning means continuous adaptation. Increased knowledge and improved skills enlarge the individual's capacities to adapt to the environment and to change that environment. External changes will lead on to further internal changes, and hence new possibilities for the individual emerge. Moreover, these changes feed the individuals self-esteem and confidence, and enhance social status. Hence learning generates potentially far-reaching changes in the individual: learning promotes development. In his very warm-hearted and insightful book on 'the transformational power of adult learning experiences', Daloz (1989) draws on mythology to convey the nature of this development.

### **2.1.1 Barriers to Learning**

Although learning is a natural process, it is not necessarily easily undertaken, particularly – as noted above – when undertaken in formal settings such as school or work. People can experience significant barriers to their learning and development, and human resource developers need to be aware of these.

Writing primarily about managers, Mumford (1998) identifies significant blocks to learning. They are also relevant to other learners in the organization. They are listed in below

## Blocks to learning

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Perceptual	-	Not seeing that there is a problem
Cultural	-	The way things are here...
Emotional	-	Fear or insecurity
Motivational	-	Unwillingness to take risks
Cognitive	-	Previous learning experience
Intellectual	-	Limited learning styles, poor learning skills
Expressive	-	Poor communication skills
Situational	-	Lack of opportunities
Physical	-	Place, time
Specific environment	-	Boss/colleagues unsupportive

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Source: Mumford (1988:26)

Anxiety and lack of confidence are frequently emphasized as significant impediments to learning Barry (1988:47), for example, notes that the considerable apprehension felt by the fitters and electricians who were returning to college after 20 years was an obstacle in the introduction of the multi-skilling programme. Their anxieties were dissipated once they learned that some of the tutors belonged to the same union and had the same craft background as them. Personality characteristics, such as an external rather than an internal locus of control (Rotter, 1966), may also make the individual less open to new learning. Human resource developers need to recognize that other people and the organization itself constitute the individual's learning environment, and that they may create barriers to effective learning.

### 2.1.2 Learning Stages

Fitts (1962) in Stammers and Patrick (1975) distinguished three stages of learning, in particular of perceptual – motor skills acquisition. It is recognized that they may overlap.

- a) **Cognitive Stage.** The learner has to understand what is required, its rules and concepts, and to achieve it.
- b) **Associative Stage.** The learner has to establish through practice the stimulus response links, the correct patterns of behavior, gradually eliminating errors.
- c) **Autonomous stage.** The learner refines the motor patterns of behavior until external sources of information become redundant and the capacity simultaneously to perform secondary tasks increases.

Gagne (1970) in Stammers and Patrick (1975) studied both the process of learning and the most effective modes of instruction, and has made several classifications of types of learning. For example, he identified the ability to make a general response to a signal to develop a chain of two or more stimulus-response links, including verbal chains and associations to make different responses to similar though different stimuli to achieve concept learning and identify a class of objects or events to learn rules through the acquiring to chain of two or more concepts and finally to combine rules and so achieve problem solving. Gagne's classification allows us to identify the processes whereby skills of all levels are acquired and hence suggests how to facilitate learning and prevent failure to learn at the various levels.

Learning is the central issue for the 21<sup>st</sup> century' asserts (Honey, 1998: 28-29) when setting out the Declaration of Learning drawn up by some of the 'leading thinkers on learning in organizations'. Dodgson (1993) defines organizational learning as the way firms build, supplement and organize knowledge and routines around their activities and within their cultures and adapt and develop organizational efficiency by improving the use of the broad skills of their work forces.

### **2.1.3 Principles of Learning**

According to Senge (1990), organizational learning focussed originally on the practice of five core principles or capacities. These five principles as discussed below are the keys to achieving this type of organisation.



**First and foremost** are the Systems thinking, which is a way of thinking about and a language for describing and understanding the forces, and interrelationships that shapes the behaviour of systems. This discipline helps us to see how to change systems more effectively and to act more in tune with the large processes of the natural and economic world. Practicing this discipline involves learning to recognize significant systematic behaviours all around you, and familiarizing yourself with some special terminology and some powerful tools unique to this field.

**Second** is Team Learning that is transforming conversational and collective thinking skills so that groups of people can reliably develop intelligence and ability greater than the sum of individual members' talents. Practicing this discipline involves starting different kinds of conversations and a remarkable degree of honesty and mutual respect, all of which you can learn to do through familiarizing yourself with specific tools from this field.

**Third** is the Shared Vision which is building a sense of communication in a group, by developing shared images of the future we seek to create, and the principles and guiding practices by which we hope to get there. It emerges when everybody in an organization understands what the organization is trying to do, is genuinely committed to achieving that vision and clearly grasps how his or her role in the organization can continue to make the vision real. Practicing this discipline involves knowing how all the parts of the organization work together and being clear about how your own personal goals align with those of your organization.

**Fourth** is Mental Models that are the deep beliefs and assumptions we hold about how the world works. These models shape the decisions we make in life, the actions we take in response to events. The ways in which we interpret others behaviour practicing this discipline involves surfacing and testing your deepest assumptions and beliefs and helping others do the same.

**Lastly the fifth** is Personal Mastery, which is the art of identifying what makes you want to leave in the world during your lifetime. That is what's your unique purpose in life and

how do you want to go about fulfilling that purpose. It involves learning to expend our personal capacity to create the result we most desire and creating an organizational environment, which encourages all its members to develop themselves towards the goals and purposes they choose. Practicing this discipline involves some honest explanation of your own life experiences and desires and a willingness to take some risks. Other disciplines that support and expand on the above include corporate culture, corporate social responsibility, dialogue, leadership, sustainability and work/life balance.

Organisational learning involves a deep learning cycle and its good in enhancing five tasks: First, systematic problem solving which rests heavily on the philosophy and method of the quality movement, secondly, experimentation, which includes systematic search for the testing of new knowledge, third, learning from past experience by reviewing their success and failures, fourth, learning from others which involves looking outside and immediate environment to gain new perspective and fifth, transferring knowledge quickly and efficiently throughout the organization.

#### **2.1.4 Reasons for adopting Organisation Learning**

According to Senge (1990), Organisations adopt the organisation-learning concept for various reasons as discussed below.

**To gain a superior performance.** Where an organization has an energized and committed workforce hence employers must learn so as to make contributions and act in the interest of the whole enterprise and for the senior managers who must learn how to extend mastery and self-determination throughout the organization.

**To improve quality.** Quality Management Companies are seeking to improve existing products and services (continuous improvement) and innovation (breakthrough strategies). This has resulted in such initiatives as TQM (Total Quality Management) and BPR (Business Process Reengineering). But companies are finding that such programmes succeed or fail depending on human factors such as skills, attitudes and organizational

culture. With the pace of change ever quickening, the need to develop mechanisms for continuous learning and innovation is greater than ever.

The only sustainable source of competitive advantage is an organization's ability to learn faster than its competitors so as to meet needs of the community hence gaining competitive advantage through organisation Learning.

Organization learning helps people embrace and manage change. People in learning organizations react more quickly when there are environmental changes because they know how to anticipate changes that are going to occur and how to create the changes they want. Change and learning are inextricably linked.

The technological changes that spin out into everyday life demand that organisations learn. The economies of scale may also diminish. People in learning organizations will hence be able to look forward to creating instead of merely reacting to the new world that emerges. There are various changes that are taking place in society and if we are going to address these conditions significantly, it will have to be at the level of collective thinking and understanding at the level of organizations, communities and society hence the recognition of interdependence.

Huber (1991) further clarifies that learning need not be conscious or intentional. Further learning does not always increase the learner effectiveness even potential effectiveness. Moreover, learning need not result in observable changes in behaviour. Taking a behavioural perspective, (Huber, 1991) notes: "An entity learns, through its processing information the range of its potent behaviours changed."

### **2.1.5 Processes of Organisation Learning**

In his literature review on organization learning, Huber (1991) describes the following processes or constructs that contribute to organisational learning namely; Knowledge Acquisition, Information Distribution, Information Interpretation and Organization

Memory. Any organisation that has adopted the concept has to have the following processes in place and functioning.

Knowledge Acquisition is when an organization acquires knowledge and learning occurs. It occurs not only due to knowledge acquisition from outside the organization but also due to the rearrangement of existing knowledge, the revision of previous knowledge structures and the building and revision of theories. The acquisition of declarative knowledge or facts and information is achieved by monitoring the environment, using information systems to store, manage and retrieve information, carrying out research and development, carrying out education and training, patent watching and bibliometrics (Dodgson, 1993).

Information Distribution is the process by which an organization shares information among its units and members, thereby promoting learning and producing new knowledge or understanding. Greater sharing or distribution of information leads to greater organizational learning. Knowledge in the form of tacit, know-how, letters, memos, informal conversations and reports are captured and distributed. Very often learning in an organization takes place by members sharing stories or anecdotes of actual work practice as opposed to what is mentioned in formal job descriptions or procedure manuals.

Information Interpretation is done so that it is shared. It's hence the process by which distributed information is given one or more commonly understood meanings. Greater learning occurs when more and more varied interpretations are developed. Huber (1991) states that individuals and groups have prior belief structures, which shape their interpretation of information and thus the formation of meaning. The deep beliefs and assumptions shape the way we interpret information, the decisions we make in life, the actions we take in response to events, and the ways in which we interpret others behaviour. Sense making or the formation of meaning is called procedural knowledge by (Dodgson, 1993).

Organization Memory refers to the situation where knowledge is stored for future use. It is also called Corporate Knowledge or Corporate Genetics by Prahalad and Hamel (1994). Organizational memory plays a critical role in organizational learning. Both the demonstrability and usability of learning depend on the effectiveness of the organizations memory. The major challenge for organizations exists in interpreting information and creating organizational memory that is easily accessible.

The learning Organization has four types of factors which are: A learning culture, which is an organizations climate that nurtures learning; Processes, which encourage interaction across boundaries and they include infrastructure, development and management processes; Tools and techniques which are methods that aid individual and group learning such as creativity and Problem solving techniques and skills and motivation which help to learn and adopt.

Learning organizations promotes a culture of learning, a community of learners. it ensures that individual learning enriches and enhances the organization as a whole. It's seen as a conscious attempt on the part of the organisations to retain and improve competitiveness, productivity and innovativeness in an uncertain environment. This means that the greater the uncertainties, the greater the need for learning. Organisations learn in order to improve their adaptability and efficiency during times of change (Dodgson, 1993). Grantham (1993) states that learning enables quicker and more effective responses to a correspondence and dynamic environment.

Learning increases information sharing, communication, understanding and the quality of decisions made in organizations. In their research, "an organization as a learning system", Nevis et al (1995) report that all the firms they observed were learning systems. The authors describe how learning has changed organizations such as Motorola, fiat Auto Company, Federal express among others. All these firms had both formal and informal structures and processes of acquisition, sharing and utilization of knowledge and skills.

Due to the continuous learning process, organizational learning create dialogue and enquiry and individuals in organizations are in constant dialogue. Communications and

enquiry so as to exchange idea and spread the knowledge acquired. People in organizations are empowered towards greater Vision. All organizational personnel have a common vision, which they strive to achieve.

Organisational learning connects the organization to the environment and all that is taking place in the organizations. It provides a strategic leadership for learning. Due to this concept the staffs of the organization have greater Commitment and they increase their energy levels. The learning helps them to boost their commitment and morale.

The staff through the organizational learning develops creative thinking hence they result in new thinking and new response to the environmental turbulence. The organisational learning is a means of enhancing organizational intellectual capital.

Due to the innovations and improvement of the organization and result of the learning process, the company improves this provision of goods and services and offers competitive goals and services and hence gains super global reputation. Learning is seen as a conscious attempt on the part of the organization to retain and improve competitiveness, productivity, and innovativeness in an uncertain environment. Organisations cannot and will not make any effective progress unless, of course, they take their learning processes further by deliberately including their human resources. (Gerald, 1999)

### **2.1.6 Factors Influencing Organization Learning**

There are various factors that influence organization learning in any organization. Influencing factors can be analyzed in three levels: organizational, functional and personal. These include the organisation of work, the culture of the organization, resources available for learning activities and skills, attitudes and motivation of managers and learners.

A Lack of learning culture impedes the organization learning. The lack of learning culture is an inhibiting factor. Its difficult to develop a learning culture and insufficient knowledge sharing hence it becomes difficult to motivate employees to share knowledge

or engage in learning processes if they are not used to this or perhaps even reluctant to do so. If an organisation has a culture open to learning, this makes it easier to change the human resource development practices such as developing responsibility to managers and employees and creating opportunities for learning within work activities (Smith, 1999).

The availability of resources influences learning. This includes both financial and human resources. Work pressure is so great that it is difficult for employees to find time for learning in their daily work routine. Other opportunities for learning (such as courses) are cancelled or postponed to ensure the workload is completed. The motivation of staff is another factor that influences organization learning. The limited involvement of managers and employees in learning issues was linked to lack of motivation for learning. When managers are involved in the learning process, they then become motivated to adopt the organization learning. Another factor that influences organization learning is a search for clarity within an organisation. This includes clear communication, clear training systems, procedures or policy and a widely shared understanding of the importance of learning and personal development.

The structure of the organisation also influences organisation learning. A centralized, mechanistic structure tends to reinforce past behaviours while a decentralized structure promotes double-loop learning. The centralized creates a more fragmented Structure, which does not support people to think for themselves thus individuals do not have a comprehensive picture of the whole (Fiol & Lyles, 1985).

The environment also affects organization learning. Organizations must align themselves with the environment so as to remain competitive and innovative. Alignment implies that the firm must have the potential to learn, unlearn, or relearn based on its past behaviours. If the external and internal environments are complex and dynamic, learning may not take place. It can only occur only when there is a balance between change (the new) and stability (the old) (Mason, 1993). Technology has a great impact and influence on organisation learning. Granthj (1993) states that technology can be used to clarify assumptions, speed up communications, elicit tacit knowledge and construct histories of insights and catalog them. Information systems can indirectly

influence organization learning by affective contextual factors such as structure and environment, which in turn influence learning.

## **2.2 Learning Organisation**

There has been a growing interest in the learning organisation concept, but even with various research papers written, there is no particular consensus on the definition of learning organisation. Some interpret it in a limited way as detection and correction of errors or learning from experience, while others present it as developing the organization's capacity to restructure problems (Argis, 1977). Learning organizations are also seen as those that scan and anticipate change in their environment, thereby developing an ability to question, challenge and change their operating methods, so as to allow an appropriate strategic direction for the organisation (Morgan, 1977).

Learning organization has also been said to be a place where people increase their capacity to generate results that they desire, as new thinking and innovations are nurtured, and the individuals continually learn how to learn together (Senge, 1990). The last two definitions emphasizes the idea of accepting and anticipating change as well as allowing the individuals in the firm to develop ways of coping with the ensuing change.

The definitions as varied as they are, have some agreement on the issues of individuals and group learning as distinct processes, the relationship between knowledge and values or attitudes and the need for an organisation to have an open system so that it learns from the environment (Cibulka et al, 2000). The authors highlight the importance of the relationship between knowledge and values within organisations and the need for learning organisations to go beyond learning how to do things to learning, why things are done the way they are done. This is important as it allows the organisations to scratch below the surface of their values to determine if there are steps in a different direction, which could yield same or better results.

Learning organizations could be said to have different meanings depending on the usage. One it could refer to an organisation that learns or the acceptance of a firm's processes



and structures as organisation of learning (Franz, 1995). In the former case, organisation is viewed an adjective while in the latter case, it is a verb and organisation is seen as a process led by the process of learning, where the organisation both wants and aids people and itself as a whole to successfully cope with ensuing challenges. Organisations are then understood as larger social organisms constituted by members and groups of people with formal and informal structures bound together by rules, purposes and values. These organisms then only come to life when people enact the structures, rules, values and purposes.

The above argument brings in the question of who learns, is it the individuals or the organisations and can organisations per se learn? When we look at organisations as structures, then the answer to the question would be no, but when we consider organisations to be purposeful interaction of people who apply and modify these structures, then the answer would be yes (Franz, 1995). It is the researcher's understanding that organisations being structures that encompass people, can only learn for as long as their members learn both individually as well as collectively.

In pursuant of the desire to be learning organisations, a number of organisations and countries have taken up the learning organisation concept. In Europe and specifically the United Kingdom, the government has developed policies and initiatives to create a learning society through a consultancy document for a learning age, which advocates for adding value and keeping the people up to date, so that the country's intellectual capital continues to be the nation's competitive strength in the development and growth environment (International journal, 1998).

In Wales, a government paper on lifelong learning has been written setting out a National Strategy emphasizing individual's learning with provision of support and guidance, (International journal, 1998). The United Kingdom's department for Education and Employment sponsors a network of learning cities, which develop new ideas and practices for the promotion of the community through learning, European Consortium for the Learning Organization. Organizations and companies being social entities have also

been studied with varied results on whether they are learning organizations. These include the following: Schools as Learning Organisations Cibulka et al (2000) and it was found that for organisations to be learning organisations, they need support in the desired attributes, a strong leadership to build and sustain the conditions and opportunities, a culture of learning characterised by an ethic of caring by all members and finally that learning is a continuous task as the organisation has to learn how to learn and provide lifelong learning.

Through the Community Development Resource Association, which is based in Cape Town in South Africa, NGOs as learning organisations have been studied Taylor (1998), with the conclusion that learning organisation concept calls for changes in behaviour which are often resisted, organisations need to have times for reflection and not always action, an environment of providing challenge, support and trust is crucial for learning unlike the commonly found atmosphere of undermining and threatening others. International Organizations Bernd (2003) noted that there are internal factors: structural, personal, cultural and external elements which influence learning in these organizations and need to be researched on and synthesized from a learning organization perspective. Private enterprises like Apple Computers of Japan Gerard (1999); which emphasized that while perfect learning organization is not an attainable goal but a desirable concept, there is no correct or wrong implementation of the learning organization. Every organization can continuously adapt, adjust and learn something new in order to survive today's global market place. which has continuous changes.

Comparison of European Countries by Brook and Stewart (1999); concludes that key players in the development of learning organization are: (i) the management who need to facilitate, coordinate and support individuals' learning rather than merely provide training; (ii) the organisation culture; (iii) the structural and set up of the organisation and the resources availed. Since the learning organisation concept is being embraced widely especially in the developed countries, it is hoped that this research gives an insight into the practice of the concept in the developing world, specifically within the Non-Governmental Organisations in Kenya.

### **2.3 Non- Governmental Organisation ( NGO)**

NGO donors require that the selection of a suitable NGO to practice should be based on the evaluation by specialists from various fields related to the project including finance. While the internal regulations of many donors requires that the choice of NGOs be based on the scrutiny of past performance, in practice international NGOs are preferred and not necessarily subjected to thorough scrutiny. Even when some donors have a policy of supporting the local NGOs more by strengthening their sustainability, the same donors tend to have a higher percentage of local NGOs.

Some times the choice of an NGO is based on the simple reason that no other NGOs are willing to come forward and for the provision of given services. Thus the choices made are not always as per the policy guidelines, numerical ratings or generally narrated strengths and weaknesses when compared to established criteria, but rather the general liking or preference for a given NGO or its leader, or because the choices are limited. (Amulyoto, 2004).

Amulyoto (2004), further argues that for international NGOs, there tends to be clear financial regulations that are in line with those of their parent offices with laid down internal controls. For some local NGOs there is lack of clear internal financial regulations or guidelines. Generally even where such guidelines exist for both local and international NGOs, the implementation at particularly the field level is hampered by high staff turnover as many people apply to work in hardship areas due to desperation for employment. Also most of the field staff that undertakes the transactions are not conversant with the contract or agreement and the financial requirements or expectations by the donors.

## 2.4 Theoretical Framework

The Learning Organisation concept is largely seen as appropriate for our times as managers appreciate learning as a useful strategy for business survival. The desire and ability of an organisation to continuously learn from any source and to rapidly convert the learning into action, provides the firm's competitive edge (Welch, real business).

Different approaches and theories have been developed in explaining the concept with one being known as Three Dimensional Approach by Kellerher (2007) which emphasizes learning and not training. This approach suggests that learning organizations are established through continuous interaction between three key dimensions: individual, team and organizational learning, in an environment that encourages and maximizes effective learning.

Learning organisation development and implementation should be seen as a journey but never a destination and therefore indicators to measure organisations for accreditation cannot be comprehensively developed. Organisations have to work within their specific environments and will only improve through maximization of their human talent and potential, bearing in mind that learning is best achieved when it is intrinsically driven.

Individual learning is based on the understanding that it is individual people who learn and not organisations per se. It is essential that all organisations which are aspiring to be learning organisations support and sustain the learning of its individual employees, giving them increased responsibility for managing individual's own learning. The second facet of this concept is the team, which is a collection of individuals and yet an entity in its own right.

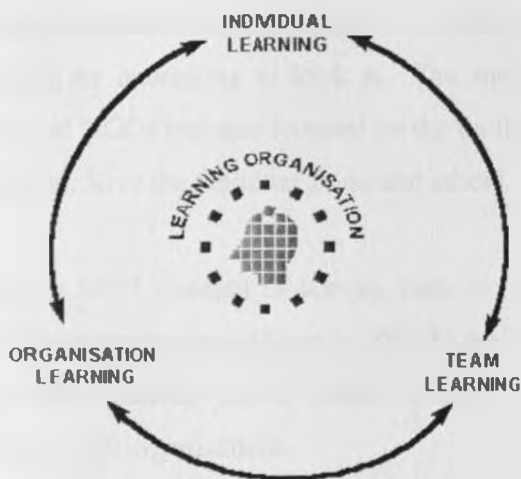
As more and more organisations get to work through different teams, team learning becomes an important factor in the organization's development. The transfer of learning experiences between team members is important and at this point the emphasis is on team learning and not team working. The environment for effective learning in groups is thus

useful as it ensures that individual learning also takes place and gives as varied dimensions to the situation as the members of the team.

Finally at the level of organisation, the learning of individuals and teams becomes transferred and engraved in the structures and systems of the organisation. This is possible if the management has established an environment in which learning is maximized, so that as individuals and teams learn they are supported and learning for all in the organization is encouraged and shared.

The schematic diagram below shows the relationship between the various variables that make up an effective learning organisation. The independent variables are individual learning, team learning and organisation learning. It is the individuals in the organisation that need to learn and not the organisation as an entity. The individual learning then translates to team learning which further translates to organizational learning. In this context, the learning organisation is the outcome of all the other three independent variables.

**Figure 2. 1: Schematic diagram for theoretical framework**



Source: Kellerher (2007)

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Research design**

A survey design was used so as to cover the target population of NGOs within Nairobi. Since the study was exploratory, survey methodology was used to identify the various factors that influence the adoption of the Learning Organisation Concept by NGOs, specifically based in Nairobi, Kenya.

### **3.2 Population**

The population was limited to NGOs of different kinds, sizes and focus in service provision, so long as they are based in Nairobi, Kenya. The researcher target was NGOs set up by individuals or communities, both local and international in their scope. These organisations are considered service-oriented, as they tend to pursue activities that help the communities to alleviate suffering and promote the interests of the poor, at times protecting the environment and other community development initiatives.

The non-governmental organisations have their own mechanisms for staff development, which would be interesting to look at. The study however did not limit itself to only Kenyan-based NGOs but also focused on the multinational NGOs like the United Nations Organisations, Save the Children Fund and others.

According to NGO Council of Kenya, there is an estimated 3,200 NGOs countrywide, however, those that use an address in Nairobi are 736. The Nairobi based NGOs were the target for this research and a sample size of 14% was taken, making the research population of 100 organisations.

### **3.3 Sampling Procedure**

The study used stratified sampling procedure to select the research sample of 100 organisations from the total 736 registered in Nairobi. Stratified random sampling

ensured the selection of the organisations, which represented the different categories. These were either individual, community, faith-based or international.

### **3.4 Data Collection**

The study largely utilized Primary data. Data was collected using literature reviews, interviews with Human Resource Managers or equivalent in the chosen organizations and questionnaires. The questionnaires were semi structured and administered through personal interviews. The questionnaires were divided into two sections. Section A sought bio-data of the respondents while section B addressed aspects of organization learning mainly the extent to which the various factors apply to the non governmental organization.

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

The data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistical tools of analysis. Frequencies and percentages were used to establish the status proportion of the respondent with respect to the extent to which NGOs have adopted learning organization concept and the factors contributing to its adoption. Mean scores were used to establish the highly ranked aspects of organization learning that have been adopted by the NGOs and challenges in implementation of the concept in the Kenyan context. The findings were then presented in tabular and graphic form for ease of interpretation.

# CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

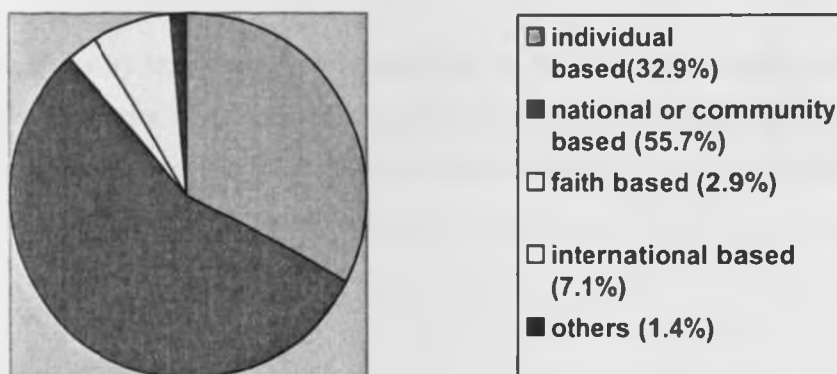
## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of data collected using a semi-structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into four sections named A to D. Section A sought personal data from the respondents. Section B explored the extent to which the NGOs had adopted organization-learning concepts into their organizations. Section C sought the challenges facing the NGOs in implementation of organization learning concepts. The last section concluded by asking the respondents to indicate their opinion on other challenges experienced in the process of learning in the organization and offer recommendations for effective organization learning in their organizations.

From the study of a population target of 100 respondents, 70 respondents answered and returned the questionnaires comprising of 70% response rate.

## 4.2 Personal data

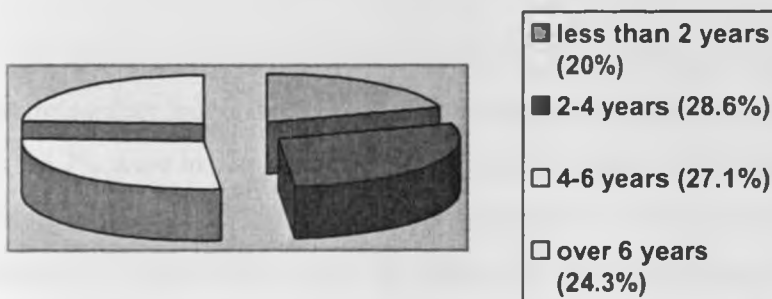
Figure 4. 1: The base of the organisation





In the above table, the researcher sought to find the organization set up of the organizations interviewed. From the findings in the table, it was clear that the majority of the organizations rated at 55.7% were national and community based, 32.9% were individual based, 7.1% were international based, 2.9% were faith based, while 1.4% said that their organization belong to other forms of organizational set up.

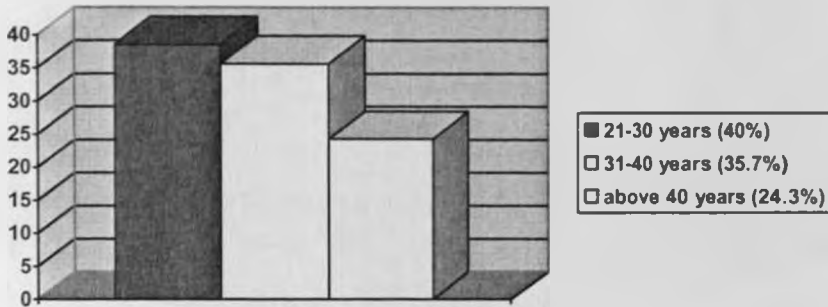
**Figure 4. 2: Duration employed by the organisation**



The researcher also sought to investigate the duration the respondents had been employed by the organization. From the findings in the above table, it was found out that 28.6% of the respondents had been employed for 2-4 years, 27.1% had been employed in the organization for 4-6 years, and 24.3% said over 6 years, while 20% of the respondents said that they had been employed by the organization for less than 2 years.

This information was very important to the researcher, as she was able to know whether the respondents were aware of the learning organization concept in their organization. The findings therefore helped the researcher to have confidence in the data collected since 80% of the respondents had been employed by the organizations for more than 2 years.

**Figure 4. 3: Age bracket**

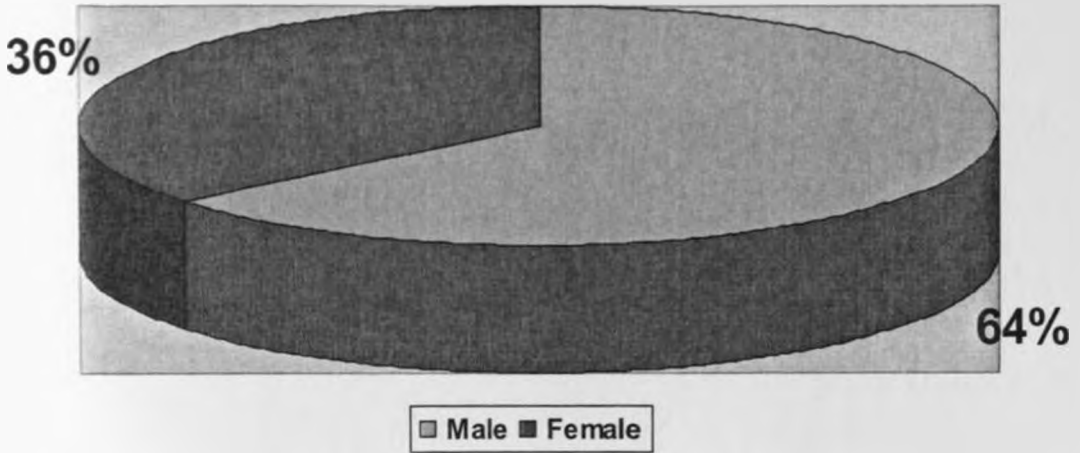


According to the above table which shows the findings on the age bracket of the respondents, the researcher found out that 40% of the respondents were in the age bracket of 21-30 years, 35.7% were in the age bracket of 31-40 years and 24.3% were above 40 years. This information was also important to the researcher as it helps the researcher to know how serious the respondents were in answering the questionnaire. From the findings, over 60% of the respondents were over 30 years and this means that they were mature enough and therefore serious in their responses.

**Table 4.1: Gender**

Factors	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percentage (%)
Male	45	64.3	64.3
Female	25	35.7	100
Total	70	100.0	

**Figure 4. 4: Gender composition**



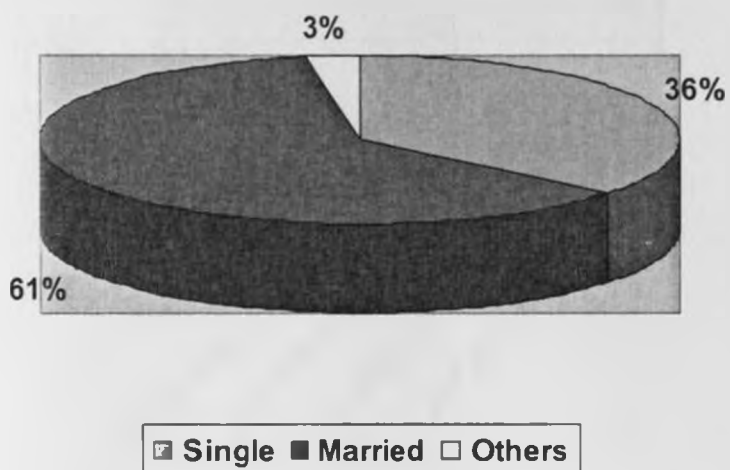
The gender of the respondents was also investigated in the study where the researcher found out that 64.3% was male, while 35.75 were females.

This may be evidence that gender sensitivity is also practiced in NGOs world to a large extent.

**Table 4.2: Marital status**

Factors	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent (%)
Single	25	35.7	35.7
Married	43	61.4	97.1
Others	2	2.9	100
Total	70	100.0	

**Figure 4. 5: Marital status**

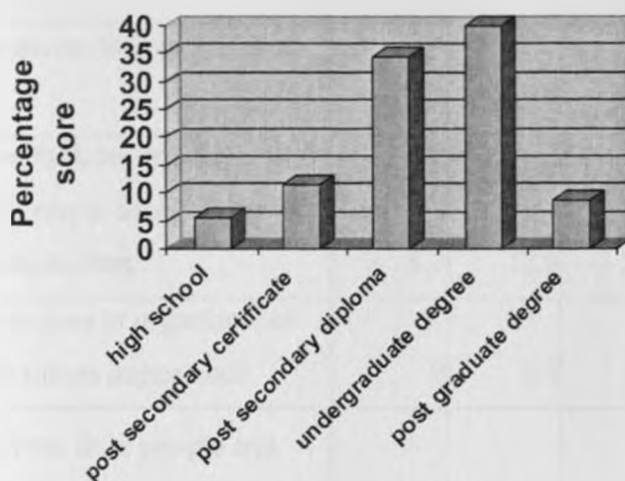


The above table shows the findings on the marital status of the respondents. From the findings, the majority of the respondents as shown by 61.4% were married, 35.7% were single, while 2.95 said others, that is they either separated or were widowed.

**Table 4.3: Education level**

Factors	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent (%)
Secondary/high school certificate	4	5.7	5.7
Post-secondary certificate	8	11.4	17.1
Post secondary diploma	24	34.3	51.4
Undergraduate degree	28	40.0	91.4
Post graduate degree	6	8.6	100.0
Total	70	100.0	

Figure 4. 6: Level of education



The researcher also sought to investigate the education level of the respondents. From the findings in the above table, she found out that the majority as shown by 40% had an undergraduate graduate degree, 34.3% had a post secondary diploma, 11.4% had a post secondary certificate, 8.6% had a post graduate degree, while 5.7% had a secondary school certificate. From the above information, the researcher concluded that the majority of respondents were able to understand the questions in the questionnaire and give the most appropriate responses as possible.

#### 4.3 Extent of Adoption of Organisation Learning Concept in NGOs in Kenya

Table 4.4: Extent of organisation learning

	Statement	Not at all	A little extent	Moderate extent	To a great extent	To a very great extent
1	Participatory policy and strategy reviews by all employees in my organization	1.4	12.9	31.4	35.7	18.6
2	Employees are encouraged to think together	2.9	2.9	15.7	34.3	44.3

3	All employees are involved in team playing and learning	1.4	7.1	24.3	40	27.1
4	All employees can access the organization database	15.7	12.9	34.3	24.3	12.9
5	There is always feedback on financial consequences of actions as soon as they are known by accounting system	5.7	12.9	31.4	32.9	17.1
6	Departments and sections in organisations all understand each others importance	0	8.6	12.9	34.3	44.3
7	Information is received from people and organizations stakeholders	5.7	10	18.6	31.4	34.3
8	We participate in joint ventures with our grantees and stakeholders	8.6	14.3	18.6	27.1	31.4
9	We meet with other organisations and share ideas	4.3	17.1	20	28.6	30
10	Various methods of communications are used in the organization	0	11.4	24.3	27.1	37.1
11	Employees in the organisation are continually expanding their abilities through learning	2.9	7.1	27.1	35.7	27.1
12	My organisation has a strategy that responds to the changing environment	2.9	10	18.6	28.6	40
13	Learning new things is a way of life for everyone in the organization	2.9	10	24.3	25.7	37.1
14	Policies and strategies are reviewed often	4.3	15.7	25.7	32.9	21.4
15	Organisation carries out research so as to get new outcomes	12.9	20	21.4	21.4	24.3
16	There is a strictly followed training programme in my organization	14.3	10	35.7	21.4	18.6

17	People in the organisation are involved in key decision making processes	5.7	15.7	27.1	37.1	14.3
18	All members of the organisations play apart in policy and strategy formulation	8.6	10	44.3	25.7	11.4
19	There is flexible organisation structure that changes frequently	4.3	17.1	27.1	28.6	22.9
20	There are different ways of compensating our work	8.6	11.4	25.7	34.3	20
21	All people in the organisation give a meaning to any information that is received in the organization	7.1	18.6	22.9	31.4	20
22	All employees in the organisation have shared goals and vision that they want to achieve	4.3	17.1	24.3	32.9	21.4
23	All employees clearly understands the relationship between their personal goals and those of the whole organisation	2.9	17.1	21.4	40	18.6
24	The organisation has strong future goals that it wants to accomplish	1.4	8.6	12.9	35.7	41.4
25	All employees help in formulating the future goals	7.1	8.6	27.1	34.3	22.9
26	Employees are free to give meaning to the information and situations in organisations	5.7	12.9	28.6	30.6	22.9
27	Information technology is not only used for automating process but helps in innovation	8.6	10	18.6	40	22.9
28	We meet with other organisations and share ideas	4.3	14.3	25.7	31.4	22.9
29	Various methods of communication are used in the organisation	4.3	5.7	24.3	31.4	34.3

30	In my organisation, our vital information is stored	2.9	11.4	11.4	17.1	57.1
31	The information is passed from one generation to another	8.6	7.1	21.4	20	42.9
32	In case of any managerial changes, the practices do not change there in continuity	2.9	5.7	21.4	34.3	35.7
33	All contracts used by the organisations are kept in data base for future use	1.4	11.4	18.6	22.9	45.7
34	All information records are accessible to all staff	12.9	15.7	24.3	25.7	21.4

**Table 4.5: Measures of central tendency and dispersion for extent of adoption of learning**

	Statement	Mean	Standard deviation	Variance
1	Participatory policy and strategy reviews by all employees in my organization	3.6	0.986	0.972
2	Employees are encouraged to think together	4.1	0.982	0.964
3	All employees are involved in team playing and learning	3.8	0.958	0.918
4	All employees can access the organization database	3.1	1.238	1.533
5	There is always feedback on financial consequences of actions as soon as they are known by accounting system	3.4	1.098	1.206
6	Departments and sections in organisations all understand each others importance	4.1	0.952	0.906
7	Information is received from people and organizations stakeholders	3.8	1.19	1.416
8	We participate in joint ventures with our grantees and stakeholders	3.6	1.302	1.695
9	We meet with other organisations and share ideas	3.6	1.206	1.454



10	Various methods of communications are used in the organization	3.9	1.037	1.075
11	Employees in the organisation are continually expanding their abilities through learning	3.8	1.024	1.049
12	My organisation has a strategy that responds to the changing environment	3.9	1.121	1.257
13	Learning new things is a way of life for everyone in the organization	3.8	1.125	1.266
14	Policies and strategies are reviewed often	3.5	1.126	1.268
15	Organisation carries out research so as to get new outcomes	3.2	1.367	1.869
16	There is a strictly followed training programme in my organization	3.2	1.269	1.610
17	People in the organisation are involved in key decision making processes	3.6	1.121	1.257
18	All members of the organisations play apart in policy and strategy formulation	3.2	1.062	1.128
19	There is flexible organisation structure that changes frequently	3.5	1.151	1.325
20	There are different ways of compensating our work	3.5	1.188	1.411
21	All people in the organisation give a meaning to any information that is received in the organization	3.4	1.207	1.457
22	All employees in the organisation have shared goals and vision that they want to achieve	3.5	1.139	1.297
23	All employees clearly understands the relationship between their personal goals and those of the whole organisation	3.5	1.073	1.151
24	The organisation has strong future goals that it wants to accomplish	4.1	1.012	1.024
25	All employees help in formulating the future goals	3.6	1.149	1.320
26	Employees are free to give meaning to the information and situations in organisations	3.5	1.151	1.324
27	Information technology is not only used for automating process but helps in innovation	3.6	1.198	1.435
28	We meet with other organisations and share ideas	3.9	1.149	1.320
29	Various methods of communication are used in the organisation	3.9	1.094	1.197
30	In my organisation, our vital information is stored	4.1	1.183	1.399

31	The information is passed from one generation to another	3.8	1.099	1.208
32	In case of any managerial changes, the practices do not change there in continuity	3.9	1.034	1.069
33	All contracts used by the organisations are kept in data base for future use	4	1.116	1.245
34	All information records are accessible to all staff	3.3	1.318	1.737

From the findings of the study, on the extent that the factors apply to the organizations, it was found out that all the respondents were in agreement that all the factors were to a great extent considered for organizational learning as all these factors had a mean above 3.5, which in the response scale of 1-5 means that these factors were considered to a great extent.

#### 4.4 Factors Affecting Adoption of Organisation Learning

Section C of the questionnaire asked the respondents to indicate on a 5-point likert scale the extent to which the listed factors affected adoption and implementation of the learning concept in the organisation. The findings of the study were then analysed using the means and the standard deviation.

**Table4.6: Challenges facing implementation of organisation learning in NGOs**

	Statement	Not at all	To a little extent	To a moderate extent	To a great extent	To a very great extent
1	Shortages of manpower in terms of numbers and key competencies	34.3	18.6	27.1	15.7	4.3
2	Lack of appropriate mind set and psychological dispositions	25.7	30	24.3	15.7	4.3
3	Inter-departmental conflicts	35.7	27.1	24.3	8.6	4.3
4	Scope of the required learning was not well defined	31.4	35.7	18.6	8.6	5.7

5	Goals were too aggressive and the organisation was not able to cope	37.1	31.4	18.6	10	2.9
6	Lack of clear communication on the learning goals objectives and what was expected of each member in the organization	31.4	32.9	20	11.4	4.3
7	Information technology is not only used for automating processes but helps innovation	24.3	28.6	28.6	10	8.6
8	Less consideration given to employees	34.3	31.4	17.1	14.3	2.9
9	Misunderstanding and lack of trust among those in authority or in other departments	34.3	25.7	27.1	8.6	2.9
10	Lack of effective leadership in the learning process	32.9	32.9	18.6	12.9	2.9
11	Lack of conducive environments for learning due to power games and organisational politics	31.4	31.4	20	14.3	2.9
12	Lack of appropriate means of evaluating organisation learning	31.4	27.1	24.3	10	7.1
13	Inadequate provisions to motivate the employees to undertake learning	25.7	28.6	22.9	18.6	4.3
14	Lack of expertise that are qualified to instil learning among other employees	32.9	27.1	22.9	11.4	5.7
15	Inability of employees to appreciate the importance of organisation learning	35.7	28.6	25.7	4.3	5.7

**Table 4.7: Measures of central tendency and variation for challenges of implementation of organisation learning**

	Statement	Mean	Std dev	variance
1	Shortages of manpower in terms of numbers and key competencies	2.4	1.229	1.510
2	Lack of appropriate mind set and psychological dispositions	2.4	1.162	1.350
3	Inter-departmental conflicts	2.2	1.146	1.313
4	Scope of the required learning was not well defined	2.2	1.153	1.329
5	Goals were too aggressive and the organisation was not able to cope	2.1	1.105	1.221
6	Lack of clear communication on the learning goals objectives and what was expected of each member in the organization	2.2	1.148	1.318
7	Information technology is not only used for automating processes but helps innovation	2.5	1.213	1.471
8	Less consideration given to employees	2.2	1.149	1.320
9	Misunderstanding and lack of trust among those in authority or in other departments	2.2	1.102	1.214
10	Lack of effective leadership in the learning process	2.2	1.124	1.263
11	Lack of conducive environments for learning due to power games and organisational politics	2.4	1.229	1.510
12	Lack of appropriate means of evaluating organisation learning	2.4	1.162	1.350
13	Inadequate provisions to motivate the employees to undertake learning	2.2	1.146	1.313
14	Lack of expertise that are qualified to instil learning among other employees	2.2	1.153	1.329
15	Inability of employees to appreciate the importance of organisation learning	2.1	1.137	1.293

From the findings on the challenges facing the implementation of organization learning in NGOs, the researcher can then conclude that the variables in the above table did not describe great challenges in the implementation of learning organizational concept. In all organizations the variables had a mean which ranged between 2.1-2.4, which in the response scale of 1-5 means that these variables were challenges to a little extent except one variable which had a mean of 2.5 meaning it was a challenge to a moderate extent. .

Other than the challenges that were provided, the researcher requested the respondents to give other challenges that affected their firms in organisation learning. The challenges suggested were as below:

- i. 80% of the respondents said that there were limited or no funds for organization learning and sometimes this limited the number of employees who are holding critical positions.
- ii. Over 75% of the respondents said that there were no support from the top management that enhanced an environment conducive for learning and there is lack of clear leadership role from the top managers.
- iii. 60% said that there was bureaucracy and as a result it takes very long for training programs to be approved/authorized.
- iv. It was also clear from 40% of the respondents that other organisations did not have clear goals on learning and training
- v. Lack of motivation, which leads to employees to be driven by individual needs instead of organizational needs
- vi. Some NGOs face problems of funding training programs.
- vii. Age was also considered another factor that impeded organisation learning as those that were older had problems learning at a meaningful rate new concepts such as Information Technology.

#### **4.5 Suggestions for Effective Organization Learning**

The study considered recommendations for effective learning to take place in the NGOs as below;

- i. 70% of the respondents recommended that there should be free interaction between the top and lower rank employees.
- ii. Over 65% also suggested that clear management policies on learning and development should be established.
- iii. Mentoring should be encouraged whereby available skills and personnel should be utilized.
- iv. Internal training should be done and employees with various skills should be encouraged to train others.
- v. 50% also suggested that there should be capacity building and succession planning.

# CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 5.1 Discussions

The aim of this study was twofold. One, to establish the extent to which organisational learning concept has been adopted by NGOs in Kenya. The second objective was to establish challenges in implementation of learning organization concept among NGOs in the Kenyan Context. A learning organization actively creates, captures, transfers, and mobilizes knowledge to enable it to adapt to a changing environment. Thus, the key aspect of organizational learning is the interaction that takes place among individuals.

82.1% of the respondents were also found to have a post secondary diploma and above level of education with the majority having an undergraduate degree. This means that the majority of them were able to read and understand the questions in the questionnaire and also gives the most accurate answers as possible. It was also clear that they understood the meaning and the importance of organization learning.

Using descriptive statistics to measure the extent of adoption and factors contributing to the adoption of organisation learning concept, the study found out that all the factors were considered to a great extent for organizational learning as all these factors had a mean above 3.5.

The results of this study also shows that the NGOs do not face the challenges indicated in the study during adoption or implementation of organisation learning concept as all the factors scored lower means of between 2.1 and 2.5. This indicates that all the factors affect the organisation to a little extent.

On other challenges that were experienced in the process of learning in the organizations the researcher found them to be, limited or no funds for organization learning and sometimes this limited the number of employees who are holding critical positions. Lack of support and goodwill from top management hinders an environment conducive for

learning. There is poor leadership and bureaucracy in some organizations, which makes training to take long to be approved/authorized. Other organizations do not have clear learning goals defined. Staff motivation is lacking in some NGOs and this affect the learning atmosphere negatively. Additionally, some organizations face problems of funding training programs and also age was considered another factor that impeded organisation learning as those that were older had problems learning and adopting to new changes such as IT.

On the recommendations for effective organizational learning, the respondents suggested that there should be free interaction between the top and lower rank employees, clear management policies on learning and development to be established, and that the employees with limited skills should be encouraged to train on others skills and there should be capacity building

## **5.2 Conclusions**

From the findings in chapter four and discussions in this chapter, it can be concluded that the majority of the NGOs in Kenya carry out organizational learning and that there are no many challenges as far as organizational learning in the organizations is concerned.

It can also be concluded that organization learning is very important due to dynamics in growth in the organizations.

## **5.3 Recommendations**

From the study, the researcher had the following recommendations:

- i. Systematic inquiry into the people's knowledge, skills and attitude should be carried out to determine the existence of present capabilities and unearth learning gaps, which need to be bridged so that the organisation is able to achieve its objectives.
- ii. By creating an environment where everyone is provided with the necessary skills to perform their jobs an organisation will be able to encourage a learning culture. Other than advocating for a free flow of information, a learning culture should also encourage people to challenge the existing ways of doing things and search



for better alternatives. As participative ways of organisational learning lead to superior results, workers should be involved in stimulating this process. It should be an all-inclusive process.

- iii. Providing training and developing skills should be the main agenda of a learning organisation. Unless the top management truly believes in training and development as a means of enhancing learning the effort will be wasted. Without belief in the importance of training and development it becomes a boring ritual where when asked why did they come to the training, the employees say 'they were sent by their bosses'. Programmes and qualifications in initial vocational educational training and in further or continuing vocational educational training should be related to work. The concept of work process knowledge serves as a sound framework for this purpose.
- iv. A leaning culture can also be encouraged through multi-skilling which is an approach requiring employees to learn how to perform more jobs in their company. Multi-skilling broadens the narrow horizon promoted by specialisation and encourages curiosity among people. A positive side effect of multi-skilling will be the general interest of employees to know more and learn more not only about their jobs but things outside their jobs. Giving people more knowledge and competencies but not giving them the opportunity to apply it to their work situations will be like giving an ice cream to a child and not letting him eat it. When people learn new things the immediate thought coming to their mind is where and how to use it. And if they do not find avenues to apply this knowledge to their jobs they get frustrated.
- v. Employees should be rewarded to reinforce the learning in organisations. This will reinforce the belief of people that if they learn they will in turn get benefit from it. Rewards can be both financial and non-financial, for instance, promotions and salary increases. People need to be rewarded otherwise more knowledge will just create dissatisfaction leading to high turn over. There is a need to find ways

for accrediting skills acquired in organisational learning so that this can benefit the individual on the external labour market.

- vi. The learning organisation is a concept, which may not be misinterpreted as a new management fad rather considered as a sound business strategy, which makes a lot of sense. By truly believing in this philosophy, committing resources to promote the learning culture companies can greatly enhance their competitive edge. The benefits of learning organisation are enormous equally relevant for all sizes of businesses and organisations. Great multinational companies as well as small business venture can equally benefit if they plan for and commit resources for creating learning organizations.

#### **5.4. Limitation of study**

Each company has its codes of practice that prohibits the employees including managers from divulging their information that would affect their customers in any way. Most of the responding organizations are the busiest place to work. I had to contend with most managers being away on meetings and taking too long with the questionnaires because of their very busy schedules. However, eventually, they would settle down and fill them.

Some of the respondents were also not willing to provide the required information and some had to be reminded severally and even persuaded to provide the required information. NGOs have also a culture of secrecy, which made it very hard to get willing respondents, as they are suspicious of strangers. This made the exercise to be very tedious and frustrating.

#### **5.5 Suggestions for further research**

A similar study can be conducted in a different kind of industry to find out whether there is some similarity in the methods used to adopt and the reasons that prompt the organizations to adopt the concept.

A study can also be done to establish the challenges that other organizations face while adopting the Organizational Learning concept.

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Appendix 1: Letter of Authorization



**UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**  
**FACULTY OF COMMERCE**  
**MBA PROGRAM - LOWER KABETE CAMPUS**

Telephone: 4184160 Ext. 208  
Telegams: "Varsity", Nairobi  
Faxes: 22095 Varsity

P.O. Box 30197  
Nairobi, Kenya

DATE 27/08/07

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

The bearer of this letter MARY GAIMUNI KIHARA

Registration No: 261/017/055/05

is a Master of Business Administration (MBA) student of the University of Nairobi.

He/she is required to submit as part of his/her coursework assessment a research project report on a management problem. We would like the students to do their projects on real problems affecting firms in Kenya. We would, therefore, appreciate if you assist him/her by allowing him/her to collect data in your organization for the research.

The project is entitled THE WORKING ORGANIZATION  
CHARACTERISTICS AND THE NATURE OF THE  
ORGANIZATION'S CULTURE IN KENYA

The results of the report will be used solely for academic purposes and a copy of the same will be availed to the interviewed organizations on request

Thank you.

**J.T. KARIUKI**  
**CO-ORDINATOR, MBA PROGRAM**

UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI  
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS  
MBA OFFICE  
P. O. Box 30197  
NAIROBI

## **Appendix II: Letter of Introduction**

University of Nairobi,  
School of Business,  
P. O. Box 30197,  
Nairobi.

Dear Respondent,

RE: COLLECTION OF RESEARCH DATA

I am a postgraduate student in the above mentioned University undertaking a Management Research Project on “The learning Organisation Concept: A study of Non governmental organizations in Nairobi, Kenya”

You have been selected to form part of this study. You are kindly requested to assist in data collection by responding to the questions in the accompanying Questionnaire. The information provided will exclusively be used for academic purposes only and will be treated with utmost confidence.

You will also be provided with a copy of the final report upon your request.

Your cooperation is highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

Mary Kihara.

James Gathungu

MBA STUDENT  
RESEARCHER

UNIVERSITY SUPERVISOR  
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS



### Appendix III: Questionnaire

#### SECTION A: PERSONAL DATA

Name of the organization

.....

The organization set up is:

- Individual based ( )
- National or community based ( )
- Faith -based ( )
- International based ( )

What is your current job title.....

How long have you been employed by this organization?

- Less than 2 years ( )
- 2 – 4 yrs ( )
- 4 – 6 yrs ( )
- Over 6 yrs ( )

Please check the basic that indicates your age bracket.

- 20 or below ( )
- 21 – 30 ( )
- 31 – 40 ( )
- Above 40 ( )

Gender Male ( ) Female ( )

Marital status Single ( ) Married ( ) Other (please state) ( )

Education (Please indicate appropriate level)

- Secondary/high school certificate ( )
- Post-secondary certificate ( )
- Post – secondary diploma ( )
- Undergraduate degree ( )
- Postgraduate degree ( )

**SECTION B**

To what extend do the following apply to your organisation please?

(Circle the most appropriate option using the provided scales)

Please tick as appropriate

- 1. Not at all
- 2. To a little extent
- 3. To a moderate extent
- 4. To a great extent
- 5. To a very great extent

	Statements	1	2	3	4	5
1	Participatory policy and strategy reviews by all employees in my organization					
2	Employees are encouraged to think together					
3	All employees are involved in team playing and learning					
4	All employees can access the organisation databases					
5	There is always feedback on financial consequences of actions as soon as they are known by accounting system					
6	Departments and sections in organisations all understand each others importance					

7	Information is received from people and organisations stakeholders					
8	We participate in joint ventures with our grantees and stakeholders					
9	We meet with other organisation and share ideas					
10	Various methods of communications are used in the organization					
11	Employees in the organization are continually expanding their abilities through learning					
12	My organization has a strategy that responds to the changing environment					
13	Learning new things is a way of life for everyone in the organization					
14	Policies and strategies are reviewed often					
15	Organisation carries out carries out research so as to get new outcomes					
16	There is a strictly followed training programme in my organization.					
17	People in the organization are involved in key decision making processes					
18	All members of the organization play a part in policy and strategy formulation					
19	There is flexible organization structure that changes frequently					
20	There are different ways of compensating our work					
21	All people in the organization give a meaning to any information that is received in the organization					
22	All employees in the organization have shared goals and vision that they want to achieve					
23	All employees clearly understand the relationship between					

	their personal goals and those of the whole organization.					
24	The organization has strong future goals that it wants accomplish					
25	All employees help in formulating the future goals					
26	Employees are free to give meaning to the information and situations in organizations					
27	Information technology is not only used for automating process but helps in innovation					
28	We meet with other organization and share ideas					
29	Various methods of communication are used in the organization					
30	In my organization our vital information is stored					
31	The information is passed from one generation to another					
32	Incase of any managerial changes, the practices do not change there is continuity					
33	All contracts used by the organizations are kept in data base for future use					
34	All information records are accessible to all staff.					

### SECTION: C

Please indicate on a scale of 1 to 5 below, the extent to which the following the following statements describe the challenges in implementation of learning organizational concept in your organization

Please tick as appropriate

1. Not at all
2. To a little extent
3. To a moderate extent
4. To a great extent
5. To a very great extent

	Statements	1	2	3	4	5
1	Shortages of manpower in terms of numbers and key competencies					
2	Lack of appropriate mind set and psychological dispositions					
3	Inter- departmental conflict					
4	Scope of the required learning was not well defined					
5	Goals were too aggressive and the organisation was not able to cope					
6	Lack of clear communication on the learning goals objectives and what was expected of each member in the					
7	Information technology is not only used for automating processes but helps innovation					
8	Less consideration given to employees					
9	Misunderstanding and lack of trust among those in authority or in other departments					

10	Lack of effective leadership in the learning process					
11	Lack of conducive environments for learning due to power games and organisational politics					
12	Lack of appropriate means of evaluating organisation learning					
13	Inadequate provisions to motivate the employees to undertake learning					
14	Lack of expertise that are qualified to instil learning among other employees					
15	Inability of employees to appreciate the importance of organisation learning.					

**SECTION D: CONCLUSIONS**

1. What in your opinion are other challenges that are experienced in the process of learning in the organization? Briefly indicate below

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

2. What recommendations can you make for effective organisation learning to take place in your firm?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION**

#### **Appendix IV: List Of NGOs**

1. Joy bringers international
2. Cognitive education
3. Goal Kenya
4. Save the children Canada
5. Islamic relief fund
6. Ipas Kenya
7. Inter life aids Kenya
8. Food for the hungry international
9. Life flite-K
10. National youth foundation (NYF)
11. Kabete community based organization
12. Single mothers association
13. Kenya aids watch institute
14. KOA rural development agency
15. Nairobi family support services
16. New life mission Kenya
17. Aga Khan development network
18. Network of aids researchers
19. Nyamondo welfare fund
20. Reed international
21. Rosa mystica academy
22. Collin Powell foundation
23. Genesis community development assistance
24. Children welfare assistance fund
25. Maendeleo ya wanawake organization
26. Ali Aslam foundation
27. Rural aid Kenya
28. Al Mahdi Relief Fund
29. People for peace in Africa
30. Kenya women finance trust



31. Women shadow
32. Zedco investment
33. Rotaract D9200 VCT Centre
34. Interface international E.A Ltd
35. Action Africa in need
36. Kenya tourist concern
37. Sudan intergraded mine actual service
38. Sudan medical care
39. Kenya against corruption
40. Stop suffering help centre
41. Kisima ministry
42. PROWED
43. Al Imran foundation
44. Vijana na maendeleo
45. Old racecourse youth outreach
46. Relief and development mission
47. KOWOTH vision
48. Plasmod watch
49. Lea mosi kini
50. Pledge action international
51. Pheisic international
52. Life ministry
53. Orphan care centre Nairobi
54. Centre for community law and development
55. Rescue the nomads
56. Stop ahead for rural women
57. Glory blind feeding and education organization
58. Health care 2000foundation for research in children diseases
59. Hand in hand Kenya
60. Action aid Kenya
61. Kenya widows and orphans support programs (KWOSP)

62. Abundant life ministry
63. Population services international
64. Christian mission aid
65. Rosa mystica synchronised organization
66. Association of Christian resource organizations
67. Swahiba youth networks
68. Kenya Section of The International Commission of Jurists
69. FIDA
70. Kenya AIDS NGOs Consortium (KANCO)