

A dynamic and holistic perspective of learning management: a case study application

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Summary

This study examines learning management as a critical driver of organizational resilience in an era of technological change, demographic shifts, and market volatility. The increasing pace of technological obsolescence and the need for continuous workforce upskilling underscore the necessity for structured learning processes. Additionally, ageing workforces and demographic decline highlight the urgency of effective knowledge transfer. Organizations must proactively manage learning to sustain competitiveness, foster innovation, and ensure long-term adaptability.

While existing literature explores learning organizations, empirical research on structured learning management remains limited. This study investigates how organizational characteristics, capabilities, and skills shape learning-oriented cultures and drive continuous improvement.

Using a case study methodology, the research examines learning context, activities, and outcomes within a multinational firm. Theoretical insights from experiential learning and human capital theory, provide a framework for analysis. Findings highlight the role of strategic leadership, knowledge management, and innovation in fostering learning-driven organizations.

Track: Knowledge and learning

Introduction

In an era of rapid technological advancement, demographic shifts, and evolving market dynamics, learning management has emerged as a critical determinant of organizational resilience and long-term success. The increasing pace of technological obsolescence and the need for continuous workforce upskilling (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014) underscore the importance of structured learning processes within organizations. Additionally, demographic decline and ageing workforces in many developed economies (OECD, 2022) further highlight the need for effective knowledge transfer and sustainable talent development strategies. Organizations must proactively manage learning to remain competitive, ensuring that employees and leaders can adapt to new business realities.

The concept of Learning Organizations (LO) has been widely discussed in management literature, with scholars emphasizing the role of organizational culture as a key enabler of continuous learning (Senge, 1990; Marsick & Watkins, 2003). A learning-oriented culture fosters innovation, collaboration, and adaptability, ultimately enhancing an organization's ability to navigate uncertainty (Garvin, Edmondson, & Gino, 2008). Prior research has highlighted the significance of knowledge-sharing mechanisms, experimentation, and openness to change in fostering a sustainable learning environment (Argote & Hora, 2017). However, despite extensive theoretical discussions, the practical implications of learning management remain underexplored, particularly about the dynamic external challenges organizations face today.

Given the increasing disruptions caused by digital transformation (Hess et al., 2016), global market volatility, and shifts in labour markets (Autor, 2019), there is a pressing need to investigate how learning management can be systematically structured to drive continuous improvement. While existing studies have explored the characteristics of LOs, there is a gap in research examining how organizational characteristics, capabilities, and skills interact to build sustainable learning management within organisations (Koul & Nayar, 2021). Addressing this gap is essential for organizations seeking to future-proof their workforce and enhance their ability to innovate amid continuous change.

This study aims to analyze learning management processes by examining key components such as the learning context, activities, capabilities, and outcomes. The research seeks to answer the following research question: "How do organizational learning contexts, activities, and capabilities contribute to continuous improvement in dynamic business environments?" To achieve this, we adopt a case study methodology, which allows for an in-depth examination of learning management within a real-world organizational setting (Yin, 2018). This research provides valuable insights for both academics and practitioners, offering strategies to enhance learning processes in organizations facing rapid technological shifts, demographic transitions, and increasing competitive pressures.

1. Theoretical background

1.1 OL and Organisational learning processes

Organisational Learning (OL) and the concept of LO have become critical topics in the contemporary management literature (Alerasoul et al., 2021; Reynolds & Ablett, 1998; Ulrich, Jick, & Von Glinow, 1993). The LO is defined as an organization that fosters continuous learning and persistently adapts to the transforming environment (Reynolds & Ablett, 1998).

OL is increasingly conceptualized as a multidimensional and dynamic process through which individuals and collectives within an organization acquire, interpret, and apply knowledge to enhance adaptive capacity and organizational performance. Building on contemporary theoretical contributions, OL is understood as emerging from the intersection of cognitive, social, and practice-

based dimensions (Akella, 2020; Garvin et al., 2008; Haukåsen & Hermanrud, 2023; Suder et al., 2019).

Akella (2020) critiques conventional hierarchical and top-down learning models by proposing a learner-centered framework that foregrounds the role of identity, tacit knowledge, and autonomous engagement. In this perspective, OL is facilitated when individuals are embedded in enabling social environments that support dialogic reflection, contextual sense-making, and experiential participation. Similarly, Haukåsen and Hermanrud (2023) advance a practice-oriented understanding of OL by examining the role of Human Resource Development (HRD) in supporting lean implementation within healthcare organizations. Drawing on Vygotsky's sociocultural learning theory, they conceptualize HRD as a scaffolding mechanism that operates across three distinct phases: (1) cognitive scaffolding to align conceptual understanding with organizational objectives, (2) peer-to-peer scaffolding through situated learning practices, and (3) the strategic withdrawal of support, which enables the internalization of knowledge and promotes autonomy among learners.

Further extending the scope of OL, Suder et al. (2017) explore the role of HRM in multinational enterprises operating in hostile and institutionally void environments. They highlight the critical function of HRM practices in facilitating the identification, capture, and dissemination of context-specific experiential knowledge, termed "rare knowledge", which is often tacit, inimitable, and integral to organizational resilience. Through mechanisms such as debriefing and expatriate learning, HRM enables the transfer of localized knowledge across organizational units, thereby contributing to the strategic development of organizational capabilities.

While these contributions have advanced the understanding of OL in complex and practice-based environments, several areas warrant further scholarly attention. Despite these rich and varied perspectives, the OL concept has not been consistently operationalized in management research. For instance, many intervening or contextual factors shape the work setting and the organization, adding to the complexity of empirically understanding their effects on performance. A major goal of organizational change and work innovation is to determine whether consistent patterns of learning exist within organizations that have successfully improved outcomes.

Marsick and Watkins (2003) proposed a comprehensive framework for examining the characteristics of a LO. Their model emphasizes three key outcomes: (1) systems-level continuous learning, (2) the creation and management of knowledge outcomes, and (3) the improvement of organizational performance. It highlights the importance of supportive learning opportunities for individual employees, identifies concrete learning processes at the team level, and underscores the strategic role of leadership in fostering inquiry and dialogue.

Building on this, Garvin et al. (2008) proposed three foundational building blocks for cultivating a learning organization: (1) a supportive learning environment, (2) concrete learning processes and practices, and (3) leadership that reinforces learning. Their model frames LO characteristics from a systemic perspective and describes the ongoing, iterative process of becoming a LO. This systemic and multi-level approach to OL, integrating individual, team, and organizational dynamics, remains critical, particularly in today's complex, hybrid work environments where fostering coherent, adaptive learning systems is both a strategic and operational imperative.

Collectively, these researches point to the need for more integrative, multi-level, and contextually grounded studies that bridge micro-level learning dynamics with macro-level organizational structures and strategies. OL should be examined not only as a mechanism for adaptation and improvement but also as a contested and negotiated process embedded in broader institutional and power relations.

1.2. Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (ELT)

Experiential Learning Theory (ELT), developed by Kolb (1984), provides a foundational framework for understanding how individuals and organizations learn through experience. Central to ELT is the view that learning is not a static outcome but a dynamic, iterative process in which knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. This process is represented as a continuous learning cycle composed of four interrelated stages: Concrete Experience (CE), Reflective Observation (RO), Abstract Conceptualization (AC), and Active Experimentation (AE) (See Figure 1).

Each stage plays a distinct role in how individuals engage with and make sense of their environment. Concrete Experience (CE) involves perceiving new information through direct, hands-on involvement, relying on sensory input and emotional responses. In contrast, Abstract Conceptualization (AC) entails grasping information through symbolic representation and mental models, privileging logical analysis and theoretical framing. Learners may then transform these experiences either by Reflective Observation (RO)—observing and thoughtfully examining events and behaviors—or through Active Experimentation (AE), in which they apply what has been learned to test new strategies or solve problems. According to Kolb and Kolb (2005), effective learning arises from the integration of these dialectically opposed modes—feeling and thinking, reflection and action—and thus requires individuals to navigate inherent tensions within the learning process.

What distinguishes ELT from purely cognitive or behavioral learning theories is its holistic and process-oriented approach. Rather than emphasizing isolated mental functions or observable behaviors alone, ELT incorporates cognition, affect, perception, and behavior in an integrated model of personal and professional development (Boyatzis et al., 1996). Kolb and Kolb (2005) emphasized that “all learning is relearning” and that knowledge evolves through the continuous testing, refining, and integration of prior beliefs with new experiences. Importantly, they argue that conflict, differences, and disagreement serve as the primary catalysts for learning, as individuals move between opposing modes of adaptation.

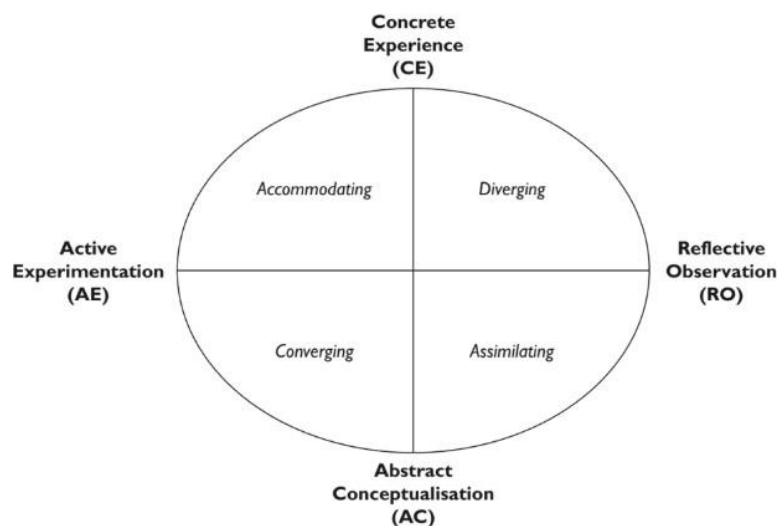


Figure 1. The experiential learning cycle and basic learning styles (Kolb, 1984)

Within the domain of organizational learning (OL), ELT offers a valuable lens for interpreting how learning occurs not only at the individual level but also across teams and organizational systems. The frameworks discussed in this analysis, including Akella's (2020) focus on tacit knowledge, Haukåsen and Hermanrud's (2023) application of situated learning in HRD, and Suder et al.'s (2017) insights on experiential knowledge transfer, all demonstrate strong conceptual alignment with Kolb's model. For instance, dialogic reflection and contextual sense-making practices resonate with the reflective

observation stage, while HR-led initiatives that iteratively adjust practices and embed new capabilities reflect both active experimentation and abstract conceptualization.

Furthermore, ELT is especially relevant in dynamic and evolving work environments, such as hybrid workplaces, where the continuous adaptation of practices and mindsets is essential. Here, experiential learning cycles support not only individual competence development but also broader organizational capabilities such as agility, innovation, and knowledge integration. By recognizing learning as a continuous, experience-based process, Kolb's theory provides a robust foundation for understanding how hybrid organizations can foster sustainable learning cultures and enhance performance over time. Therefore, ELT is not merely a descriptive model but a strategic tool for driving adaptive capacity within organizations. Its emphasis on recursive learning, emotional engagement, and the synthesis of diverse learning styles makes it particularly useful for explaining how individuals and collectives navigate change, resolve uncertainty, and co-create knowledge in contemporary work contexts.

2. Method

We adopt a semi-grounded case study research design (Hadjielias & Cruz, 2024), which integrates key techniques from grounded theory, such as theoretical sampling while leveraging existing literature to guide both data collection and analysis (Branicki et al., 2021; Bueechl, Pudelko, & Gillespie, 2023). This approach enables a balance between inductive theory building and the application of established theoretical frameworks, ensuring both depth and rigour in our study. Moreover, even if LO research is traditionally based on questionnaires, some studies in this stream of literature (e.g. Dewi et al., 2019) highlighted that a qualitative approach can capture more deeply employees' descriptions of their environment.

To explore the research question comprehensively, we rely on an in-depth case study research design, which allows in-depth exploration of the dynamics present within a single case context (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2018). While using in-depth interviews as a primary mode of data collection, we complement this source with documents from the case firm. This data triangulation enhances the credibility and robustness of our findings (Diaz-Moriana, Clinton, Kammerlander, 2024).

This method allows us to examine the complex interactions and learning dynamics within a single organizational context, capturing rich qualitative insights that might be overlooked in broader quantitative studies. Our primary data collection method consists of semi-structured interviews, which provide deep, context-specific knowledge from key stakeholders. To enhance data triangulation and strengthen the credibility of our findings, we supplement interview data with internal organizational documents, ensuring a robust and well-rounded analytical framework (Diaz-Moriana, Clinton, & Kammerlander, 2024).

This methodological approach ensures that our findings offer both theoretical contributions and practical implications, shedding light on how learning management processes unfold in real-world organizational settings. The integration of multiple data sources enables us to capture the nuanced interactions between organizational culture, learning practices, and strategic adaptation in a rapidly evolving business environment.

2.1 Research context

GEROS¹ is a global leader in the creation of flavours, fragrances, and active cosmetic ingredients, with a strong presence in over 100 countries and a history that spans more than 250 years. The

¹ Pseudonym is used

company is driven by a mission to create products that delight consumers, enhance well-being, and promote sustainability. GEROS is renowned for its innovative solutions, which cater to the food, beverage, fragrance, and beauty industries, and its commitment to shaping sensory experiences that positively impact people's lives. GEROS's business is rooted in innovation, sustainability, and collaboration. The company heavily invests in research and development to stay at the forefront of the market, and it places a strong emphasis on environmental, social, and governance (ESG) goals. Its "A Sense of Tomorrow" strategy underscores its dedication to sustainability, responsible sourcing, and reducing its environmental footprint, aligning with global goals for a greener and more ethical future.

GEROS represents an exemplary case study for exploring lifelong learning capabilities and continuous improvement in organisations. Here are key reasons why it is important to study GEROS:

1. *"Focus on Innovation and Knowledge Management"*: GEROS thrives on its ability to innovate, constantly adapting to market demands and technological advancements. This necessitates a culture of lifelong learning, where employees are encouraged to update their skills and knowledge, particularly in areas such as biotechnology, artificial intelligence, and sustainable production practices.
2. *"Commitment to continuous improvement"*: as a leader in its industry, GEROS demonstrates a commitment to refining its processes and products. Through its investments in R&D and the application of cutting-edge digital technologies, it exemplifies how businesses can integrate continuous improvement practices to maintain competitive advantage.
3. *"Sustainability and organisational learning"*: GEROS's approach to sustainability requires dynamic learning capabilities to adapt to evolving environmental regulations, consumer expectations, and supply chain challenges. Its commitment to responsible sourcing and circular practices reflects its ability to learn and innovate for long-term resilience.
4. *"Collaborative ecosystem"*: the company's partnerships with academia, suppliers, and customers highlight its openness to knowledge sharing and co-creation. These collaborations are essential for driving industry advancements and underscore the importance of fostering a learning-oriented ecosystem.
5. *"Global perspective and cultural adaptability"*: operating in diverse markets worldwide, GEROS's employees must continually develop cultural intelligence and adaptability. This reinforces the need for lifelong learning to navigate global complexities and maintain relevance in diverse environments. By studying GEROS, we can gain valuable insights into how organisations can foster a culture of learning, innovation, and sustainability, ultimately enhancing their ability to thrive in an ever-changing business landscape. It serves as an inspiring example for other companies aiming to integrate lifelong learning and continuous improvement into their strategies for growth and impact.

2.2 Data collection

The interviews were held in an advanced manufacturing enterprise, a global leader in the creation of flavours, fragrances, and active cosmetic ingredients. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the organizational context and corporate culture, a series of exploratory interviews were conducted with the Human Resources Department. This qualitative approach served as a crucial preliminary step for guiding the analysis and tailoring subsequent interventions. The interviews provided valuable insights into the organization's values, internal dynamics, and cultural framework, as well as a detailed overview of the current training processes and future strategic plans. Beyond their exploratory function, these interviews also served as opportunities for critical and constructive

dialogue with key HR representatives, fostering a shared reflection on training needs and long-term organizational goals. The direct involvement of Human Resources stakeholders enriched the analysis with relevant contextual elements, thereby enhancing the alignment between the proposed actions and the cultural specificities of the organization. After this step, the other interviews (table 1) were conducted with employees from various departments to ensure a diversity of perspective across functional areas. A total of eight interviews were conducted. Participants were randomly selected from the company's internal directory to minimize selection bias and enhance representativeness. Invitations were sent via email outlining the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and the confidentiality of responses. We also employed a snowball sampling technique (Wright & Stein, 2005) by asking each interviewee at the end of the session whether they could suggest any colleagues who might be relevant for the study. This approach allowed us to access additional participants who met the inclusion criteria and might not have been reached through the initial random selection. The use of the snowball sampling technique also enabled us to diversify the roles of the interviewees. While the interview process generally began with the identification of leaders, snowball sampling allowed us to extend participation to employees who had experienced, or were currently engaged in, training processes. This approach contributed to a more comprehensive understanding of the organizational dynamics surrounding training initiatives. We asked participants about the characteristics of the company and how the processes of training are organized. The interviewees were asked about their perception of the learning process strategy and values of the company. We also asked them about the characteristics of a learning organization (e.g., practices, leadership style, behaviours) that could hinder or facilitate it. We tapped into the topic of learning organization from the participants' points of view rather than starting with the researchers' points of view or direct questions to provide them with an opportunity to discover new ways of thinking about the issue.

Table 1. Role of interviews

Job Title interview	Acronyms	Number of interviews	Duration of the interview in min	Gender
Head of Operation	HO	2	60	M
HR manager	HR	1	80 min	F
HSE Facilitator	HSEF	1	45 m	M
Process Engineer and Continuous Improvement Manager	PE	1	60 min	M
Planner and Procurement Supervisor	PPS	1	50 min	M
Assistant Production Manager	AS	1	75 min	M
Production Manager	PM	1	60 min	M
Total		8	430 min	

Table 2 Data source

Data source	Type of Data	Use in the Analysis
Internal document	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Company training programmes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Familiarize with the organizational context;

Media archive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Company documents on the redesign of the performance management system • Company's surveys administrated to gather information on learning management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support, triangulate and integrate evidence from interviews
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articles published in national and local press (2024-2025) • Sustainability reports available in the company website (2024-2025) • Articles published in company's social media platforms (2024-2025) • Articles published in national and local press and business magazines (2024-2025) • Reports from national research institutes (2024- 2025) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support, triangulate and integrate evidence from interviews

2.3 Data Analysis

We used an open-coding approach (Strauss & Corbin) searching for themes within participants' accounts on learning process. Our analytic plan included: a) to extract all quotes in which participants describes what the company had already done to improve the learning process (open coding); b) to make connections between the emergent themes and grouping them into higher-order conceptual categories (axial coding); c) to select core categories in order to capture the key elements of this process (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The researchers analyzed the interview transcripts in order to identify salient themes and systematically convert them into codes. Then, the researchers independently coded each interviews following an iterative approach, namely continuously iterating between our data and the emerging conceptualizations and comparing codes by engaging in a discussion when disagreements emerged (Locke, 2001). Working with two coders reduces mistakes in data recording and avoids omitting relevant constructs (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

3. Findings

The findings section is organized into four parts by referring to the combined framework proposed by Marsick and Watkins (2003) for examining the characteristics of an LO and Kolbs' theory.

Internal and external factors:

In a learning organization, both internal and external factors play a critical role in shaping how the organization adapts, grows, and fosters continuous learning. A culture that values learning and development is key. This can be achieved by promoting values like collaboration, knowledge sharing, and curiosity. A culture of trust and psychological safety, where employees feel comfortable expressing ideas and questioning norms, is important.

"There are possibly various continuous improvement projects that the company asks us to provide as input for the following year; therefore, proposing projects aimed at implementing saving activities, which, however, are then realized in the current year through activities that I carry out directly or with my team to achieve them." (PE)

When employees are motivated to learn and grow, they contribute more actively to the learning process. This includes formal training programs, mentorship, and informal learning opportunities. Also, a learning organization and employee proactivity are closely linked because a learning organization fosters an environment where employees feel empowered, encouraged, and motivated to take initiative. It is evident that this company has established lifelong learning as a fundamental pillar of its business strategy. Continuous training and professional development are not merely ancillary services, but integral components of the company's value proposition. This commitment to learning emerges consistently across various interviews conducted with employees and candidates. Numerous respondents indicated that the company's explicit commitment to continuous training was a primary factor influencing their decision to apply. For many, the availability of structured learning pathways and the promise of long-term personal and professional growth were seen as key differentiators that set this company apart from other employers in the field. The prospect of being supported in one's personal and professional growth through structured learning opportunities has proven to be a powerful attractor, positioning the company as an appealing employer in a competitive talent market.

"This training system works because it still stimulates a certain level of proactivity and time management to follow extra work-related courses, so it is quite challenging from certain points of view, and therefore, in my opinion, it works." (PPS)

Also, if we take a look at external factors, we can state that a learning organization plays a crucial role in enhancing its capacity to attract talent. The concept of a learning organization involves creating an environment where continuous learning, adaptability, and innovation are prioritized. This type of environment is not only beneficial for the organization's growth but also makes the organization a more attractive place for talent to work. This company operates in a highly dynamic and innovation-driven industry where continuous learning is essential to maintaining a competitive edge. The company has embedded a culture of learning into its core business model, offering a range of development opportunities including internal academies, digital learning platforms, and partnerships with academic institutions.

"From the start, the company stimulated me more than others because it gave me the opportunity, presenting me with a range of training and personal growth in lean manufacturing and various other areas that I was looking for at that time." (PE)

In summary, internal factors focus on creating an environment within the organization that supports and encourages learning, while external factors push the organization to adapt and evolve in response to broader societal changes. Together, these factors ensure that the organization remains dynamic, competitive and capable of continuous growth.

"That is, the training was provided to me from the basics, and gradually, with guidance, we accomplished a lot." (HSEF)

Also, as highlighted in the sustainability (ESG) report on the company's website, continuous training is a fundamental pillar in achieving the "S and G" goals. Moreover, it is very important for the multinational to anticipate external needs in order to have a proactive approach.

"So, on the external factors level, for example, I was also thinking about market needs, which might have led to certain decisions regarding specific training courses. Let's say that market needs are usually somewhat anticipated by the multinational, everything related to, I don't know,

certifications or the need to have skills in continuous improvement. They're more internal than external, it's as if Givaudan were a bit of a leader in this." (HO)

The proactive approach by the company to anticipate training needs is essential to ensure that employees are always ready to face market challenges and respond to ever-evolving demands. Adopting this approach allows the company to invest in future skills, rather than simply reacting to requests as they arise.

This means that the company not only identifies the required skills based on market trends and industry forecasts, but also develops training programs that address these needs before they become critical. This helps maintain a competitive edge, improve productivity, and create a work environment where employees feel valued and prepared.

In summary, a proactive approach to training not only supports personnel growth but also ensures that the company remains agile, innovative, and cutting-edge.

Process:

The core of the learning process are all the activities that contribute to the dissemination and promotion of training within learning organizations. In particular, this company is very linked in the territory, organizing meetings with schools to promote knowledge and awareness of certain specific roles in the new generations.

"Still on a training level, we also have meetings, it's kind of everything we had already shown in the past with the skill match. We get closer to local schools to show what it means to cover certain roles. This is because, in the future, we hope to stimulate students' curiosity and guide them towards other areas, maybe less well-known." (HO)

Learning activities are tasks or exercises designed to help individuals acquire knowledge, skills, or competencies in a specific area. They can vary widely depending on the learning objectives, the learners' needs, and the context.

In examining organizational processes, particular attention should be given to the company's learning itinerary, which appears to be thoughtfully designed and well-structured. Such a coherent and systematic approach to employee development provides substantial advantages for the organization. By aligning the learning process with strategic goals and ensuring it is transparent and methodical, the company enhances the overall effectiveness of its training initiatives, fosters continuous improvement, and supports long-term organizational growth.

"The process is quite structured. Initially, I started by following this lean manufacturing course directly with my manager, and then he followed the internal process for course approval, which was quick and structured." (AS)

Learning activities are vital in making the learning process engaging, effective, and impactful. They provide learners with diverse ways to engage with material, build skills, and retain knowledge. Whether through hands-on practice, discussions, assessments, or technology, choosing the right learning activities can significantly enhance the learning experience and outcomes.

Fine Tuning:

The aim of the learning process is to implement and reinforce existing skills but also to promote new ones. Relational skills and technical skills are two essential types of competencies that individuals need to succeed in personal and professional environments. While they are distinct, both are crucial

for effective performance and career progression. Relational skills, often called "soft skills," refer to the abilities needed to interact effectively with others. These skills help individuals build strong interpersonal relationships, communicate well, and collaborate in teams. They are vital in fostering positive work environments and are highly valued in workplaces where teamwork, customer interactions, and leadership are important. Some soft skills could be: communication, teamwork and collaboration, negotiation skills and so on.

"I also took a soft skills course with a personal coach. It was a dual-purpose course, aimed at managing operators. I worked with this coach to learn techniques and soft skills to improve my communication with them, while the same coach taught my supervisors on the other side. So, it acted as a link to improve our communication and organizational aspects. This course was offered following somewhat implicit requests from the operators and my requests to be better understood by them. Therefore, this coaching role was created, and at two different times, we received training on this aspect." (PPS)

On the other hand, technical skills or "hard skills," refer to specific knowledge and expertise required to perform a particular job. These skills are typically learned through formal education, training programs, or hands-on experience and are often measurable or quantifiable. For example, project management, financial management, cloud computing, and so on.

"The aspect of 'costing' is more of an internal matter that I feel I need to deepen to have a more complete picture, particularly regarding product costing, procurement trends, and so on. I mean, having a broader view, but it's not something that falls under my responsibility now. So, it's something I would like to do in the future; simply a personal training step." (PE)

In the context of Geros, both relational and technical skills are fundamental not only for individual performance but also for the company's overall success. More importantly, they play a crucial role in promoting and sustaining an organizational culture centered on continuous learning. While relational skills help individuals build effective relationships, communicate well, and work collaboratively, technical skills provide the expertise needed to perform specialized tasks and roles. A balance of both is often necessary to excel in today's fast-paced, interconnected world, where successful professionals are expected to navigate complex tasks and interact with diverse teams.

"Yes, I don't work in a team, but I collaborate with many people. In the field of safety, I often have to interact with other operators from the company and the factory. Therefore, the relational aspect currently plays a very important role." (HSEF)

Short-term and long-term consequences:

Like any process, learning has consequences in the short-medium term. The impact can occur at three levels: individual, group and organizational. At the individual level, a learning organization provides the environment, resources, and opportunities necessary for personal and professional growth. A culture of continuous learning can boost individual motivation by allowing employees to see clear opportunities for growth and career advancement, encourages employees to take ownership of their learning journeys, which fosters greater autonomy and responsibility, individuals can develop stronger problem-solving abilities as they encounter new challenges and adapt to change.

"And from there, we defined an action plan to try to improve, identifying where we needed to improve and where we didn't need to, in order to maintain the performance that was confirmed." (HR)

On aggregate level, teams benefit from an environment where learning and knowledge sharing are encouraged, leading to stronger collaboration and more effective communication. Also, a learning culture encourages teams to explore new ideas and innovate, leading to creative solutions to problems and new approaches to projects. Moreover, learning organization at the team level could improve the continuous improvement in fact teams constantly evaluate and reflect on their work, learning from past experiences and mistakes to improve future performance. Finally, On the organizational level, a learning organization leads to increased agility, improved competitiveness, and long-term sustainability by fostering a culture of constant development and adaptation. Learning organizations are more adaptable to changes in the market, technology, and the external environment because they are always learning, evolving, and adjusting. Of course, these three levels are not separate, organizations that support continuous learning create a positive environment that leads to higher employee satisfaction, engagement, and retention. In a learning organization, the emphasis on continuous learning and development positively impacts individuals, teams, and the organization as a whole. At the individual level, it enhances skills, motivation, and career growth. At the team level, it strengthens collaboration, innovation, and accountability. At the organizational level, it increases agility, fosters innovation, and ensures long-term competitiveness and sustainability. By creating a culture that prioritizes learning, organizations can adapt to changing environments, maintain a competitive edge, and achieve sustained success.

A core principle of a learning organization is that all employees, regardless of age or tenure, have equal access to opportunities for learning and development. Senior workers should not be excluded from training, leadership programs, or development initiatives simply because of their age or experience level.

4. Discussion and conclusion

Our study responds to ongoing scholarly calls for deeper investigation into the factors, processes, and both short- and long-term consequences that shape effective learning management in organizations (Koul & Nayar, 2021). Building on established theories in OL and ELT, we propose a dynamic and holistic perspective that conceptualizes learning management as a multi-level, evolving process deeply embedded in organizational systems, social interactions, and individual experience (Akella, 2020; Haukåsen & Hermanrud, 2023; Kolb & Kolb, 2005).

OL is increasingly understood not as a singular outcome but as a complex and recursive process through which knowledge is continuously created, shared, and applied at individual, group, and organizational levels (Garvin et al., 2008; Marsick & Watkins, 2003). Drawing from this perspective, we view learning management as an integrated system that must continuously adapt to shifting organizational goals, employee needs, and external challenges. Our framework aligns with the conceptualization of the LO as one that fosters continuous improvement, inquiry, and adaptive capacity through structured and informal learning mechanisms (Reynolds & Ablett, 1998; Alerasoul et al., 2021).

Moreover, our approach is grounded in Kolb's ELT (1984), which views learning as a cyclical process involving four interdependent phases which highlight the importance of experiential learning as an iterative journey rather than a linear event. By emphasizing the interplay between thinking and doing, feeling and observing, ELT offers a processual and holistic understanding of how learning unfolds within the organization (Boyatzis et al., 1996). As Kolb and Kolb (2005) argue, learning is most effective when individuals resolve tensions between opposing modes of adaptation and integrate multiple forms of engagement.

Our model (Figure 1) reflects this conceptual grounding by structuring learning management into three interdependent components—learning context and opportunities, learning activities, and learning outcomes—that operate in a cyclical framework of continuous improvement. Each component aligns with the theoretical insights from OL and ELT literature:

“Learning Context and Opportunities”: in line with the OL emphasis on systems-level enablers (Garvin et al., 2008; Marsick & Watkins, 2003), we argue that organizations need to cultivate a learning-oriented culture supported by access to formal and informal opportunities. These include internal training programs, external courses, and peer learning environments tailored to evolving business needs. Such contexts provide the “concrete experiences” necessary for initiating learning cycles (Kolb, 1984), enabling individuals to engage affectively and practically with knowledge.

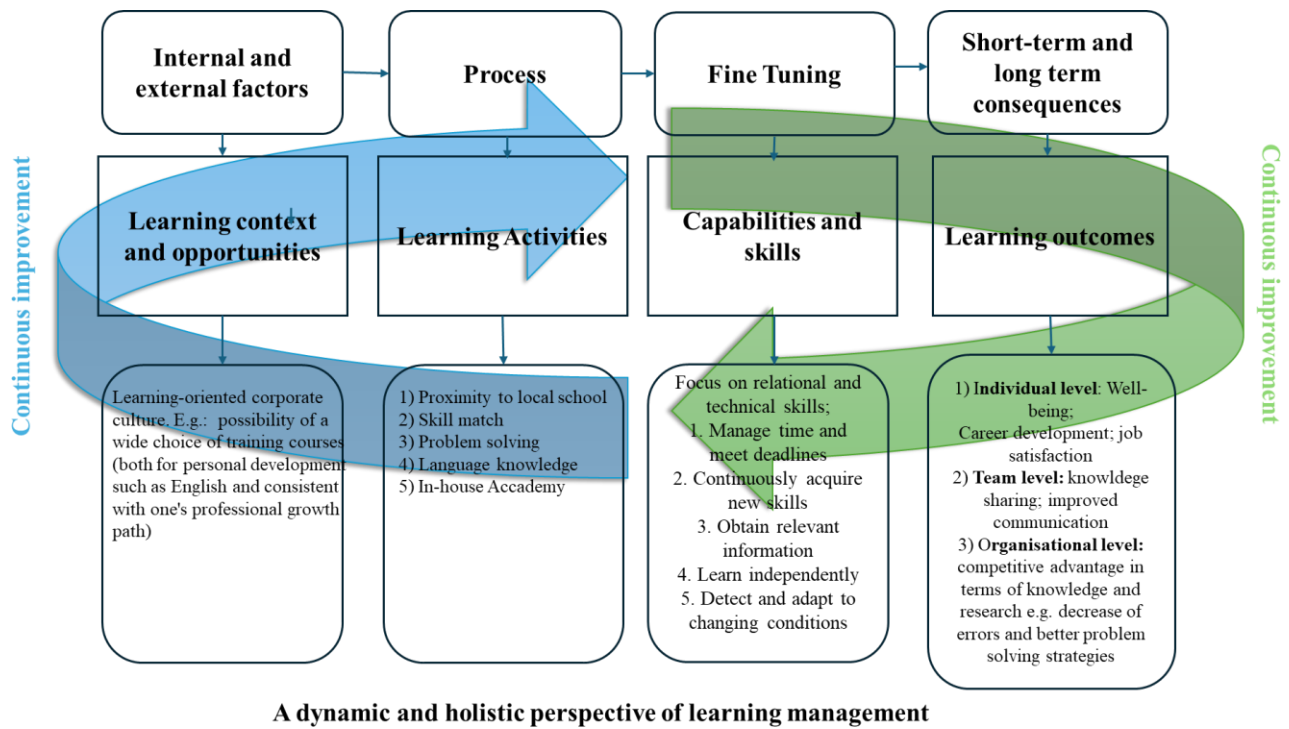


Figure 1. A dynamic and holistic perspective of learning management

“Learning Activities”: consistent with the reflective and experimental phases of ELT, effective learning management involves a wide range of interactive and experiential mechanisms. Mentoring, coaching, and on-the-job problem-solving offer dynamic opportunities for reflective observation and active experimentation (Haukåsen & Hermanrud, 2023). These activities create opportunities not only for technical skill development but also for adaptive reasoning, collaboration, and identity formation (Akella, 2020).

“Learning Outcomes and Continuous Improvement”: at the individual level, outcomes include enhanced competence, well-being, and career progression—elements that contribute to long-term employee engagement and retention. At the organizational level, learning outcomes translate into innovation capacity, strategic alignment, and overall performance (Marsick & Watkins, 2003; Suder et al., 2017). These outcomes in turn feed back into the learning context, reinforcing the cyclical nature of organizational learning and underscoring its strategic importance.

By integrating OL and ELT frameworks, our approach positions learning management as both a structural and experiential process. It not only encompasses the design of learning systems but also captures how individuals internalize and act upon knowledge in a dynamic and often ambiguous environment. In particular, ELT’s emphasis on “learning as relearning” (Kolb & Kolb, 2005) resonates with the iterative nature of skill acquisition and mindset transformation within learning organizations.

Ultimately, this dynamic model supports organizations in building resilient learning cultures that adapt to continuous change. By aligning individual aspirations with organizational capabilities, and

by embedding experiential learning into the fabric of everyday work, organizations are better equipped to navigate complexity, promote innovation, and sustain high performance in an increasingly hybrid and knowledge-intensive landscape.

5. Limitation and future research direction

Notwithstanding these contributions, this research has some limitations. First, this study was conducted using a qualitative research methodology, which inherently prioritizes depth of understanding over breadth. As such, the findings are context-specific and emerge from a detailed exploration of a particular setting. Consequently, generalizing the results to broader populations is limited, as the aim of qualitative research is not statistical generalization but rather analytical or theoretical insight. This limitation, however, is balanced by the richness and depth of the data, which provide nuanced understandings of the phenomena under investigation. Second, the interviews may have introduced some limitations (e.g., social desirability). While the quality and depth of the responses provided would suggest these were not serious problems, they must be considered in evaluating the findings of the study. Moreover, the coding process itself may have introduced certain biases, which are particularly relevant in the context of qualitative research. Given the inherently interpretive nature of qualitative data analysis, subjectivity in assigning codes and identifying themes can influence how the data are represented and understood. These biases may arise from the researchers' prior assumptions, theoretical positioning, or interpretive frameworks applied during the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Acknowledging such potential limitations is essential for ensuring analytical transparency and reinforcing the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings. Engaging in reflexivity throughout the coding process helps researchers critically examine their own influence on the analysis and maintain methodological rigor. However, in order to overcome the limitations of the interview methodology, it would be interesting to replicate the study by applying other methodologies.

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