

**AN ASSESSMENT OF THE CHRISTIAN SERVICE COMMITTEE
(CSC) IN LIGHT OF THE LEARNING ORGANISATION MODEL**

Masters in Business Administration

Mrs Martha Kachaka Mkandawire

University of Malawi

The Polytechnic

July 2008

**AN ASSESSMENT OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE COMMITTEE IN LIGHT OF THE
LEARNING ORGANISATION MODEL**

MRS MARTHA KACHAKA MKANDAWIRE

**A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Commerce, The Malawi Polytechnic,
University of Malawi, in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of
Masters in Business Administration.**

July 2008

DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. It is being submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MBA in the University of Malawi and it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university.

Candidates Name: Mrs Martha Kachaka Mkandawire.....

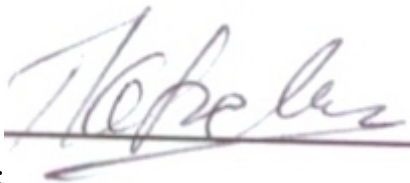
Signature:

Date:

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

We declare that this dissertation is from the candidate's own work and effort. Where she has used other sources of information, it has been acknowledged. This dissertation is submitted with our approval.

First Supervisors Name: **Dr. Tesfaye Ketsela**



Signature:

Date: 05 August, 2008.

Second Supervisors Name: **Dr. Panji Chamdimba**



Signature:

Date: 05 August, 2008

Head of Department's Name: **Dr. James M. Buliani**

Signature:

Date: 05 August 2008

DEDICATION

To my children, Nema, Sangwani and Gomezgani whom I expect to achieve greater than this.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am sincerely indebted to Dr Tesfaye Ketsela and Dr Panji Chamdimba, for their tireless supervision and guidance throughout the time of writing this dissertation.

Special thanks are also due to the management and staff of the Christian Service Committee for allowing interviews to be conducted and providing the information without which this dissertation would not have been written.

Most of all, I am so grateful to my husband and co-student Pastor Nelson Mkandawire, and my children for the unfading support, and understanding throughout the writing of this dissertation.

ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to assess the Christian Service Committee (CSC) in light of the learning organization model with a view to transform its operations to ensure survival.

A modified learning questionnaire was used as a tool to gather data on the CSC staff perceptions, attitudes and opinions. From the data, the extent to which the CSC has embraced the learning organization characteristics has been generated. The CSC was found to be weak in five of the eight characteristics of the Learning Organization. These were: creating the supportive culture; developing the communication systems; developing the organizational memory; integrating learning into strategy and policy; and applying the learning. The three characteristics in which the CSC is rated strong were; accessing external learning; gathering internal experience and drawing conclusions.

Based on the results of the study the researcher recommended that in order for the CSC to adopt the characteristics of a learning organization, it has to; create the organization culture which legitimizes the process of learning, have leaders who legitimize learning, involve most people in policy making, ensure that the organization minimizes its vulnerability to the loss of knowledge through the loss of individuals, ensure systems and procedures are in place to encourage information sharing between departments, develop policy for the CSC communication systems, and installation of a computer room.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION.....	iii
CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL	iv
DEDICATION	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	vi
ABSTRACT.....	vii
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background	1
1.1.1 <i>Non Governmental Organisations in Malawi</i>	1
1.2 Organisational Description of Christian Services Committee.....	2
1.2.1 <i>Background of the CSC</i>	2
1.2.2 <i>Programmes and Projects for the CSC</i>	2
1.2.3 <i>Fund Raising in the CSC</i>	2
1.2.4 <i>Efforts of the CSC in being a learning Organisation</i>	4
1.3 Research Problem	6
1.4 Research Objectives	8
1.5 Research Questions	9
1.6 Significance of the Study	9
1.7 Content overview	11
1.8 Chapter summary	11
Chapter 2 LITERATURE REVIEW.....	13
2.1 Introduction	13
2.2 Theoretical foundation of a learning organization	14
2.2.1 <i>Defining a Learning Organisation</i>	14
2.2.2 <i>Characteristics of a Learning Organization</i>	15
2.3 The eight function Model of the learning organization	20
2.4 The Environment of a Learning Organisation	22
2.4.1 <i>Guiding Ideas</i>	22
2.4.2 <i>Theory, Method and Tools</i>	24

2.4.3 <i>Innovations in Infrastructure</i>	26
2.4.4 <i>Skills and Capabilities</i>	27
2.4.5 <i>Awareness and Sensibilities</i>	27
2.4.5 <i>Attitudes and Beliefs</i>	28
2.5 Why NGOs should take up the Idea of a Learning Organisation	28
2.6 The Learning NGO	31
2.7 Characteristics of the Development and Humanitarian work that may present particular challenges	32
2.7.1 <i>Accountability</i>	32
2.7.2 <i>Measurability</i>	33
2.7.3 <i>Self inflicted complexity</i>	34
2.8 Sustaining the Learning Practice	36
2.9 Chapter summary	37
Chapter 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	38
3.1 Introduction	38
3.2 Research design	38
3.2.1 <i>Philosophy and Data Sources</i>	38
3.2.2 <i>Questionnaire</i>	39
3.3 Research methods and application	40
3.3.1 <i>Population of the Study</i>	40
3.3.2 <i>Sampling Plan</i>	41
3.3.3 <i>Senior Management Staff</i>	42
3.3.4 <i>Junior Members of Staff</i>	43
3.4 Ethical consideration	44
3.5 Data analysis and interpretation	44
3.6 Limitations of the study	45
3.7 Chapter summary	46
Chapter 4 SURVEY FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS	47
4.1 Introduction	47
4.2 The Findings	47
4.3 Rating by Respondents on Learning Organisation Characteristics of the CSC	47
4.4 Comparison of the Senior and Junior employees rating	49
4.4.1 <i>Discussion of the results</i>	51

4.5 Individual assessment of specific questions	52
4.5.1 <i>Creating a Supportive Culture</i>	52
4.5.2 <i>Gathering Internal Experience</i>	53
4.5.3 <i>Accessing External Learning</i>	54
4.5.4 <i>Communication Systems</i>	55
4.5.5 <i>Mechanisms for Drawing conclusions</i>	57
4.5.6 <i>Applying the Learning</i>	58
4.5.7 <i>Integrating the Learning</i>	59
4.5.8 <i>Developing Organisational Memory</i>	60
4.6 Chapter summary	62
Chapter 5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	64
5.1 Introduction	64
5.2 Conclusions	64
5.2.1 <i>Staff Perceived CSC as Having Strong Characteristics of a Learning Organisation in the following areas</i>	64
5.2.2 <i>Staff Perceived CSC as Having weak Characteristics of a Learning Organisation in the following areas</i>	65
5.2.3 <i>Reasons for Rating the CSC Weak in Certain Characteristics</i>	65
5.2.4 <i>Staff perceived that some of the Characteristics of the Learning Organisation were there at the CSC But not as Strong for the following reasons</i>	67
5.3 Recommendations.....	67
5.4 Ideas for Future Research	70
Chapter 6 REFERENCES	71
APENDIX 1	80
APENDIX 2	81
APENDIX 3	92
APENDIX 4	93
APENDIX 5	94
APENDIX 6	95
APENDIX 7	96

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1: Likert Rating Scale 42

Table 3.2:Sampling Plan..... 43

Table 3.3: Numbers of Interviewees by Category 48

Table 4.1: Summary of the Average Ratings by Respondents..... 48

Table 4.2: Summary of average ratings for Juniors and Seniors 50

LIST OF FIGURE

Figure 4-1: Average Ratings of Juniors and Seniors.....	50
---	----

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Non Governmental Organizations in Malawi

A Non Governmental Organization (NGO) is described as any non-profit, voluntary citizens' group, which is organized on local, national or international level. It is task oriented and driven by people with a common interest. Non Governmental Organizations perform a variety of services and humanitarian functions, bring citizens' concerns to Governments, monitor policies and encourage political participation at the community level. They provide analysis and expertise, serve as an early warning mechanisms and help monitor and implement international agreements. Some are organized around specific issues, such as human rights, environment or health (UNDP, 2001). Non Governmental Organizations depend on donor funding. In recent years, there has been a dramatic increase in the numbers of NGOs, with no significant increase in funding to the NGO sector (Lawson, 2000). In Malawi the multiparty democracy has widely been recognized as a watershed in the evolution of the NGO sector, which was very difficult to establish during the one party era. As a result, there has been a rapid expansion in the numbers of NGOs following the dawn of multiparty democracy in 1993. This has resulted in most NGOs surviving on only one donor adding the general feeling of insecurity, as this means that the sustainability of the organization depends on that one donor.

As a result, donors take advantage of the insecurity in funding, by imposing their preferences on NGOs. Non Governmental Organizations that focus on money rather than their mission change their programmes to suit their donor preferences. This can happen even when they have good reputation and successful track record. This leads to NGOs moving further away from the original mission making it very difficult to respond to the needs articulated by their constituency.

1.2 Organizational Description of Christian Service Committee (CSC)

1.2.1 Background of the CSC

The CSC is a membership organization comprised of 29 churches in Malawi. It is ecumenical in nature, i.e. it is composed of Catholic churches as well as the Protestants churches. It was initiated in 1968 as a development arm of the member churches. It has therefore been in existence for about 38 years.

The top most body of the CSC is the General Assembly, which meets annually. The Assembly comprises of the two mother bodies of the CSC –the Malawi Council of Churches (MCC) and the Episcopal Conference of Malawi (ECM). Below the two main bodies, are twelve Board of Directors representing MCC and ECM. Below the Board is the Executive Director supported by subordinates namely; Director of Technical Services and the Director of Finance and Administration. Below these Directors are Heads of various Departments. Appendix 1 at the end gives the organogram of the CSC.

1.2.2 Programmes and Projects for the CSC

The CSC has done a lot in the area of development as evidenced by the number of projects and programmes undertaken over the years, although initially it was mainly involved in relief work. In the late 1980s the member churches decided to set up a separate entity Churches Action for Relief and Development (CARD) to handle relief activities because they were perceived to be large and specialized operations and therefore difficult to be handled effectively by one organization. The CSC's mandate was therefore to focus purely on development with Agriculture and Food security, Water and sanitation, and Advocacy programmes, as main program areas.

1.2.3 Fund Raising in the Christian Service Committee

The sources of funds for the CSC are the following;

- (a) External donors (Europe and USA) - for projects and programmes
- (b) Locally generated - rents from properties, membership fees from member churches and drilling contract boreholes.

The CSC does the fund - raising by:

- (a) **Applying to foreign donors:** once a need has been identified, the respective department writes a project proposal to be 'sold' to the donor partners. The proposal goes through the normal internal formalities of discussions and approvals. It is then submitted to donors for consideration. It should be mentioned that since the CSC has been dealing with donors within the donor's respective priority area, almost invariably the project gets approved and funded,
- (b) **Applying to local donors:** The above procedure is also followed but the response has been not very encouraging,
- (c) **Rentals from own properties:** The CSC has got 18 properties mainly in Blantyre, which are being rented out. A substantial amount of rentals is collected from these properties. In addition, the CSC owns a three storey office block in Blantyre which also generate a substantial amount of money and boosts the CSC's finances,
- (d) **Incomes from borehole drilling rig:** where the rig is engaged in contractual projects and enhances the CSC's local income generation capacity,
- (e) **Membership fees:** The CSC being a membership organization, members subscribe to it a fee, though this is relatively a small amount, and
- (f) **CSC Design and Building Company:** In addition to the above, the CSC incorporated a company in 1997 called Design and Building company. This was previously a department within CSC, which used to handle all donor funded building projects of the CSC. Management recommended that due to economic reasons, there was need to have the department registered as a separate legal entity. This is a subsidiary of the CSC solely for fundraising.

On the whole, the CSC deals mainly with donors whom they have had long standing relationships with, -called the traditional donors. The CSC cultivated and developed relationships with donors mainly in Europe who have been supporting it in all its programmes. Some donors have remained loyal to the CSC over a very long period, others have been erratic and others have altogether dropped the CSC. The CSC has not shifted very much from what it set out to do in the past 20 years.

1.2.4 Efforts of the CSC at Being a Learning Organization

As a learning organization, the CSC believes in networking with others and thereby draws lessons and strength from experiences from other organizations. As of now, the CSC interacts with Churches Development Coordination Committee (CDCC), Malawi Economic Justice Network (MEJN), Dan church Aid partners, Alliance Members in Food Security (AMFS) and Civil Society on Land Policy. Thus, the CSC has been quite good on accessing external learning.

In addition, in the CSC, the development of strategy is deliberately organized as a learning process. There is a deliberate feed back loop incorporated to enable continuous improvement in the light of experience. Over the years, the CSC constantly built its capacity and done innovation based on what it has learnt.

However, the CSC tends to be very ‘action oriented’. It is usually difficult to provide resources and facilities for individual development to all staff members of the organization because funds are designated for project activities. In addition, departments do not work as a team because departments are created along programme lines and therefore funding,. As such, even if people learn regularly from their work at all levels of organization, there are no systems to feed such learning to other parts of the organization. On the other hand, the CSC does not have systematic procedures for the regular monitoring, review and evaluation of all its project, programs and advocacy activities. Such lack of monitoring, evaluation and feedback has a negative impact on the CSC as the CSC is not able to identify what has been learned from the work and what lessons could be applied in the future.

On reporting to donors, there is definite need for improvement. The study done by Kamanga, Nankhuni, Nkhandwe, & Katundu (1995), made a number of observations on reportage. The observation was that there seems to be no standard format for reporting. It seems each donor has his own format. Secondly, reports are generally deficient in analysis of project achievement or shortfalls i.e. there are no variance analyses between planned and actual outputs or activities and their causes. In most cases the reports are descriptive. Thirdly, narrative reports are detached from financial reports so that it is difficult to relate project achievements to the budget or actual expenditure. There is need to synchronize the

two reports. Finally, it seems there is no definite time frame for submitting reports to donors. This is reflected in the absence of reports on a number of projects. Thus there is need for a Monitoring and Evaluation Unit for improving information management and reporting in the CSC set up. The numerous projects being undertaken need to be properly monitored and reported on.

Furthermore, there are very poor communication systems in CSC. It is not easy to access information on the lessons learnt from other parts of the organization because departments are fragmented. The Chief Executive of the CSC likes calling them, 'small CSC's within the CSC', because of its fragmented nature of operations. Staff have no access to e-mail, thus it is not even possible to share information using electronic media such as the Internet and bulletin boards. The only way information is shared is through an in house newsletter from the office of the Executive director called 'Tiyeni Titchere Khutu' (meaning let us be alert) and the 'Information spot', which comes out every three months and week respectively. Because of its structure and its presence throughout the nation the CSC can be assisted if it sets up a simple but very comprehensive site on the World Wide Web.

In addition, in the CSC there are no regular monitoring, evaluation and field visits reports done. If done, it is usually from donor's influence, thus takes the donor's perspective. Consequently, those done for the donors are not routinely analyzed to identify what has been learned from work and what lessons could be applied in the future. This kind of evaluation requires ready access to the necessary information and openness about discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the organization's practice.

The CSC is very vulnerable to losing its experience when individuals leave. For example, staff that leave the organization are not required to go through a systematically recorded de-briefing to ensure that the organization retains their knowledge. Again, the CSC does not have a systematic database of its projects and program work, which can enable its staff and outsiders to identify its expertise. The organization has not yet developed systematic ways of ensuring that knowledge and understanding is made widely accessible to colleagues both in their own organization and beyond.

In conclusion, therefore, CSC has made some efforts towards becoming a learning organization. There are efforts like accessing external learning through networking, being

able to integrate learning into strategy and policy and being able to gather internal experience. However, there are still pockets of problematic areas that need to be addressed. It is hoped that this research will come up with recommendations on how the CSC can deal with the problems of creating a supportive culture, communication systems, developing an organizational memory, applying the learning, and drawing conclusions, which together with the three above are the eight key functions of a learning organizations. Unfortunately, for an organization to change to a learning organization, the organization needs to embrace all the factors. Therefore, with some factors showing serious impediments to learning, CSC is not a learning organization.

1.3 Research Problem

There is recognition that the donor world is responding fast to the global social-economic and political change. On the other hand, the assimilation and change process could be slow for organizations in the developing world due to a number of factors including (a) educational levels, (b) poor infrastructure and (c) attitudes towards work and work ethics. These factors, if not properly addressed would result in inefficiency and ineffectiveness. The CSC has within limitations of its environment made positive attempts to respond to the changes, though not fully, as discussed above.

The dynamics on the development landscape over the past years have exposed the CSC to a lot of challenges. According to Mhango (1998) the following are perceived to be the challenges that the CSC must deal with:

- (a) The economics of Europe:** - For example: the movement towards a common currency in Europe has greatly affected the CSC. One of the CSC's major German donor partners draws funds from the German government overseas development funds budget. The German government is being forced to conform to certain requirements for it to qualify for the common currency move. One measure it has taken as a result of such pressures has been to cut back on the aforementioned fund which has in turn affected the CSC's donors' funds available,
- (b) The opening up of Eastern Europe and Russia** has put pressure on the funds available on the part of the donor partners. They now have to share the funds between their partners in the South and new partners in the East. Sometimes there is an apparent legitimate argument that the south has relatively benefited a lot over

the years and a chance should now be given to others. This has led to dwindling of funds due to competition abroad.

- (c) **The mushrooming of other NGOs in the country:** This is also a challenge to the CSC. Previously the CSC used to build the capacity of the churches it works with in anticipation that one day these churches should build up their own development desks. Over the years these churches have developed their NGOs, which are called development desks. These NGOs have brought some more challenges to the CSC, because firstly, they fundraise from the same church based donors where the CSC fundraise, hence rise in competition. Secondly, they are doing the same projects the CSC is supposed to be doing; hence the CSC's reason for existence is becoming redundant. Thus, most of these NGOs are in all intent and purpose direct competitors of the CSC in their activities.

These challenges can only be overcome if the CSC embraces a 'cultural change' (Human Resource Development Council, 2005). This is the sort of culture that encourages the risk taking behavior and functional and constructive conflicts. The study is aimed at investigating whether the CSC has qualities of a learning organization to enable her gain advantage over others in this competing environment. The study is theoretically based on the notion that for the CSC to survive, it has to embrace characteristics of a learning organization.

According to the reports on the evaluation of the CSC programs by DanChurchAid (2000) and the strategic plan on the recommended programme directions of the CSC, it is apparent that there is need for the CSC in the face of competition to be very efficient and accountable. The present structure of the CSC cannot effectively implement the change. To be able to facilitate, the CSC would need to have a flexible organization structure capable of sensing a changing environment and quickly rearranging its inputs and production system to provide the enabling services needed in the changed environment (which are characteristics of a learning organization). The CSC must start to employ the 'business concept' in running activities if they are to survive. The use of these organizational concepts from the corporate world would be encouraged in order to increase its effectiveness, efficiency and impact. The emerging use of the concept of the learning organization is part of this trend, which has roots in private sector organizations.

The reality for the CSC is that the economic and political environment in which it operates is increasingly unpredictable. The changing funding context demands that the CSC need to have the capacity to adapt and change (a learning organization) so as to develop flexibility to sudden changes in funding. The CSC consciously needs to analyze the changing context in which it operates and seek to adapt to the changes and continually learn from experience.

1.4 Research Objectives

This research has been designed to address the following main objective that will provide the focus of the study:

1. To find out the extent to which the CSC is capable of developing a continuous capacity to change and adapt to changing environment in which it is operating in order to survive the current funding problem.

The study will also address the following specific objectives:

1. To assess the extent to which the CSC has embraced the eight key characteristics of a learning organization model,
2. To find out the factors that staff perceive of the CSC as strong in light of the characteristics of a learning organization,
3. To find out the factors that staff perceive as weak in light of the characteristics of a learning organization,
4. To find out reasons for rating the CSC as weak or strong in some characteristics of the learning organization.

1.5 Research Questions

The study will attempt to answer the following specific questions that are designed to serve as a basis for the focus of the study:

1. To what extent has the CSC embraced the eight key characteristics of a learning organization model?
2. What are the factors that staff perceive of the CSC as weak or strong in light of the characteristics of a learning organization?
3. What are the reasons for the CSC to score high or low in the characteristics of a learning organization?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The purpose of this research is to assess the Christian Service Committee as an organization in light of how it has developed the continuous capacity to adapt to emerging demands and change. This information could be used to encourage the exchange of ideas about how the CSC can rise to the challenge of adapting and continually improving its performance. This will enhance the CSC's position to remain relevant as an organization of social change into the 21st century. One such improvement would be in research and development and documentation of its activities which, most of the local NGOs lack. Being the longest serving development agency, the CSC is in a good position to develop a niche in knowledge sharing with other partners. This may be of interest to most donors and therefore would reduce unnecessary competition for funding and be able to survive.

The CSC has over the years learnt a number of lessons from its fund-raising experiences such as:

- (a) Donor funding is not infinite i.e. donor partners have also got their own budget constraints within their economies and can therefore only spare what they can. In response, the CSC placed all staff on term specified employment contract beginning September 2005 instead of permanent employment
- (b) There is no independence in decision-making due to the above reason under (a). Sometimes certain decisions by management can be influenced by donors as opposed to being 'home grown'.

- (c) Over dependency on donor funding is not a very healthy situation for the survival of the CSC. The CSC has therefore been streamlined to align it to new funding realities.
- (d) Donor priorities are not always in line with NGOs' priorities, therefore there is a tendency of developing programmes or projects that are donor driven and not needs driven.

Thus, this study is important for three reasons. Firstly, the CSC will be able to identify some of its strengths. These strengths can then be exploited for its advantage in the highly competitive environment it is working in. Secondly, the CSC will also be able to identify the functions that require most attention, i.e. what needs to be done to strengthen the organization's capacity in those areas and then on that basis, the study will recommend strategies to improve, which may contribute to its success and survival. Finally, the study will also identify the main barriers to strengthening the learning capacity of the organization, so that strategies would be established to overcome barriers, which the CSC may experience if it wishes to continuously adapt and change.

By becoming a learning organization, the CSC will achieve an improved cohesion between departments. There will be unity of purpose across different parts of the organization, which is encouraged in a learning organization. By embracing the learning culture, the organization will achieve increased adaptability, hence the CSC will be better placed to take advantage of opportunities and deal with challenges and more unpredictable events. Consequently, there will be an increased impact on the ground. There will also be increased effectiveness and efficiency because the CSC will make better use of its resources.

By identifying on weaknesses and working on them, there will be an increased ability to initiate change in the CSC. This is the learning itself, which provides the organization with the confidence and information necessary to take initiatives and risks. There will also be greater opportunities available to the CSC if it is creative. This is because learning encourages creativity and teamwork. Grass roots knowledge will also be legitimized. This is because learning is valued no matter where it takes place. Consequently, there will be increase in staff motivation because staff will feel valued and influential. Thereby, the CSC will be able to retain staff and their knowledge because there will be better systems for rewarding the contribution the staff make to the development of the CSC.

1.7 Content Overview

This chapter has introduced the dissertation. It provides a brief background to the development of NGOs in Malawi and the organizational description of the Christian Service Committee. It also highlights the purpose and the significance of the study. The research questions that guided the whole study and the research objectives are also outlined. The rest of the study is organized and presented as outlined below.

Chapter 2 is an extensive review of the literature on learning organization, commencing from defining the term ‘learning organization’, its characteristics and developed the learning organization model taking into account of the previous literature and discussed other associated models. The reasons NGOs have taken up the idea of becoming a learning organization; its challenges and how it can sustain that environment are also discussed.

Chapter 3 presents the methodology used in this study. The design and limitations of the study are presented. Methods of sampling, data collection, tools for analysis, interpretation of the data and presentation are also described.

Chapter 4 presents a discussion of the survey findings. The eight function scores of a learning organization established by the study are analyzed. Flaws in the organization’s ability to becoming a learning organization are discussed to provide basis for recommending appropriate strategies.

Chapter 5 concludes with the implications of the findings for successful operation of the CSC and puts forward recommendations to help meet the challenge of becoming a learning organization and hence be able to attract donor funding for survival.

1.8 Chapter Summary

This introductory chapter has given a brief background to the development of NGOs in Malawi since 1993. It has also presented the present performance situation in the CSC. The efforts that are taken by the CSC to become a learning organization are also presented. Also presented are the objectives that the study sought to achieve, the research questions to be investigated, and the purpose and significance of the study.

The next chapter will discuss the meaning and characteristics of a learning organization. The chapter also reviews the key characteristics of a learning organization that are agreed upon by several writers on the concept and the eight functional model of the learning organization will also be presented.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Regardless of its dynamic nature, change is a constant feature in human activities. Consequently, organizations are usually challenged to find ways and means of adapting to the inevitable impact of the forces of change. Since the last century, society has been under a constant state of flux due to the forces of globalization and the information and communication technology. Leading organizations in the developed parts of the world, have adopted numerous ways of coping with these forces. The learning organization concept is one of such ways, which according to Skyrme (2003:1), 'is seen as a response to an increasingly unpredictable and dynamic environment'.

Today's wisdom is that future organizational survival will depend on an ability to learn and apply new learning to alter behavior, which is a characteristic of a learning organization. This argument has been picked up by managers and is being applied when dealing with growing instability and complexity and increased competition. Indeed, the learning organization concept has spawned a number of books within the corporate sector. It has created an interest from managers and organization theorists looking for ways to successfully respond to a world of interdependence and change. The ideas underpinning this concept have a generic appeal and as a result it is the subject of increasing interest even in the NGO sector and the 'not for profit' world more widely. In fact Korten and Klauss (1984) believe that becoming a learning organization is not simply an option for NGOs, but a necessary and integral part for sustainable development. This chapter will survey important studies related to the concept of the learning organization and how the use of this model is an important factor in the efficient and effective operation of Non Governmental Organizations.

2.2 Theoretical Foundation of a Learning Organization

2.2.1 Defining a Learning Organization

The idea of the learning organization has been very influential in shaping policy and practice in both the corporate and the NGO worlds. There are many diverse definitions of learning organizations. Garvin's (1993:78) definition of the learning organization as an organization which is 'skilled at creating, acquiring, and transferring knowledge, and at modifying its behavior to reflect new knowledge and insights' emphasizes the importance of internal processes. Pedler, Burgoyne, and Boydell (1991: 1) emphasize the importance of learning for change in their definition of the learning organization as 'an organization which facilitates the learning of all its members and continually transforms itself'. Senge (1990:3) in his ground breaking book 'The Fifth Discipline' describes learning organizations as 'organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together'.

The definition by Senge (1990) emphasizes the team or collective spirit of a learning organization. As such each definition has something valuable to contribute to our understanding but clearly there is no single all-embracing definition of precisely what is meant by the learning organization.

However, the learning organization is concerned with the implementation, and the characteristics of organizations which are able to effectively share and use knowledge to achieve organizational goals, (Easterby Smith, 1997). They are those organizations with an integrated philosophy for anticipating, reacting and responding to change, complexity and uncertainty, (Maholtra, 1996).

One important thing to note in the definitions of a learning organization is that they highlight characteristics such as adaptability, responsiveness, vision and transformations. What underpins most of these definitions is the desire to create an organizational environment characterized by change, adaptability, a holistic approach, vision and renewal. From a review of the concept and meaning of the learning organization, it can be

concluded that; a starting point in creating a learning organization is when an enterprise recognizes the need for change, focusing on issues to do with leadership, power, the devolution of initiative and personal development, linked to the needs of the organization and wider community. Thus, to summarize it all, Robbins (2001: 573), defines a learning organization as ‘an organization that has developed the continuous capacity to adapt and change’. This is the definition adopted in this study. It is broader and encompassing than these other definitions.

Based on all, learning organizations are able to empower their workers, integrate quality initiatives with quality of work life, generate productive capital, encourage collaboration and share the gains, and create continuous learning opportunities. Smilie and Hailey (2001) have highlighted some strategic areas of importance that make connections between learning organization and successful NGOs. This was based on studies done on NGOs in Asia. They argue that learning organizations are able to perform more successfully in turbulent environment and can introduce the structural changes that are necessary to cope with new conditions.

2.2.2 Characteristics of a Learning Organization

According to Robbins (2001:573), all organizations learn whether they consciously choose to or not – ‘it is a fundamental requirement for their sustained existence’. It is easy to understand how the individuals in an organization can learn. Argyris and Schon (1986), suggested that an organization may be said to learn when it acquires information (knowledge, understanding, know how, techniques or practice) of any kind and by whatever means. In this sense, all organizations learn, for good or for ill, whenever they add to their store of information, and there is no strictness on how the addition may occur. This suggests that learning is likely to occur continuously in any organization but may not have a specific focus or even lead to desired outcomes.

However, a learning organization is where (a) people in that organization are able to put aside their old ways of thinking, (b) learn to be open with each other, (c) understand how their organization really works, (d) form a plan or a vision that every one can agree upon, and then finally (e) work together to achieve that vision (Robbins, 2001). Cummings and Worley (1997), suggest that most of the literature on the learning organization is

prescriptive but they identify five interrelated categories that characterize specific features of the learning organization. These are (a) structure, (b) information systems, (c) human resource practices, (d) organization culture and (e) leadership. In summary, what this means is that for managers who want to develop learning organization capability for their organizations they have to note that learning organizations are (a) adaptive to their external environment, (b) continually enhancing their capability to change/ adapt, (c) developing collective as well as individual learning and, (d) using the results of learning to achieve better results (Skyrme, 2003).

According to Robbins (2001), a learning organization seeks a 'boundarylessness' organization through the breaking down of barriers created by hierarchical levels and fragmented department. It supports the importance of disagreements, constructive criticism and other forms of functional conflicts. It is characterized by a specific culture of risk taking, openness and growth. According to Page 5, paragraph 2 of the introduction chapter, the CSC has fragmented departments. This study will help the CSC discover how to improve on this

There is also a strong element of 'self-improvement' found in the literature, whereby individuals in a learning organization are not only in an ongoing quest for work –related knowledge, but also for self knowledge. One aspect of this is the need to understand their own 'mental models' –deeply ingrained assumptions about how the world works, what motivates people, cause –and –effect relationships- and to be open to challenges regarding these assumptions.

Another aspect of a learning organization is that, in the same way that, organizations are more than simple collections of individuals, there is more to a learning organization than simply a collection of individuals, each of who is learning independently. Some organizations may appear to know less than their individual members. Similarly, organizations can continue to work effectively (at least for a while) on the basis of well established procedures based on what has been learned in the past even when they lose their brightest people.

This later case means that there are some organizations that are able to build on the experience of its members and incorporate that experience into its ways of operating in

such a way that it can temporarily withstand the loss of key individuals. The organization, here, is acting as if it has a memory, which contains the accumulated wisdom of all its previous members. Of course, this is not literally true, but it is a useful metaphor. The individual knowledge can be ably ‘downloaded’ into information systems so that everyone can be able to access each person’s experience. It is not yet known whether the CSC makes use and incorporates each person’s experience in the operations. Hence, one of the aims of this study is to investigate this.

A review of literature by Easterby-Smith (1997) notes that the learning organization, mostly closely associated with the writing of Senge (1990), is pragmatic, normative and inspirational.

The literature is pragmatic in that it focuses on how organizations successfully acquire, share and use knowledge to achieve organizational goals. There is a strong emphasis for creating knowledge for action, not knowledge for its own sake (Argyris, 1993). Further, it recognizes that organizations are a part of complex social systems, systems over which it is unlikely they can exert control. Rather than trying to isolate or protect an organization from its environment, an organization ought to be closely attuned to it, embrace the opportunities that changing circumstances can offer, and as more recent theorists have urged, ‘ride the wave’ (Duesterberg, 2001; Merron, 1997), meaning the organizations have to go through the challenges the environment offers, rather than running away from it.

Another aspect of the pragmatic orientation is that learning organization theorists, unlike many of their academic counterparts, have also developed an array of techniques and tools for doing diagnostic, examining patterns of behavior in organization, and engaging in ‘transformative thinking’ (Wyckoff, 1995), where the thinking is more to do with change.

The approach is also normative in the sense that there is a strong set of underlying values that inform practice within a learning organization, which include a commitment to:

- (a) valuing different kinds of knowledge and learning styles and creating a ‘learning environment’ so each organizational member can realize his/her full potential,
- (b) dialogue and exploration of different perspectives and experiences to generate creative thinking,

- (c) team work and breaking down traditional barriers or blinders within organization, and so release creative potential,
- (d) fostering leadership potential throughout the organization and reducing distinctions, such as those between management and staff, between strategists and implementers, between support and professional staff, and so on.

The writing on learning organization is also normative in the sense that it encourages organizations to go beyond 'single-loop learning', which often focuses on finding efficiencies and dealing with first order problem (symptoms), to double- and even triple-loop learning. In double-loop, learning organizations consistently test assumptions, identify the roots of problems, and are open to fundamental rethinking of strategy. Organizations practicing double-loop learning are open to examining how organizational practice diverges from 'espoused theory' (i.e. all practices and policies that are open to all people) and addressing these inconsistencies. In triple-loop learning, the highest form of organizational self-examination, people are open to questioning the very reason for existence of the organization.

An effective learning organization will constantly question its assumptions and review its objectives in the light of its own experience and changes in the external environment. The learning organization is able to process information into knowledge and combine this with the fruits of experience to become usable wisdom. The accumulation of accessible wisdom is what differentiates a learning organization from other organizations.

Argyris and Schon (1978), state that a theory of learning organization calls for a deepening of the level of questions. They also note a tendency in organizations towards 'single-loop learning' in which the emphasis is on more immediately observable processes and structures, whilst taking organizational goals, values, frameworks and strategies for granted i.e. it seeks to describe the organizational ideas where learning is maximized. It tends to be focused on practical implementation, generating action and change to create an environment that is conducive to learning. There is an emphasis on creating the kinds of conditions in which individuals and collective creativity and performance flourish which contribute to the organizations ability to achieve results. This type of learning leads to adaptation, but only within the existing organizational framework for action.

However, a learning organization is regarded as an ideal (Smith, 2001a) or a vision (Human Resource Development council, 2005). This vision according to Finger and Brands (1999) is towards which organizations have to evolve in order to be able to respond to the various pressures facing them. The learning organization literature is inspirational in the sense that the models are presented as something of ideal types. Individuals as well as the organization are engaged in an ongoing quest for knowledge, their struggle to unlearn dysfunctional behaviors is continuous, and because change is constant, they must constantly change.

Organizations face some difficulties such as existence of gaps between organizational words and actions, resource constraints that can inhibit training, unclear and conflicting vision (Braham, 1995): as well as the inability to make optimum use of trained personnel, and lastly inability to manage information overload. This inhibits the learning culture. Edwards (1997), argues that NGOs, often have ‘activist culture’ with people who may see learning (which is a characteristic of a learning organization), as ‘luxury’ rather than ‘real work’. In activist culture, organizations are action oriented, where they tend to prioritize activities on behalf of other things, for example learning. They also have hierarchical, centralized, control-oriented structures, in which learning is restricted and experimentation is discouraged. Skyrme (2003), state that managers should note that there are some inhibitors to becoming a learning organization and these include

- (a) Operations/fire fighting preoccupation (i.e. not being able to create time and sit back and think strategically),
- (b) Being too focused on systems and process to the exclusion of other factors,
- (c) Reluctance to train or invest in training other than for obvious immediate needs,
- (d) Too many hidden personal agendas and
- (e) Too top-down driven, over-tight supervision resulting in lack of real empowerment.

Having noticed that there are inhibitors to becoming a learning organization, this study will also find out whether some of these inhibiting factors exist in the CSC. Such information will be used to recommend strategies on how the CSC can improve its systems.

The notion implied in this writing is that the CSC's ability to become a learning organization will make it adaptive to the forces of change facing it. This requires what is called a 'cultural change' that demands organizations with all their staff to:

- (a) create and communicate a shared vision for the organization,
- (b) make information in the organization accessible to all,
- (c) help employees manage change by anticipating change and creating the types of change desired by the organization,
- (d) empower employees to act,
- (e) acknowledge and support the need to take risks,
- (f) learn to manage the organization's knowledge by (i) keeping information current, (ii) maintaining historical knowledge and (iii) addressing increasing volumes of information (Human Resource Development council, 2005).

2.3 The Eight Function Model of the Learning Organization

The scholars who have conducted thorough research work on learning organizations agree that there is no simple description of a learning organization, but hold that there are certain key characteristics that are unique to a learning organization. They suggest that there are a number of basic features, which an organization needs to have in order to become a learning organization. The framework for understanding the key functions of the learning organization are covered by Slim (1993), and also discussed by Britton (1998). Eight characteristics are identified by researchers in the field as follows:

- (a) Creating a supportive culture,
- (b) Gathering internal experience,
- (c) Accessing external learning,
- (d) Developing appropriate communication systems,
- (e) Drawing conclusions,
- (f) Developing organizational memory,
- (g) Integrating learning into strategy and policy,
- (h) Applying the learning.

An associated model, as presented by Kandola and Fullerton (1994) and aptly captured by Armstrong (2003) attributes the following six factors to such an organization. These are

- (a) shared vision,
- (b) enabling structure,
- (c) supportive culture,
- (d) empowering management,
- (e) motivated workforce and
- (f) enhanced learning which results from the existence of processes and policies that promotes a culture of learning among the workers.

Another model by Pedler et al (1991), as quoted by Torrington and Hall (2002), identifies eleven necessary conditions for creating a learning company. They believe that a learning company is that which has the following characteristics:

- (a) A learning approach to strategy,
- (b) A participative policy making,
- (c) Information technology harnessed to inform and empower people to ask questions and take decisions based on available data,
- (d) Formative accounting and control, where accounting systems are designed to assist learning from decisions,
- (e) Internal exchange,
- (f) Reward flexibility,
- (g) Enabling structures,
- (h) Frontline workers expected to be, and used as, environmental scanners,
- (i) Inter-company learning, where learning is not restricted to the organization, but extended to organizations which are suppliers, customers or even competitors,
- (j) A climate, which is created which supports learning,
- (k) Self-development is encouraged in all members of the organization.

Therefore, a learning organization is one in which the learning strategy is more than a human resource or a staff development strategy. Indeed the challenge of CSC is to embrace all the necessary conditions for a genuine learning organization.

The model by Britton (1998) was developed from an extensive review of the literature on both NGOs and learning organizations. It is a useful one not only for the NGO sector but

also for any organization, which is serious about changing. The model truly gives reliable guidance to the successful design and use of learning organization and its tools. Besides it can shed light on the task of digging and uprooting the roots of change problems in CSC. Therefore, the model will guide the process of this research.

2.4 The Environment of a Learning Organization

The above section has explored some key concepts and methods, which facilitate improved learning in organizations. However, translating these into organizational practice is likely to pose a number of challenges. What is required is an organizational environment that facilitates such practice; the environment of a 'learning organization'. Senge et al (1994) capture some key dimensions of change required to build a learning organization in a useful framework. The dimensions of this framework are described below:

2.4.1 Guiding Ideas

According to Eyben (2003), there is positivism in development practice, and dominant professionals have been economists. Bureaucratic organizations, based on a positivist paradigm, tend to find reflection difficult, due to their centralized control, mechanistic thinking, high levels of specialization, and over specification of plans (Olson and Euyang 2001; Morgan 1986). Reflection is described as 'active , persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions towards which it tends' (Dewey, 1933:118).

Despite high levels of uncertainty within the development environment, there is a pressure to be able to predict, and to appear infallible.

Ellerman (2002) notes a tendency amongst donors to seek a one best way to achieve poverty reduction outcomes, and become wedded to these official views. This attachment to single solutions seriously limits learning within the organization, and the ability of partners to share ideas and learn together.

It is argued therefore, that a shift in fundamental assumptions – a new paradigm is needed for development agencies to become learning organizations (Eyben, 2003; Hinton and Groves, 2004; Ellerman, 2002). The alternatives proposed include an ‘open learning model’ (Ellerman, 2002), a complex system’s approach (Hinton and Groves, 2004), or critical theory (Eyben, 2003)-the key characteristics of all being a more open and experimentalist, holistic and pragmatic perspective where it is unlikely organizations can exert control, and the encouragement of greater collaboration.

The three proposed alternatives originate from the systems thinking. Systems thinking highlights the need to see, or think in ‘wholes’ rather than in parts, drawing attention to the importance of recognizing relationships and feedback loops in the complex and dynamic environments in which people work, interact and learn. Reality is complex and it is important to recognize and appreciate the interdependency of the different elements of any system as well as to changes over time in order to fully understand and analyze (Senge 1990: 92). Flood (1999), likens systems thinking to opening contrasting ‘windows’ on a particular, bounded action area to generate a more holistic appreciation of issues and dilemmas.

Human thought is not capable of knowing the whole but it is capable of seeing greater connectedness between the known elements and of recognizing and appreciating better what is unknown. Viewing an action or situation through all of these windows and inter-relatedness of the issues and dilemmas revealed by each, will suggest more creative courses of action and transformation from which improvements can be made. Taking a systematic approach to an issue in a social organizational context will reveal a number of interpretations of any particular action context. The aim of the systems thinking is not to achieve a new and improved model of reality, but that interpretations or models should be used to explore and discover, and in this way generate a more meaningful understanding of the context in question.

The open learning model (which is characterized by being more open and experimentalist), a complex system (which is characterized by being more holistic and pragmatic), and a critical theory (which is characterized by encouragement of greater collaboration) helps people to recognize their connectedness to the world and the consequences of their action, it constitutes a shift from linear thinking, helps people to

reflect on their current mental models, and thus expose prevailing assumptions; it provides a shared language for improved team discussion and dialogue; and it allows a shared vision to emerge through collaborative feedback process.

2.4.2 Theory, Method and Tools

Achieving a paradigm shift might seem a daunting proposal. Change begins to happen through the introduction of new theory, tools and methods, and the elimination of old ones (Chamber's and Petit, 2004; Hobley and Shields, 2000; Senge et al 1994). David and Mancini (2004) observed that whilst the philosophy of Action Aid promoted the participation and rights of a range of stakeholders, their internal procedures did not reflect this. They recount how Action Aid reinforced their guiding ideas by developing more consistent accountability and reporting methods. This meant a shift from a traditional upward reporting system to a more participatory 360 degrees learning approach called ALPS (Accountability, Learning and Planning System). Other alternative theories, tools and methods, which facilitate reflective and reflexive learning include: action learning, systems thinking, double loop learning, participative enquiry and immersions.

Reflexivity is 'self critical epistemological awareness. It means critical straining for honest reflection on how one's own ego, mindset, institutional context, and social and political interests combine to select and shape personal knowledge' (Chambers, 2002; 153). Reflection is as is described above; an 'active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions towards which it tends' (Dewey, 1933:118). Reflective learning requires one to question organizational norms and policies, rather than only their manifestations and impacts. This happens in double-loop learning where learning occurs when error is detected and corrected in ways that involve the modification of an organization's underlying norms, policies and objectives (Argyris & Schon (1978:2-3). For it to be effective, it must be holistic or systematic in nature, i.e. it should try to capture inter-relationships which explore different perspectives on an issue.

Systems' thinking is a framework for seeing interrelationships rather than things, for seeing patterns of change rather than static snapshots. Systems thinking is a discipline for

seeing the 'structures that underlie complex situations, and for discerning high from low leverage change' (Senge 1990: 68-9).

Cornwall, Pratt and Scott-Villiers (2004), describes an enquiry as a means by which further information is obtained through which can help to build a better understanding of the bigger picture and to interrogate and challenge assumptions. This can take a range of forms whether as an individual or group process or through activities of observation, investigation or dialogue. Some strategies that have been used to improve the quality of dialogue and enquiry include those from the discipline of action research including action learning, co-operatives enquiry and participatory enquiry. These approaches involve the establishment of small groups or 'sets' of participants who meet on a regular basis.

In action learning, each brings to the group a situation or problem they are engaged in, for example, a policy they are working on, or an issue relating to work relationships. They share their experiences relating to the issue with group, and through reflecting together gain a deeper understanding of the issue, its dynamics and dilemmas. On the basis of the new insights, ideas for action are developed. Between group meetings participants consciously reflect on their current ways of working and explore new and better ways of operating to address the particular issue under enquiry. They then return to the group with an account of the consequences of their actions for further reflection and exploration (Pedler and Boutall 1992; Reason and Heron 1999).

Forms of the enquiry can differ in the number of participants involved, whether they have individual or shared questions around which to enquire and the nature of the actions taken between meetings (active research or simple reflection on practice in the light of discussions (Reason and Heron 1999).

Marshall (2001) notes that each person's enquiry approach will be distinctive and disciplines cannot be cloned or copied. She has made a conscious commitment to self-reflective practice, and as such she dedicates time to this purpose, making notes to capture and track her sense-making processes. Chambers (2002) also notes that the act of writing a diary helps reflection, and gives one something to return to, when later experiences may have caused unconscious manipulation of memory.

Another stimulus for reflection is by challenging oneself through exposure. Immersion programmes involve development agency staff who are principally based in or developed countries undertaking extended visits to the field to spend time with poor people. These are opportunities for learning more about poverty through enquiry and dialogue, but also for reflecting on ones personal assumptions and testing them against the realities observed. Accounts of such reflective processes are often quite powerful and reveal radical shifts in thinking.

Principally these are methods that encourage a broader and more inclusive analysis of issues and problems as well as putting emphasis on individual, personal reflection on ones own attitudes, beliefs and how these influence learning, decisions and actions.

2.4.3 Innovations in Infrastructure

Infrastructure refers to the means through which an organization makes resources available to support people in their work, in other words, time, management structures, incentives, money, information and contact with other colleagues, etc (Senge et al, 1994). This raises a whole range of issues and areas for change to facilitate learning.

In terms of management, decentralized structures allowing for participation, flattened hierarchies which reduce power differentials, and small units that communicate and interact well with one another all facilitate better learning relationships (Finger and Brand, 1999). In development agencies some mentalities often associated with disciplinary training and departmental membership, and strong hierarchies associated with more bureaucratic agencies are counter to learning (Hobley and Shields, 2000; Pasteur and Scott-Villiers 2004). They tend to result in relationships of competition or of fear; and do not foster openness and sharing.

Recruitment, job descriptions, training, performance assessment, incentive systems and promotions criteria can all be adapted to ensure capacity and incentives for reflection and learning (Chambers et al, 2001; Hobley and Shields, 2000). Pasteur and Scott -Villiers (2004) highlight the importance of creating a space for learning; ensuring that time is available for learning and that this activity is valued by managers; and that existing procedures could be better adapted to help facilitate learning. There are tendencies within

the CSC, which may be typical of other development bureaucracies, to reward competition independence over team working, honest reflection and sharing. The drive to spend budgets also tends to devalue investment of time in other aspects of the aid delivery process, such as understanding the working context and investing in relationships (ibid).

2.4.4 Skills and Capabilities

Relevant skills and capabilities are also essential if individual members are to be able to apply new theories, tools and methods. Skills such as reflection, effective dialogue and systemic conceptualization may not come naturally to people and are not typical components of academic training (Senge, Roberts, Ross, Smith, & Kleiner, 1994). Organizations may need to invest in awareness raising, training and skills development in this area to ensure that organizational policy is effectively transformed into practice (David and Mancini, 2004; Pasteur and Scott-Villiers, 2004). Bloch and Borges (2002) describe in some detail how they developed new skills for more effective listening, dialogues and communication, linking these to the monitoring and evaluation system so that they could monitor qualitative improvements over time. This required considerable investment of time and effort in order to achieve profound change in team behavior. However, Bloch and Borges (2002; 468) note: ‘there are no miracles- changes take time’.

2.4.5 Awareness and Sensibilities

Senge et al (1994) suggest that as new skills and capabilities are learned and practices, then new awareness will emerge: an ability to ‘see’ the underlying structures driving behavior, and assumptions and practices that may previously have gone unquestioned. This type of sensitivity is a form of emotional intelligence, defined by Goleman (1998) as a person’s ability to be sensitive to others, recognize their own emotional response and use this awareness effectively in interaction. Emotional intelligence is important to learning, because enquiry processes often focus on issues of tension and power dynamics are often at play (Larbi-Jones, 2004; Pasteur and Scott -Villiers, 2004). Emotional intelligence is hard to learn, per se, however as individual or groups consciously attend to these factors in their practice of reflection, dialogue and reflexivity; awareness will begin to become apparent.

2.4.6 Attitudes and Beliefs

Changes in attitudes and beliefs represent a shift at the deepest level of an organizations culture. This signals that learning has really become embedded in the organization, rather than being merely an espoused value (Schein, 1992). Characteristics such as an ability to surrender control, to admit uncertainty or fallibility, a broadening of ones analytical perspective, increased levels of risk taking and improved communication, transparency and trust, all start to become internalized (Finger and Brand, 1999). All these are ingredients of a learning culture in an organization; hence an organization improves in the learning if they are embedded in an organization.

As attitudes and behavior start to become internalized within the organization, this should not imply the achievement of a new steady state. The principle of questioning holds for assumptions about learning as well as about other areas of organizational practice. This process of reflecting on the learning process itself is termed by Argyris and Schon ‘triple loop learning’ (1978), and involves inquiring into the context of learning as well as the content of learning. Or as ‘deutero-learning’ (Bateson, 1972) which is the highest form of organizational self-examination, where people are open to questioning the very reason of their existence of the organization.

Therefore the learning organization can be seen as being based on architecture of guiding ideas, innovations in infrastructure and theory, methods and tools which support the learning practice of individuals, teams and the organizational whole. New skills and capabilities should be complemented by fundamental shifts of individual and collective attitudes to ensure enduring change in the learning organization.

2.5 Why NGOs Should Take Up the Idea of Becoming a Learning Organization

Power, Maury, and Maury (2002) argue that though many businesses are modeling the learning practices neither the-for - profit environment nor corporate structures fit well with the environmental and organizational forms needed for grassroots development. The absence of shareholders and profit as priorities for NGOs, as noted by Bloch and Borges (2002), means that values that are related to principles and mission, tend to dominate. Yet the concept of being a learning organization and the transformation promise of

effectiveness clearly resonate deeply in a great range of organizations. The reasons why this is like this is described below:

First of all, there is a long tradition in the NGOs of recognizing untapped human potential in all human beings as well as the transformative power of learning. Even in the earliest years of international development, significant support was given to literacy and adult education, primary and secondary schools, and to some extent higher education. Beyond valuing education simply as a ticket to a better standard of living, there were thinkers who saw education as more than an investment in skills and capacities: non-formal learning in particular was recognized as a process of sparking critical awareness and consciousness, leading to both individual and social change (Friere, 1970). In his book, 'The Pedagogy of the Oppressed' (1970) is among the most brilliant and influential expressions of this tradition, showing that critical analysis of one's reality can be a powerful tool for empowerment and collective action. In the African context, the idea that development should be a mutual learning experience was powerfully expressed by Julius Nyerere as early as 1968 (Oakley 1991, cited in Cornwall, 2001). Both thinkers were inspired by Christian thought as well as socialism, and their work – rather than viewing learning in a strictly instrumental way – shared a redemptive vision, as well as a commitment to liberation from oppression in the here and now as the right of all people.

A second aspect of learning organization theory with which NGOs feel comfortable is the emphasis on embracing change. Most people join NGOs because they want to change the status quo – whether in a relatively restricted way such as improving nutrition, housing, or educational opportunities, or in a more profound way, such as addressing the root causes of poverty, and challenging those economic and political structures that perpetuate it (Roper and Pettit, 2002). For NGOs, change is both desirable and necessary. Consequently, how to generate knowledge for action and be constantly monitoring a dynamic environment in order to identify opportunities and anticipate challenges have strong appeal. Non Governmental Organizations themselves are also seeking to embrace change to become more flexible and adaptive in a rapidly changing global context, and to become more strategic in addressing deeper structural inequalities and policy issues (Edwards and Hulme; 1996). For some, the approaches hold the promise of helping to introduce urgently needed shifts in culture, vision, and purpose.

Another aspect with which many NGO professional will identify with relates to the focus on changing internal structures and practices that inhibit learning and, in turn, fulfillment of an organization's mission. In most NGOs nowadays, there is a lot of work to do with 'institution building' or organizational capacity building. The learning organization literature has the merit of going beyond much of the mainstream capacity building guides put out by Organizational Development consultants and technical intermediaries, which often have a prescriptive feel and are not characterized by their sensitivity to different economic, socialism and cultural contexts.

The limitations of the conventional capacity-building guides are a function, in part of the influence of neo- liberal thinking on management and governance. This is particularly pronounced as NGOs have come under pressure to live up to their idealized role of providing models of good practice for others to follow (Cornwall, 2001), and to do so efficiently. Learning organization approaches with their emphasis on flatter organizational structure nurturing the leadership potential in all staff, closer connection with and greater accountability to clients, better internal communication, the efficacy of teamwork may be seen by some as a potential antidote to more traditional organizational practices of many NGOs which can often be hierarchical, narrowly construed and non participatory.

However, Kelleher, McLaren & Bisson (1996), Power et al (2002), and Padaki (2000b) suggest that as a normative theory, the learning organization does not argue explicitly for internal democracy and because it does not examine 'deep structures' and power in equalities within organizations, it is unlikely to have transformational- live impact it aspires to (Kelleher, 2002). Related to this, because learning organization theory emerges from the private sectors and consequently is not concerned about development, much less development that is firmly grounded in a grassroots approach, the scope of its interest in transformation is in fact quite limited (Powers et al, 2002). Regarding the degree to which it is pragmatic, Padaki (2002b), argues that it actually distracts from attention to management fundamentals, and may generate more heat than light. Bloch and Borges, (2002) on the other hand, find potential in those strands of organizational learning theory that focus on critical reflection, transforming values and personal behavior (Agyris and Schon, 1978).

2.6 The Learning NGO

Ellerman (1999) argues that NGOs, including some with enormous influence and resources, tend not to change because they try to identify ‘the one best way’, and become deeply wedded to these beliefs. This creates significant obstacles to becoming a learning organization, as people focus on explaining a way of failures (bad single-loop learning) rather than question the dogma or dominant paradigm (double and triple –loop learning). Bloch and Borges (2002) suggest that NGOs tend to get stuck in single –loop learning because their planning and evaluation tools focus on the operational level, and fail to engage people in critical reflection on underlying issues of behavior, values and agency. They agree with Edwards (1997) that the complexity and diversity of the development process means that to develop capacity for learning and to make the connections is more important than accumulating information.

Non Governmental Organizations efforts are also made much more complex because it is not a solo enterprise. Of course, business is not a solo enterprise either, but, there is a considerable literature on joint enterprise. However, the private sector literature focuses on developing characteristics of a learning organization in order to maintain an edge over competitors. The competitive lens is not the most useful for analyzing actors in NGOs. Non Governmental Organizations in different countries of different sizes, with different missions, mandates and accountability structures have to collaborate with each other in the hope of having impact. Even within a given organization, there can often be many hierarchical levels and a variety of sector or units, as well as remote offices, each with their own cultural contexts, each of which may have different worldviews. The challenge in the NGO is to instill learning capabilities, including the learning challenge of consistently and effectively working with each other’s, in a range of very diverse organizations, which operate at different and/or multiple levels and in profoundly different contexts.

Musyoki (2002) asks whether the principles of learning organization are relevant or useful in complex bilateral programmes looking at a joint rural development effort of the Dutch and Kenyan governments in Keiyo and Marakwet districts. He examines how participation was institutionalized at different stages of the programme, as both learning and a conflict generating process. In the politicized context of bilateral programmes, Musyoki (2002)

finds that the ability to carry forward any learning from one phase to the next is hindered by high staff turnover, national politics, diplomatic considerations, and shifts in the international development agenda. Learning organization theory tends to assume some degree of consensus of shared vision, both of which can be elusive in NGO programmes that involve multiple actors, competing interests and conflicting goals.

2.7 Characteristics of the Development and Humanitarian Work That May Present Particular Challenges

2.7.1 Accountability

It is common ‘wisdom’ in the private sector that a company’s primary responsibility is to maximize shareholder value. This implied accountability and responsiveness to customers, and to a more limited extent to employees, to the extent that doing so serves to maximize profits and return on investments. Compared to the NGO sector, private sector accountability is quite straightforward, particularly since there is an arguable congruence of interests among its immediate stakeholders.

This apparent congruence can of course be disrupted if a company develops a monopoly over the market, if influential shareholders are exclusively focused on short term profit, or (increasingly rarely) if labor is highly organized in a tight labor market. Today, there is a growing awareness of the need not only to satisfy the shareholders, but also to protect the company’s reputation (and deflect public criticism), and to minimize practices that are environmentally unsustainable-the so –called ‘triple bottom line’ (Elkington, 1997).

Accountability is not necessarily so straightforward for NGOs. Powers et al (2002) are most explicit in identifying the conflict of interest between two primary stakeholders of an NGO- its donor institutions and the clients of the NGOs services or actions. Because donors control the purse strings, they often exert undue influence on how the NGO views accountability. Consequently, monitoring and evaluation systems, how reports are developed and used, and criteria for success are determined not by those the NGOs sets out to serve, but by donors. As explained in chapter one, this is the case even at the CSC. This obviously has consequences for how learning processes are structured and whose interest they serve. Reporting systems and procedures are geared to control over resource

flows rather than to learning and innovation. This study will find out if CSC's monitoring and evaluation systems are a source of knowledge rather just as a means of ensuring accountability.

2.7.2 Measurability

Non Governmental Organizations are not producing and selling. They are interested in both process and outcome. Outcomes are multi-dimensional and often not easily measurable, e.g. empowerment, and organizational capacity process. The things you can most easily count are often things that do not tell you very much. There are fundamental questions to consider about who does the measuring, who benefits for monitoring and evaluation procedures, and whose learning and knowledge is valued (Estrella, Blauert, Campilan, John, Julian, Irene, Deb, & Roger , 2000).

The challenge of measurability runs up smack against the accountability issue. Numerous papers note that their monitoring and evaluation systems are designed to conform to donor demands (Mebrahtu, Earl, and Carden, 2002). Bloch and Borges (2002), in their work with reproductive health rights NGO in Brazil, describe efforts to engage staff in deeper reflection on their own values and behavior, and to build skills for more effective listening, dialogue and relationships.

They link this effort to the NGO's monitoring and evaluation, so that qualitative changes in organizational response and performance can be measured over time, and so that staff can reflect on their own behavior in the process of defining indicators, documenting progress, and learning from the evaluation process, and so break with 'defensive routines'.

The rapid growth of advocacy work is challenging many NGOs to develop effective ways to monitor, measure, and learn from programmes. Coates and David, (2002), explore the complex and changing nature of advocacy, drawing on experiences of Action Aid and the World Development Movement. They suggest that conventional monitoring and evaluation and impact assessment methods are likely to be inappropriate or even counter productive. A focus on measuring short term advocacy impacts, for example, may undermine longer term aims such as strengthening the capacity and voice of partner groups to effect deeper change. Similarly, causality can be hard to pin down. Efforts to

assess the impact of one organization may create perverse incentives that undermine joint action.

Coates and David (2002), argue that an analysis of power and power structures should guide advocacy strategy and inform the ways in which advocacy is evaluated. Their review adds to a growing body of work on the challenges of doing and assessing advocacy and policy change work (Chapman, 2002; Veneklasen and Miller, 2002; Cohen, Rosa, Gabriel, 2001; Roche, 1999; Brown and Fox, 1998). To contribute to organizational learning those applying conventional monitoring & evaluation approaches to advocacy work are advised to join the search for alternative tools and methods. The new tools and methods will have to take into account the longer-term impacts of the advocacy programmes such as strengthening the capacity and voice of partner groups to effect deeper change, and also the impact the programme has on the joint action. This will help the CSC to encourage reflection on their behavior in the process learning from the evaluation process. Monitoring and evaluation being one of the important characteristics of a learning organization, right tools and methods will be used in evaluation.

Improved strategies for and collaborative reflection which seek to build a more holistic understanding of an issue or problem are necessary in order to achieve the kinds of insight that result in profound learning and change. The implications of this type of learning for an organization are thus less to do with knowledge management systems and processes and more concerned with developing new tools for dialogue and holistic analysis and attitudes and skills for working collaboratively. There are also implications for the guiding ideas (or paradigms) upon which organizational practice is founded, and the types of organizational culture, structures, incentives and procedures which dominate.

2.7.3 Self-Inflicted Complexity

Non Governmental Organizations are notional for the imbalance that is almost inevitably found between aspirations, capabilities, and resources (human, financial and temporal). As Twigg and Steiner (2002) note, one of the most significant, and emphatic findings of their research is that overwork and pressures of work are not minor factors in NGO operations and performance, but systematic weaknesses which in their view is a major obstacle to the update of new approaches. Mebrahtu, et al, (2002) also identify time as a major constraint.

Another challenge is staff turnover, especially those organizations that embrace voluntarism.

Despite emphasis on learning and knowledge creation, many NGOs feel themselves to be in a vicious cycle. In most organizations people work, are not rewarded for reflecting on their work, for reading and listening to what others have to say, for systematizing and sharing on experiences so others can critique their work, both within the institutions and in broader NGO community. They also work with ever more ambitious NGO agendas, increasing numbers of relevant actors and stakeholders and more complex change processes. As learning is by doing, real learning becomes even more important. Yet increased complexity increases demands on staff and strains existing infrastructure, meaning there is even less time for reflection and learning. When and how can this cycle be transformed into a virtuous cycle of reflective practice? Where learning would be acquired and reflected upon at their organization or broader NGO community.

Much literature on learning in the context of knowledge management focuses on ways of improving access to knowledge based on the assumption that more knowledge leads to better outcomes. This assumption has been questioned (Ackoff, 1989; Senge, 1990). The purpose of learning in the context of organizations is to improve practice, i.e. there should ideally be an action outcome (Binney and Williams, 1995; Pedler et al, 1991; Pedler & Boutall, 1992).

Learning is viewed by many authors as a cyclical process whereby people reflect on actions, knowledge and experience, and as a result reframe their perceptions of their original experience or strategy (leading to new actions or strategies in the future (Kolb, 1984; Binney and Williams, 1995). The stage of reflection and questioning is critical to an effective learning cycle. The quality of the reflection is key to achieving the next stage in the cycle of learning, the reframing of the initial understanding or beliefs relating to that action. This outcome makes the learning process different from the simple acquisition of new knowledge (Pedler and Boutall, 1992).

2.8 Sustaining the Learning Practice

Hailey, and James (2002), identify a number of successful South Asian NGOs, characterized by good learning practice, and emphasize the importance of top leader's commitment to learning and critical inquiry for creating a learning culture. Although less explicit than in the Hailey and James article, the role of top leadership for moving change the system is clearly significant. A clearly key aspect for successful organizational learning is to structure learning processes in such a way as to enhance individuals learning capabilities and sense of urgency.

Wallace (2002) illustrates the point that individual learning would be shared regarding delivery of service. The challenge that many organizations would be left with is how to institutionalize that learning within respective organizations, particularly when head quarters staff had not been much involved.

Debede (2002), details the challenges inherent within a bicultural collaboration that includes participants with very different worldviews and value system from the perspective of one of the actors who is trying to get a long stalled project moving forward. It demonstrates a point made by several other authors (e.g. Hilhorst and Schmiemann, 2002; Mebrahtu, 2002), which is that each of us negotiates our place within systems often simply to cope. It also illustrates that the extent to which they have insights into underlying issues of values, power and culture. Very often, organizational evolution is derailed by the limitations of key individuals to learn deeply and genuinely.

This is highlighted very forcefully in the papers by Kelleher et al (1996), and Ahmed (2002), both of which deal with gender relations within organizations and efforts to make organizations more gendered in their policies and practices. To many people, it is in fact, very threatening to examine the 'deep structure' within organizations including the position of privileges that men hold and which are reinforced by institutional policy with practice.

Those holding positions of privilege in a society (or organizations) may be totally oblivious to its many manifestations. While they can gain insights and are willing to address the more obvious and obviously unfair examples, they may be completely

unaware of other aspects, and cannot recognize them even when they are pointed out. Very often leaders will embrace upon organizational change processes with real commitment to transform the organization, until they realize how genuine transformation will challenge their own authority and prerogatives. Even when top leadership remains committed it is often middle management or upper level professionals who feel threatened by the constant challenge to basic premises and by the more egalitarian values embodied in learning organization theory. As Kelleher (2002), observes that as change agents, organizations may recognize that gender equality requires a very different set of power relatives in an organization, yet it is seldom, if ever asked by organizations to lead a cultural revolution.

Where leadership structures are highly politicized, as in the case analyzed by Musyoki, (2002) learning and change may be very threatening to the status quo. Commitment, shared vision may not exist, even nominally, and it may be necessary to create alternative, community-based structures that can build trust and hold officials accountable. Musyoki (2002), argues for more rigorous attention to the political and a power dynamic at play within and among organizations, and observes that this is missing from much of the writing on organizational learning. He also cautions that even alternative structures and processes of participation can then be formalized in ways that fold them back not the existing power structure, where in the end it is ‘political dynamics that determine what is to be learned, by whom, how, and for what purpose’. By understanding reflective and open processes where people can develop in their own learning agendas and manage the outcomes.

2.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter has critically reviewed the diverse definitions of a learning organization concept. It has also explored some key concepts and methods, which facilitate improved learning in an organization. The main characteristics of a learning organization and the eight function model of the learning organization have also been explained. The environments that facilitate such practice have also been described. It has also examined reasons NGOs would like to be a learning organization and the reasons NGOs find it difficult to achieve the practice. The chapter has concluded by touching on how organizations can sustain such learning practices.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines and discusses the research design, the research methods and applications including questionnaire design, sampling, and questionnaire administration. The limitation of this research is also described. The chapter also discusses how the data were analyzed and interpreted.

3.2 Research Design

3.2.1 Philosophy and Data Sources

It is important to describe the methodology and technical approach that was adopted in addressing the purpose and objectives of the study. This is necessary in order to appreciate the nature of the research and the manner in which the study was designed and conducted as this has implications for reliability and validity of survey findings. There are several philosophies that guide research studies ranging from positivism to phenomenology. Positivism adopts the philosophical stance of the natural scientists preferring working with an observable social reality and whose end results can be law like generalizations. Phenomenology in contrast, is an argument that the social world of business and management is far too complex to lend itself to theorizing by definite laws (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2000). They argue that generalizations do not hold true in an ever-changing world of business organizations.

The fact that there is wealth of literature on the learning organization, with some writers coming up with conceptual frameworks on the subject, is the cause of the researcher to progress from theory to data. This study lends more towards positivism as it is the researcher's belief that an organization needs to be a 'learning organization' if it is to be successful. On the other hand the issues of the learning organizations involve people's perceptions, which may be subjective. Consequently, the survey involved the collection of

qualitative data. Therefore, the researcher used more of deduction to answer the research questions developed largely through induction.

The study has been carried out in the CSC. The researcher has been motivated to conduct the study in her organization due to funding situation at the organization, which demands that as an organization it has to change in order to meet some expectations by the donors. The concept of the learning organization being one of the most contemporary approaches to change is chosen by the researcher in order to examine how the CSC operates in eight key characteristics of this model.

The researcher administered one type of the questionnaire to employees from the various departments including their heads of departments in order to understand the weaknesses and strengths in the CSC's ability to becoming a learning organization. These provided an insight into the gaps that the CSC could work on to become a learning organization. The study used both the closed questions and open-ended questions in order to enhance validity. The questionnaire included open-ended questions in order to give chance to respondents to articulate answers in their own understanding. On the other hand, closed questions sought specific responses based on areas to be tested. Open-ended questions only would make respondents gloss over issues, which would not necessarily be within the bounds of this study.

3.2.2 Questionnaire

The study used a modified learning NGO questionnaire by Britton (1998) to get the employees perceptions of the Christian Service Committee on its ability to embrace the characteristics of a learning organization. The initial testing had revealed some redundancies in the questions and consequently twenty four questions than envisaged were extracted from the standard learning NGO questionnaire that had forty questions. The modified questionnaire resulted in twenty four questions in the questionnaire. The twenty four statements that the questionnaire is comprised of, described the eight key characteristics of a learning organization as prescribed by Slim (1993), namely: creating a supportive culture, gathering internal experience, accessing external learning, developing appropriate communication systems, gathering conclusions, developing organizational memory, integrating learning into strategy and policy, and applying the learning, are

covered. The testing of the questionnaire allowed a proper selection of items in it. Participants responded to these questions on a four – point likert rating scale as follows:

Table 3.1 Likert Rating Scale

Scores	
Strongly Disagree	0
Disagree	1
Somewhat Agree	2
Agree	3
Strongly Agree	4

The rating of responses from 0 to 4 simplified the completion process. The ease of completion is in itself a tool for enhancing a high response rate.

The researcher views the questionnaire as the best tool for measuring the expectations and perceptions of employees on the ability of the CSC on embracing the characteristics of a learning organization. The questionnaire offers a more feasible way of collecting data on a wide variety of aspects of a learning organization than would be offered by unstructured interviews. A particular advantage of this learning questionnaire is that it is a tried and tested instrument (Britton, 1998).

The questionnaire contained both open-ended questions to give respondents chance to articulate answers in their own understanding and the closed questions gave way of capturing the eight key aspects of a learning organization that Slim (1993) had covered.

3.3 Research Methods and Application

3.3.1 Population of the Study

There were 105 members of staff who were employed by the Christian Service Committee. For the purposes of this research, the staffs were divided into two categories: The CSC Senior members of staff (management), and the CSC Junior members of staff.

This was done deliberately, so as to make the study more encompassing and present the varied perceptions of the diverse respondent categories more appropriately.

3.3.2 Sampling Plan

Under Christian Aid sponsorship, a consultant firm, Development Associates, reviewed the 2000 strategic plan and produced some fresh strategies that resulted into the CSC being put into zones. The CSC has therefore assumed a zoned model so that she effectively plays its facilitation role. Thus the way employees of the CSC are spread over the country invites the use of random sampling so that all employees were given same chance of being selected for the sample and hence ensure all employees are represented, and therefore avoid bias. There are three regional offices in CSC and five zone offices namely; Mzuzu, Blantyre and Lilongwe; and Champhira, Ntaja, Mponela, Ndirande and Phalombe respectively. In all these geographical areas, the services that are rendered to the communities are different. This therefore necessitated the researcher to get inputs from each zone and regional offices.

In drawing the sample for this study, the population was divided into two strata – the senior managers and junior staff. A random sample was selected from each stratum. A total sample of 55 was selected from the population of 105 as explained below. It was necessary to divide the employees into strata and take a random sample from each stratum because senior members of staff are very few in size such that if the sampling would be a simple random sample, there was a probability of getting too few or none of the small number of the senior members of staff.

Due to the fact that there is variation in the service, the questionnaires were administered to eight managers at each geographical point so that perceptions of managers are captured at all points. Where there are more than four members of staff on each project, the researcher administered the questionnaire to four members of staff on that project (It has to be known that the minimum number of employees on each project was four). One project in Ntaja had three members of staff; hence the three were the only interviewees. Lilongwe had eighteen members of staff running two projects, namely; Agriculture and food security project and Radio project. The questionnaire was administered to eight members of staff representing four on each project. Blantyre office had forty six members

of staff running four projects. The questionnaire was administered to sixteen members of staff representing four on each project, namely; water and sanitation, HIV/AIDS, Advocacy, and Core Administration. Most of the employees at Blantyre, Lilongwe and Ndirande are security staff; hence it was the researcher's view that not more than four members of staff should be interviewed. Employees at the Blantyre office may have different perceptions on the characteristics of the learning organization due to variations of the projects being run. This is expected to compensate for any bias emerging as a result of concentrating the study in the Blantyre office. In each of the programs, four staff members were selected randomly, except at Ntaja where all staff members were interviewed as tabulated below:

Table 3.2 Sampling Plan

	Mzuzu	Lilongwe	Blantyre	Phalombe	Ndirande	Ntaja	Mponela	Champira	Total
J	4	8	16	4	4	3	4	4	47
S	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8
N	6	18	46	6	14	3	6	6	105
B	2	10	30	2	10	-	2	2	50

INDEX

J = Junior members of staff that were sampled

S= Senior members of staff that were sampled

N= Number of total employees at the area

B= Employees not interviewed

A random sample of 55 employees responded to the learning questionnaire, which represent 100% response rate - representative of staff members' perception of the CSC. The researcher interviewed at least one member from all zones and projects department.

3.3.3 Senior Management Staff

For the purpose of this study, senior management staff consisted of the heads of departments, supervisors, zone coordinators, directors, and regional managers. The CSC at present had sixteen managers representing 15% of the total population of 105 members of

staff of the CSC. A sample of 8 senior management staff was selected to complete the questionnaire.

3.3.4 Junior Members of Staff

The junior members of staff were chosen to participate in this study because they are the ones who were in the field with the beneficiaries more than other the CSC staff members. It was, therefore, envisaged that they would be in a better position to provide data about the changes from the grassroots, which are legitimized at the most senior levels. For this study, the field staff members were also chosen for the interview. These members of staff are directly involved with projects on the ground, therefore should be in better position to understand how information is processed from the grassroots to the head office. The interview had to be employed on junior members of staff on answering the questionnaire because the study required an above level understanding, hence the need for the researcher to assist the respondents in answering the questionnaire. The junior staff members were 89 in number, representing 85% of the total population of 105 members of staff of the CSC. A sample of 47 junior staff members was respondents in this interview schedule.

The total number of sampled interviewees from the different respondent categories is presented in a table below:

Table 3.3 Numbers of Interviewees by Category

Senior members of staff	Junior members of staff	Total
8	47	55

In total therefore, this research used data collected from 55 respondents, representing 52% of the total 105 staff members of the Christian Service Committee. Targett (1990) argues that provided the sample size is greater than thirty, the sampling distribution of the mean should be normal. He states that according to statistical theory, the approximation is valid provided the sample size is greater than 30. The central limit theorem requires a sample

size of 30 or more. Therefore, the statistics in the sample design mean that the results are generally reliable in representing the views of the employees in the CSC.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

Confidentiality, privacy and anonymity of the respondents and all participants of the study were upheld. Participation was voluntary and the researcher never attempted to put under pressure on a respondent to be interviewed or to complete a questionnaire. The researcher informed all participants of the objectives of the study and always reminded the respondent's that as far as this study is concerned, no one would ever be able to use their responses for purposes other than for this research undertaking.

3.5 Data Analysis and Interpretation

The Learning NGO Questionnaire – Calculation Sheet by Marc Steinlin (1998) (Table 3.3, Appendix 3, Table 3.4, Appendix 4, Table 3.5, Appendix 5), was used to calculate the averages of the data collected. The data from the questionnaire was used to enter on the analysis sheet (Table 3.6, Appendix 6). The total scores of each respondent from the analysis sheet, for each Learning Organization characteristic were entered in their respective columns. The average ratings were found by dividing the totals for each column by the number of the respondents.

Each characteristic of a Learning Organization has three statements in the Questionnaire. The individual question scores were entered and the totals for each column calculated (the columns represented eight key characteristics of a learning organization by Britton (1998). The analysis sheet by Britton (1998) (Table 3.6, Appendix 6) enabled the responses to each of the questions to be allocated under one of the eight headings, which represent the eight functions of the learning organizations. The calculation sheet developed by Sterlin (1998) was used to calculate the averages of the data collected (Table 3.3, Appendix 3, Table 3.4, Appendix 4, and Table 3.5, Appendix 5). When the individual question scores had been entered, the totals for each column were calculated. The average ratings were found by dividing the totals for each column by the number of the respondents. The minimum score for any one column was 0 while the maximum score was 12.

The Learning Questionnaire uses the eight function of a learning organization as a basis for assessing the organization's strengths and weaknesses. The overall average scores for each of the functions from the survey have been interpreted as follows; scores less than an average of 6 out of the possible 12 reflected areas where the CSC was weak and scores from an average of 6 out of the possible 12 and above reflected areas where the CSC was strong.

The average ratings of seniors and juniors were compared using a bar graph. The gaps in their approach and understanding between the senior staff and junior staff were located and analyzed. This helped to locate if there are any wide disagreements between individuals' scores for a particular function and its significance.

In the final analysis, reference was made to the original questions which were twenty four in number and three for each characteristic of the learning organization to examine each individual's assessment of specific questions. Using the Microsoft Excel, the table was generated where key characteristics of a learning organization using the three statements on each characteristic were analyzed. This helped to identify the explanation for particularly high or low scores since the individual questions would provide guidance on what is weak and what is strong in the CSC. This process helped to identify functions, which the CSC could acknowledge as its strengths and also functions, which require most attention and what need to be done in order to strengthen the organization's capacity in inadequate areas. This made it easy to identify the main barriers to strengthening the learning capacity of the CSC and how this can be overcome. Thus the analysis was guided by the research questions and objectives presented in Chapter 1 of this dissertation.

3.6 Limitations of the Study

This research was limited in the following ways:

The study was conducted at the Christian Service Committee only. Although the Christian Service Committee has been in existence for a long time to be able to capture the perceptions of other NGOs and therefore statistical enough for inference, the NGOs are many in numbers and hence different missions, objectives, mandates, accountability structures and in different countries of different sizes. Future studies on the application of

the concept of learning organization to NGOs should as much as possible be used to draw a greater number of organizations.

In addition, as part of the methodology, only 55 members of staff of CSC are selected and stratified into two groups selecting 8 from senior members of staff and 47 from junior members of staff, leading to a very narrow sample size, more so from the senior members. Deductions from such a narrow sample may not hold well in other similar organizations.

3.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter has described the methodology and technical approach that was taken to address the research questions and objectives. Specifically, population of the study, samples, research strategy, questionnaire design and administration have been described. The chapter has also described how the data were analyzed and interpreted. The next chapter presents and discusses research findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

SURVEY FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents findings on the assessment of the Christian Service Committee (CSC) in light of the learning organization model. Staff members of the CSC provided their perceptions, attitudes and opinions about the CSC's ability to embrace the characteristics of the learning organization. These perceptions are analyzed and presented in this chapter.

4.2 The Findings

These results were taken from a sample of 55 employees of the CSC. The goal of the researcher was to assess the extent to which the CSC has embraced the eight key characteristics of the learning organization. This was done through the modified Learning NGO Questionnaire by Britton (1998). The questionnaire required the staff to rate the characteristics of the learning organization according to the current level of disposure. An open question gathered ideas on the characteristics that staff felt the CSC management could do to improve the situation (see Questionnaire in Appendix 2).

4.3 Rating by Respondents on Learning Organization Characteristics of the CSC

Using the Learning Organization Questionnaire, employees were asked to rate the extent to which the CSC was capable of embracing the learning organization characteristics. Each characteristic of a learning organization has three statements in the questionnaire. The twenty-four statements that the modified questionnaire is comprised of, described the eight key functions of a learning organization as suggested in the Eight Function Model by Britton (1998). Subjects responded to these statements on four – point Likert rating scale with 0 representing strongly disagree and 4 representing strongly agree. The analysis sheet by Britton (1998) (Table 3.6, Appendix 6) enabled the responses to each of the questions to be allocated under one of the eight headings, which represent the eight functions of the learning organizations. The Learning Questionnaire – Calculation Sheet by Steinlin (1998)

(Table 3.3, Appendix 3, Table 3.4, Appendix 4, Table 3.5, Appendix 5), was used to calculate the averages of the data collected. This offered a more feasible way of linking the collected data to the literature and objectives of the study.

The eight key functions were further analyzed into individual's specific statements. This process helped to identify functions, which the CSC could acknowledge as its strengths and also functions, which require most attention and what need to be done in order to strengthen the organization's capacity in inadequate areas. The summary of the average ratings are shown in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1 Summary of the Average Ratings by Respondents

Characteristics	Average Rating	Standard Deviation
Accessing External Learning	7.1	2.5
Drawing Conclusions	6.9	2.0
Gathering Internal Experience	5.9	2.0
Developing Organizational Memory	5.3	2.6
Integrating Learning	5.2	2.5
Applying the Learning	4.8	2.2
Communication Systems	4.5	2.0

According to Table 4.1, which presents the rating of CSC by staff members, the organization scored less than 6 out of a possible 12 in 5 of the 8 characteristics. This score represents less than half of the maximum score and thus below average for those characteristics namely; creating the supportive culture, developing communication systems, developing organizational memory, integrating learning into strategy and policy and in applying the learning. The CSC has however, scored 6 or above in accessing external learning, gathering external learning and drawing conclusions.

Based on the results the staff perceive the CSC as generally not a learning organization. It is clear from the Table 4.1 that the CSC is yet to develop the continuous capability to adapt and change. The results show that the CSC did well in three out of eight characteristics. The gaps exist in the CSC for it to embrace most characteristics, namely: creating a supportive culture, communication systems, developing organizational memory, integrating the learning into strategy and policy and applying the learning. The CSC is however, doing well in the gathering internal experience, accessing external learning and drawing conclusions. With an estimated standard deviation of 2 in most characteristics, there are relatively low variations within the total scores on each characteristic.

The staff has expressed dissatisfaction with the CSC's capability of embracing most of the learning organization characteristics. There is need for the CSC management to create a supportive culture, develop communication systems, develop organizational memory, and integrate learning into strategy and policy and apply the learning. The CSC needs to realign its strategies to be able to change at the pace of environmental change or well exceed the staff expectations.

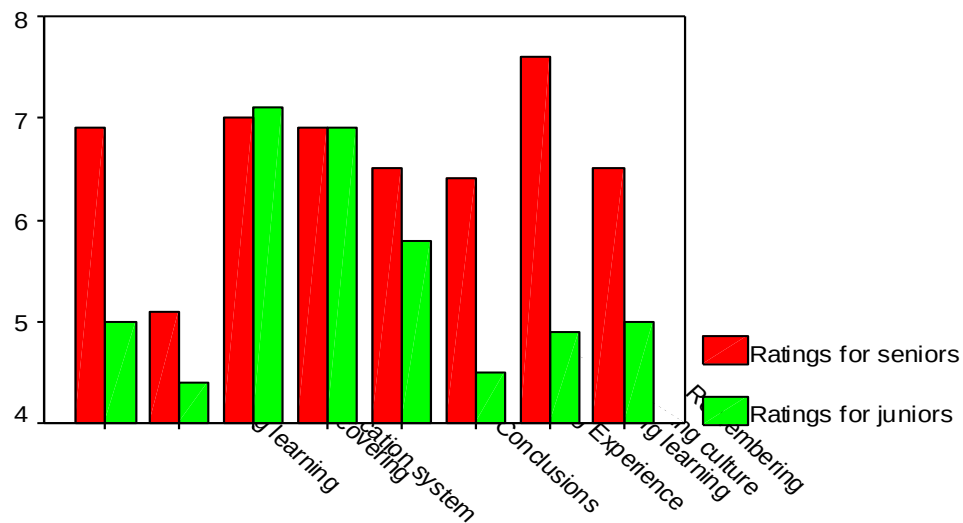
4.4 A Comparison of the Senior and Junior Employees Rating

A sample of senior staff and junior staff were asked separately to rate the extent to which the CSC is capable of embracing the learning organization characteristics. This process helped to identify if there is a wide disagreement or similarity between the ratings of senior and junior employees for a particular function and its significance. Summaries of total average scores from juniors and seniors on each characteristic are tabulated in Table 4.2. A bar chart on the two average ratings was also drawn as in Figure 4.1 below.

Table 4.2 Summary of Average Rating For Juniors and Seniors

Learning Organization Characteristics	<u>Juniors Rating</u>	<u>Seniors Rating</u>
Learning Culture	4.9	7.6
Gathering Internal Experience	5.8	6.5
Discovering	7.1	7.0
Communication Systems	4.4	5.1
Drawing Conclusions	6.9	6.9
Remembering	5.0	6.5
Integrating the Learning	4.5	6.4
Applying the learning	5.0	6.9

Average Ratings of Seniors and Juniors



Characteristics of the Learning Organisation

Figure 4.1

4.4.1 Discussion of Results

A comparison of the average ratings between seniors and juniors shows that there are wider differences in perception on four characteristics, namely: applying the learning, the learning culture, integrating the learning and remembering. The senior staff rated the learning culture, integrating the learning, applying the learning and remembering higher than the junior staff. The differences in perception may only be due to self-bias by senior employees.

The junior staff and senior staff have however rated drawing conclusions and discovering in almost the same way. Both juniors and seniors rated drawing conclusions and discovering above 6 out of the possible 12 (see 4.3.1). The agreement in rating shows that the CSC is doing well in drawing conclusions and discovering.

On the other hand, both juniors and seniors rated communication systems below half of 12(see 4.3.1). This is a cause for concern and provides a definite starting point for the organization's improvements. The employees expect the CSC to ensure the information flows freely in the organization, that there is easy access to information to the whole organization and that there is an encouragement on electronic information sharing/access.

All in all, there is a gap in junior employees and senior employees rating of the extent to which the CSC is capable of embracing the learning organization characteristics. The senior employees perceive the CSC as an organization, which is doing well in embracing most of these characteristics while the junior staff perceives it otherwise. This suggests that these characteristics may only be taken for granted by senior staff in the CSC, namely: the learning culture, communication systems, developing organizational memory, integrating the learning into strategy and policy and in applying the learning. There is need for improving all the characteristics of a learning organization that are perceived to be below the average of 6 by the junior staff in the CSC.

4.5 Individual Assessment on Specific Questions

The researcher examined not only the overall scores for each of the functions but also each individual's assessment of specific questions. The modified learning NGO Questionnaire provided eight characteristics that employees considered when evaluating the extent to which the CSC was a learning organization. Each characteristic has three dimensions the sum of which makes one characteristic. All employees were asked to rate the CSC on these dimensions. This was important as it provided reasons why the characteristics of a learning organization needed most attention or not. It also helped to identify the barriers to strengthening the learning capacity of the CSC and how to overcome them. Table 4.3, Appendix 7 below summarizes the results.

4.5.1 Creating a Supportive Culture

According to Table 4.3, Appendix 7, 33% of the respondents agreed that the members of staff are rewarded for the contribution they make to the organization and an additional 22% said they 'agree somewhat'. On the other hand, 45% responded that they disagree that the members of staff are rewarded for their contribution (9% strongly disagree and 36% disagreed). This means that the majority of staff members (55%) feel that the members of staff are rewarded for their contribution.

In addition, 35% of the respondents agreed that CSC management encouraged experimenting and allows mistakes and an additional 24% 'somewhat agree' that management encourages experimenting and allowing mistakes. On the other hand, 41% responded that they disagree to this characteristic (21% disagree, and 20% strongly disagree). This means that the majority of the members of staff (59%) feel that management encourages experimenting and allowing mistakes.

However, 58% of the respondents disagreed that the CSC encourages individual development, while 26% said they agree and 16% 'somewhat agree'. This means that the majority of the members of staff (58%) believe that the CSC does not encourage individual development.

According to the studies done by The Swedish Mission Council (2002) the learning culture is very important in that if organizational learning is to be a collective, organization-wide activity, it must become part of the organization's culture. The organization has to have an environment which enables, encourages, values, rewards and uses the learning of its members both individually and collectively. Creating a Supportive Culture legitimizes the process of learning. While this is the case from a conceptual framework perspective of what is expected from a learning organization, the results indicate that the CSC is good at embracing the espoused values of rewarding staff contribution and encouraging experimenting and allowing mistakes. But the individual development is not encouraged at the CSC. This, therefore, suggests that although the CSC is generally good at encouraging experimenting and allowing mistakes, and rewarding staff contribution, gaps do exist in creating supportive culture.

This implies there is a need for the CSC to draw a human resource development plan where resources and facilities for individual development will be made available to all members of the organization, for example, access to distance learning and self study materials; attendance at training events and conferences. In this way, the CSC would be able to encourage individual development.

4.5.2 Gathering Internal Experience

According to Table 4.3, Appendix 7, 34% of the respondents agreed that the CSC has systematic monitoring and evaluation and an additional 24% said they 'somewhat agree'. On the other hand, 42% responded that they disagree (4% strongly disagree, and 38% disagree). This shows that the majority of the members of staff (58%) feel that the CSC has systematic monitoring and evaluation systems.

On building spare capacity to allow members of staff to reflect on lessons learnt, 44% of the respondents agreed that the CSC has built in spare capacity and an additional 33% said they 'somewhat agree'. On the other hand, 23% responded that they disagree (5% strongly disagree, and 18% disagree), which implies that the majority of the members of staff (77%) feel that the CSC does build on the spare capacity to allow members of staff to reflect on lessons learnt.

In addition, 31% of the members of staff agreed that staff work as teams and meet each other's expectations and an additional 22% said they 'agree somewhat'. On the other hand, 47% responded that they disagree (15% strongly disagree, and 32% disagree). This means that the majority of the members of staff (53%) at the CSC feel that the CSC staff work as teams and meet each other's expectations.

From a conceptual framework perspective, the process of gathering internal experience and changing it into practical and accessible lessons learned is at the center of the learning organization. The results show that the majority of the staff feel that the CSC uses the systematic monitoring and evaluation systems, individual staff and departments are encouraged to view each other as working partners, constantly striving to find out and meet each other's expectations and needs and that members of staff feel there is built in 'spare capacity' to allow members of staff to reflect on lessons learned.

This implies that the CSC management needs to continue ensuring that all monitoring, reviews evaluation has an explicit learning function while ensuring that there is a regular review of the wider use made of monitoring, review and evaluation data. They need to continue building in spare capacity to allow time for individual and collective reflection. In addition the management need to ensure that the documents include specific actionable recommendations and use ICT to enable greater accessibility of 'grey literature' and develop an internal database of staff/partner expertise and that work proposals include a section on whom and what have been consulted during their preparation.

4.5.3 Accessing External Learning

According to Table 4.3, Appendix 7, 73% of the respondents agreed that the CSC has open cooperation with other organizations and an additional 16% said they 'agree somewhat'. On the other hand, 11% responded that they disagree (2% strongly disagree, and 9% disagree). This shows that the majority of the members of staff (89%) feel that the CSC has open cooperation with other organizations.

While 56% of the respondents disagreed that there is wide range of contacts at all staff level, 25% said that they 'somewhat agree' and an additional 19% responded that they agree (10% agree and 9% strongly agree). This shows that the majority of the staff

members (56%) feel that there is no wide range of contacts at all staff levels when making decisions.

In addition, 69% of the respondents agreed that the CSC has links with wide range of networks and an additional 18% said that they 'somewhat agree'. On the other hand, 13% disagreed that the CSC has links (4% strongly disagree, 9% disagree). This shows that the majority of staff members (87%) feel the CSC has wide range of networks.

Partnership work with other organizations is becoming more common and this approach opens up the boundaries of organizations to learn from one another. While this is the case from a conceptual framework perspective, the results show that the majority of members of staff believe that there is an open cooperation with other agencies at the CSC, and that CSC has links with wide range of networks. The members of staff however feel that there is not a wide range of contact by the CSC staff at all levels, in decision-making.

This implies that there is need for the management at the CSC to encourage its members of staff to develop a wide range of contacts with other agencies and to actively learn from their experience whilst ensuring that networking is seen as an important and legitimate activity and time should be allowed for networking.

4.5.4 Communication Systems

According to Table 4.3, Appendix 7, 28% of the respondent agreed that information flows freely in the organization, and an additional, 53% said they 'agree somewhat'. On the other hand 19% of respondents said they disagree (4% strongly disagree, and 15% disagree). The implication of these results is that the majority of the members of staff (81%) feel that information flows freely at the CSC.

On the other hand, 69% of the respondents disagreed that there is easy access to information in the whole organization, and 11% said they agree that there is easy access to information and an additional 20% said they 'somewhat agree'. This implies that the majority (69%) of the staff members feel that there is no easy access to information in the CSC.

According to the same Table and the Appendix, 63% of the respondents disagreed that the CSC encourages electronic information sharing/access. 12% of the respondents agreed that there is an encouragement of electronic information sharing and an additional 25% said they 'somewhat agree'. This means that the majority (63%) of the staff members feel electronic information sharing is not encouraged at the CSC.

With today's availability of information and communication technology, there is an increasing assumption that a learning organization simply requires the communication of information. The danger is that the illusion of 'more is better' encourages greater and greater emphasis on moving information and less on identifying and exchanging knowledge. Internal email networks that encourage the thoughts sharing of information are more likely to add to the organizations problems by overloading recipients than helping those individuals to find solutions. What is needed is a focus on quality and relevance of what is communicated rather than simply increasing its quantity and availability.

Looking at the studies conducted by INTRAC (2002), electronic media would encourage the thoughts sharing of information and then help employees to find solutions to their problems because knowledge would be identified and exchanged. In these days of Information and Communication Technology, knowledge sharing is very important, even though there is need to be very cautious of sharing knowledge rather than just information (Powell: 1999).

While this is the case from a conceptual framework perspective, the results indicate that access to information in whole organization is difficult. Electronic information sharing or access is not encouraged. The members of staff strongly feel they do not have access to email and the Internet is not used to share information nor the bulletin boards. However, the organization seems to be doing better in leaving the information to flow freely throughout the organization, crossing departmental or sectional boundaries. This therefore, suggest that much as information is left to flow freely within the organization, the gaps that exist on electronic information sharing or access and members of staff difficulty to access information in the whole organization, needs to be rectified.

4.5.5 Mechanisms for Drawing Conclusions

According to Table 4.3, Appendix 7, 22% of the respondents agree that Monitoring and Evaluation reports are routinely analyzed at the CSC, and additional 31% said that they ‘agree somewhat’. On the other hand, 47% responded that they disagree that monitoring and evaluation reports are routinely analyzed at the CSC (38% disagree and 9% strongly disagree). This means that the majority (53%) of the respondents believe that monitoring and evaluation reports are routinely analyzed.

In addition to the above, 66% of the respondents agree that there is regular analysis around identified theme of work at the CSC, and an additional 25% said they ‘somewhat agree’. On the other hand, 9% responded that they disagree (2% strongly disagree and 7% disagree). This shows that the majority of respondents (91%) believed that the CSC has a regular analysis around an identified theme of work.

According to the same Table and the Appendix, 64% responded that they agree that the CSC encourages continuous improvement and an additional 27% said they ‘somewhat agree’. On the other hand, 9% said they disagree (2% strongly disagree and 7% disagree). This implies that the majority of the members of staff (91%) believe that the CSC encourages continuous improvement.

From a conceptual framework perspective, a mechanism for drawing conclusions is described as the process, which converts information to knowledge, through a process of knowledge creation. The results show that the CSC uses a continuous improvement approach when analyzing the knowledge and experience gained from its practice. It also regularly focuses on a theme of its work and draws conclusions based on an analysis of all its practical experience and understanding of the current ‘state of the art’. The CSC also routinely analyses its monitoring and evaluation reports that are produced, to identify what has been learned from the work and what lessons could be applied in the future.

The implication for this is that there is a need for the CSC management to continue using the organization’s monitoring and evaluation systems as a source of knowledge and not just as a means of ensuring accountability while ensuring that all monitoring and evaluation reports address lessons learned and ways in which these can be applied.

4.5.6 Applying the Learning

According to Table 4.3, Appendix 7, 31% of the respondents agreed that there is systematic use of learning in practice and advocacy at the CSC, and an additional 29% said they ‘somewhat agree’. On the other hand 40% responded that they disagree (31% disagree, 9% strongly disagree). This shows that the majority of the members of staff (60%) believe that the CSC has systematic use of learning.

In addition to the above, 24% of the respondents agreed that the change at the CSC is done according to new knowledge and insights, and an additional 16% said they ‘somewhat agree’. On the other hand, 60% said that they disagree (16% strongly disagree and 44% disagree) which shows that the majority of the staff members (60%) believe that the CSC does not change according to new knowledge and insights.

Furthermore, 25% of the respondents agreed that the CSC builds capacity and innovation based on learning, and an additional 35% said that they ‘agree somewhat’. On the other hand, 40% responded that they disagree (2% strongly disagree, and 38% disagree), which shows that the majority of respondents (60%) believe that the CSC is able to build capacity and innovation based on learning.

Applying the Learning is a very important feature of a learning organization as shown in the discussion of results section. The ultimate test of a learning organization is the ability to apply what has been learned. Only when learning is applied in the work setting can one say that a continuous learning cycle has been created.

A recent study by Carlson and Lennart (undated, p8) of learning in ‘Development Co-operation’ points out ‘if the purpose of learning is improving the effectiveness of aid, then learning becomes an issue which cannot be confirmed to one party only. Effective learning does require that both parties learn and that they have an opportunity to share their experiences and jointly work out an agenda for action’. This has important implications for understanding and developing the learning capacities of all ‘partners’ in a development enterprise. While this is the case from a conceptual approach perspective, the results from the survey show that the majority of the members of staff feel the CSC does apply learning, except where change is not done according to new insights and knowledge.

This implies that there is need for the CSC management to change its practice and priorities to reflect new knowledge and insights in its efforts to constantly improve its effectiveness, while not holding on to outdated work practices and priorities simply because change is ‘uncomfortable’.

4.5.7 Integrating the Learning

According to Table 4.3, Appendix 7, 22% of the respondents agreed that policy making involves staff members at all levels of the organization, and an additional 15% said they ‘somewhat agree’. On the other hand, 63% responded that they disagree (36% strongly disagree, 27% disagree). This shows that the majority of respondents (63%) believe that the CSC does not involve staff of all levels in policy making.

In addition, 42% of the respondents agreed that the CSC has operating systems which assist learning, and additional 45% said that they ‘somewhat agree’. On the other hand, 13% responded that they disagree (4% strongly disagree and 9% disagree). This shows that the majority of respondents (87%) believe that the operating systems at the CSC assist learning.

Further, 17% of the respondents agreed that learning is made available through out the organization in the CSC, and an additional 20% said they ‘somewhat agree’. On the other hand, 63% responded that they disagree (43% disagree and 20% strongly disagree). This shows that the majority of the respondents (63%) believe that learning is not made available throughout the organization in the CSC.

Just as the Swedish Mission Council (2002) has shown, in their study, Integrating the Learning is a very important issue in the organization because it provides a framework for decision making and resource allocation, which is grounded in the organization’s own experience and what it has learned from other agencies. One way of building lessons into an organization is to develop strategies and policies which embody the lessons it has learned. Integrating learning into organizational strategy is more challenging but potentially rewarding. This happened at People in Aid (1997), a group of UK-based development organizations, pooled their experience to develop ‘The people in Aid Code

of Best Practice' which benchmarks exemplary practice in the management and support of aid staff.

While this is the case from a conceptual framework perspective, the results show that lessons learned are not built into the organization by producing strategies and policies, which embody the lessons it has learned. The majority of the staff members feel that policy making in the organization does not involve them at all level and also feel that learning is not made available throughout the organization. However, the members of staff feel the operating systems assist the learning at the CSC.

This implies that there is need for the CSC management to involve the staff members at all levels of policy making in the organization, according to what the members of staff can contribute to the process and not simply their status while also ensuring that learning gained by one part of the organization is quickly made available to others even if it may appear to be of little immediate relevance.

4.5.8 Developing Organizational Memory

According to Table 4.3, Appendix 7, 30% of the respondents agreed that there are a range of mechanisms for remembering at the CSC, and an additional 25% said they 'somewhat agree'. On the other hand, 45% responded that they disagree (30% disagree, 15% strongly disagree). This shows that the majority of the respondents (55%) believe that the CSC had a range of mechanisms for remembering.

In addition to the above, 12% of the employees responded that they agree that the CSC uses systematic de-briefing when staff leave the organization, and an additional 11% said they 'somewhat agree'. On the other hand, 77% of employees responded that they disagree (24% strongly disagree, 53% disagree). This shows that the majority of employees (77%) believe that there is no systematic de-briefing of leaving staff.

Finally, 38% of the respondents agreed that there is systematic database of projects to identify expertise at the CSC, and an additional 29% said they 'somewhat agree'. On the other hand, 33% responded that they disagree that there is systematic database of projects to identify expertise (22% disagree, 11% strongly disagree). This shows that the majority

(67%) of the employees believe that there is systematic database of projects to identify expertise at the CSC.

According to studies done by The Swedish Mission Council (2002), remembering is a crucial element of organization learning. If learning is locked inside the heads of individuals, the organization becomes vulnerable to losing its experience if those individuals leave the organization.

A learning organization needs mechanisms which enable an individual's memory to be 'down loaded' into knowledge management system so that everyone can continue to access that person's knowledge long after the individual may have moved on from that organization. While this is the case from a conceptual framework perspective, the results of the survey show that the majority of staff members at the CSC feel the organization has a range of mechanisms for remembering, such as database and information center. They also feel that there is a systematic database of projects to identify expertise. However, the members of staff feel there is no systematic debriefing of leaving staff.

This implies that there is need for the CSC Management to put in place mechanisms for remembering the experience of its current and previous work to ensure that the organization is not vulnerable to losing its experience when individuals leave. For example, they may ensure that staff members that leave the organization go through a systematically recorded de-briefing to ensure that the organization retains as much as possible of their knowledge and contacts.

4.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented and discussed results or findings from the study. The perceptions, opinions, beliefs or attitudes of staff relating to the ability of the CSC to embrace the learning organization characteristics have been outlined. The findings have revealed that the CSC has scored less than 6 out of the possible 12 in 5 of the 8 characteristics of the learning organization namely; creating the supportive culture, developing communication systems, developing organizational memory, integrating learning and applying learning. The senior staff rating was slightly higher than that of the juniors probably due to senior's self-bias.

The findings have revealed that the CSC staff members perceive that the CSC does not fully satisfy the characteristics of a learning organization. The above five characteristics are not satisfied because the majority of staff believed that:

- ❑ The CSC did not encourage individual development,
- ❑ There was no wide range of contacts at all staff levels when making decisions,
- ❑ There was no easy access to information in the CSC,
- ❑ Electronic information sharing was not encouraged at the CSC,
- ❑ The CSC did not change according to new knowledge and insights,
- ❑ The CSC did not involve staff at all levels of policy making,
- ❑ Learning was not made available throughout the organization in the CSC,
- ❑ There was no systematic de-briefing of leaving staff.

However, the majority of staff members believed that:

- ❑ The CSC members of staff were rewarded for their contribution,
- ❑ Management encouraged experimenting and allowed mistakes,
- ❑ The CSC had systematic monitoring and evaluation systems,
- ❑ The CSC had built on spare capacity to allow staff to reflect on lessons learnt,
- ❑ The CSC staff worked as teams and met each other's expectations,
- ❑ The CSC had open cooperation with other organizations,
- ❑ The CSC had a wide range of networks,
- ❑ Information flowed freely at the CSC,
- ❑ Monitoring and evaluation reports were routinely analyzed at the CSC,
- ❑ The CSC had regular analysis around an identified theme of work,

- ❑ The CSC encouraged continuous improvement,
- ❑ The CSC had systematic use of learning,
- ❑ The CSC also was able to build capacity and innovation based on learning,
- ❑ The operating systems assisted the learning,
- ❑ The CSC had a range of mechanisms for remembering,
- ❑ There was systematic database of projects to identify expertise at the CSC.

The next chapter outlines recommendations that have been derived from literature and survey findings to provide a basis on which the CSC can formulate or develop effective strategies in order to be able to change at the pace of change of the environment, and thereby guaranteeing success.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Introduction

An assessment of the Christian Service Committee in light of a learning organization model has revealed that the CSC as an organization does not fully satisfy the characteristics of a learning organization. The data collected from randomly selected employees has shown a need for more attention in most characteristics if the CSC were to operate as a learning organization. The importance of learning organization has been shown in chapter two. The following conclusions have been drawn based on the survey and recommendations formulated in order to lay out a practical path for the CSC to improve its capability to become a learning organization. This chapter presents conclusions drawn from the results and a list of recommendations, followed by suggestions for further areas of research.

5.2 Conclusions

Conclusions have been drawn from four key areas:

- a) Characteristics of a learning organization in which the CSC is strong,
- b) Characteristics of a learning organization in which the CSC is weak,
- c) The reasons why the CSC is rated as being weak in certain characteristics,
- d) The reasons for the CSC not scoring high in the strong characteristics of a learning organization.

5.2.1 Staff Perceived CSC as Having Strong Characteristics of a Learning Organization in the following areas:

- Accessing external learning
- Gathering internal experience

- Drawing conclusions

According to the conceptual framework and model of a learning organization on page 19 which the study is based, the above three are features of such organizations. The CSC is rated high in these three characteristics (with scores of 50%, 58% and 58% respectively; Table 4.1, Page 48) and it thus meets the characteristics of a learning organization in each of them.

5.2.2 Staff Perceived CSC as Having Weak Characteristics of a Learning Organization in the following areas:

- creating the supportive culture,
- developing the communication systems,
- developing the organizational memory,
- integrating learning into strategy and policy and
- applying the learning.

5.2.3 Reasons for Rating the CSC Weak in Certain Characteristics

As presented in the discussion of results section, Table 4.1, page 48, the score for each of the above was less than 50% which according to the interpretation in chapter 3 do not allow the CSC to satisfy the requirement for a learning organization in those characteristics.

In terms of Creating Supportive Culture, most respondents (58%) (page 53, paragraph 4) felt that the CSC is not providing the necessary support and encouragement for training, and rarely gives feedback to employees on their level of performance and seldom utilizes their opportunities for attending courses and conferences.

As regards to the Communications Systems, the majority of staff members (63%) (Page 57, paragraph 2) felt that the current system does not have adequate provision for the use of electronic media that would allow employees to access information and communicate with

each other. Based on the survey findings and discussion section, 69% (Page 57, paragraph 1) of staff felt that it is not easy to access information on the lessons learned from other parts of the organization. The communication department is not adequately resourced to enable the organization to keep its information system and record keeping up to date.

When it comes to another important feature of a learning organization, which is Applying the Learning, the survey findings have shown that the majority of staff members (60%) (Page 59, paragraph 4) felt that the CSC is finding it difficult to change its practice and priorities to reflect new knowledge and insights in its efforts to constantly improve its effectiveness. The organization holds on an outdated work practices and priorities probably because change is uncomfortable.

Most changes at the CSC are made after the board approves of them. Following the CSC Constitution, the board is supposed to meet four times a year. However, the board rarely meets to approve new issues. Usually the board would only meet once or twice a year. All this happens, because of the cash flow problems. This, in turn affects the culture because change takes a long time to be implemented.

In Integrating the Learning, which is another important characteristic of a learning organization discussed in chapter four, the majority of staff members (63%)(Page 60, paragraph 3) believed that in the current system, policy making does not involve staff at all levels in the organization according to what they can contribute to the process but rather their status. According to the same discussion section, (Page 61, paragraph 1), members of staff also felt that learning gained by one part of the organization is not made available to others even if it may be of value. This is because technical meetings, which are supposed to be used to share most of the learning points in different departments, are rarely done.

As regards Developing Organizational Memory, which is one of the eight key characteristics of the learning organization discussed in the survey findings and discussion chapter, 77% (Page 62, paragraph 2) of staff members felt that the organization does not have a range of mechanisms for ‘remembering’ the experience of its current and previous work. It is very

important for a learning organization to have mechanisms which enable individual memory to be ‘downloaded’ into knowledge management system so that everyone can contribute to access that person’s knowledge long after the individual may have moved from that organization.

5.2.4 Staff Perceived That Some of the Characteristics of the Learning Organization Were There at the CSC But Not As Strong for the Following Reason:

Based on the discussion section, the CSC has been rated 6 and above, (Page 42, paragraph 1) in three most important characteristics of a learning organization, i.e. accessing external learning, drawing conclusions, and gathering internal experience. However, the majority of staff members (56%) (Page 56, paragraph 1) felt that there is no wide range of contacts at all staff levels when making decisions. CSC does not encourage its staff to develop a wide range of contacts with other agencies and to actively learn from their experience. It seems networking is not seen as important and legitimate activity and thus time is not allowed for it.

5.3 Recommendations

For the CSC to become a learning organization, and hence enhance its performance, the following recommendations are suggested:

1) The CSC must demonstrate that it has become genuinely committed to learning at all levels, by raising the profile of learning through addressing each of the eight key functions above. The most important of these is to create an organizational culture which legitimizes the process of learning by resourcing it adequately and rewarding (in all sorts of ways) those who contribute to active use of the organization’s bank of explicit wisdom. Management should conduct awareness sessions so that employees know and use the opportunities that exist for learning.

2) Since building learning into each individual’s job design and job description gives added legitimacy to activity and also provide an important reminder to managers about the staffing

levels necessary for ensuring a learning approach to development, the CSC should encourage learning by building it in to job descriptions, by allocating time and other resources for it and by talking about it at team meetings, individual's supervisions and work review meetings and through staff appraisal schemes. There is also need for timely feedback; otherwise according to general comments from staff during the interviews, the performance appraisals are not enough to get the feedback.

3) Leaders and managers have a critical part to play in developing a learning approach to CSC's work. The CSC leaders and managers must legitimize learning in the organization in whatever way they can. Leaders who provide a vision open a window to a larger, meaningful world that people may not see for themselves. Without such a leader, the yearning spirit of the employee will wither, (Daft & Lengel, 2000). The aim of the managers should be to exemplify the 'reflective practitioner's approach' in all that they do. This means practicing what they preach by opening up their own work to scrutiny as well as encouraging others to do so. Also the managers/leaders must be prepared to address the resource issues, which may well, arise from assessing learning capacity at both individuals and organizational levels. Because learning is fundamental to the development process, one of the priorities for CSC must therefore be to educate its donors and supporters about the nature of the development process itself.

4) The CSC management should encourage staff to build links with other NGOs. They should use these links to seek out and learn from (benchmarking) examples of 'best practice' in the activities and functions upon which the CSC wishes to build its reputation. Employees need to be encouraged to network with other agencies or departments. Lack of networking between agencies leads to little information sharing and no access to external learning.

5) A deliberate effort should be done to ensure systems and procedures are put in place to encourage information sharing between departments, for example, technical meetings. The technical meeting should be a forum where different departments access information on the lessons learned by other parts of the organization. As a result, the development of strategy would be deliberately organized as a learning process. Feedback loops would be incorporated

to enable continuous improvement in the light of the exchange of what strategies are followed and which are abandoned. Keeping overheads down (which is common excuse in NGOs) should not be a common scapegoat for low prioritisation and meager investment in learning.

6) The policymaking should involve people at most levels in the organization, according to what they can contribute to the process and not simply their status. Thus, policy formulation should not be at management level only.

7) The information spot and Tiyeni Titchere Khutu news letters that the office of the Executive Director produces, to relay lessons learned from other parts of the organization, should include challenges met, impact of the problems, lessons drawn by the concerned departments, highlights of the activities done, or to be done by a department, and possible solutions applied for other departments to apply similar strategies should they face similar problems. The newsletters should be produced on consistent basis.

8) The CSC needs to install a website for electronic information sharing/gathering to improve resource mobilization. The information function should be adequately resourced to enable the organization to keep its information system and record-keeping up to date.

9) Since very few staff has access to communication media due to shortage and restriction to use of available computers, there is need to set up one or more computer in one room which can be used as a common room which can be on-line for every staff to access information and e-mails. The CSC management should be innovative enough to ensure they adopt new systems and technological change quickly.

10) The CSC communication policy needs to be redrafted or revisited to meet current Information and Communication Technology. Otherwise, communication technology will not be considered a priority issue in CSC.

11) The CSC should ensure that it is not vulnerable when staff leaves. For instance, staff that leaves the organization (even those who are dismissed) should go through a systematically

recorded de-briefing to ensure that CSC retains its knowledge. This would make the organization not vulnerable to losing its experience when they leave.

12) The CSC management should endeavor to call for board meetings at least four times a year as recommended in the constitution. One reason why change takes too long to be implemented is because the board approves policy changes. The members of staff feel the board is quite conservative and due to financial problems, it rarely meets to approve change issues.

5.4 Ideas for Future Research

In the aid business, doing well is not enough. Setting an example is not good enough in itself either, if the example does not translate into more widespread improvement. 'If aid agencies feel their operational work is good and offers lessons worth emulating, they must ensure that others learn from and build on those lessons. All agencies then, must be learning organizations, not just organizations that learn well, but agencies that successfully disseminate those lessons and promote uptake of good practice' (Thin, 1997). This will ensure their success in the industry.

Research is the search for new knowledge. As such, further research into other NGOs with the same objectives on its capability to embrace the learning organization characteristics is necessary for comparisons purposes. This would also provide ideas that would assist management to improve the capacity to become a learning organization and to sustain the business. Feedback from these NGOs would suggest the ideas contained in the tools that would spark off a great deal of valuable discussion and reflection and sometimes lead in directions, which would be quite unanticipated.

REFERENCE

- Ackoff, R.L. (1989) *From Data to Wisdom*. Journal of Applied Systems Analysis, Volume 16, 1989 p3-9.
- Aiken, M., & B. Britton (1997) The Learning Voluntary Organization: in Cook, J., D. Staniforth, & J. Stewart (eds.) *The Learning Organization in the public services*, Gower: Aldershot.
- Argyris, C., & D. Schon (1978) *Organizational Learning; a theory in action perspective*, Boston: Addison-Wesley.
- Agyris, C. (1993) *Knowledge for Action: Guide to Overcoming Barriers to Organizational change*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Argyris, C., & D. Schon (1986) *Single and double –loop learning, in Organizational Learning II*, Reading, CA: Addison- Wesley.
- Bateson, G. (1972) *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. San Francisco: Chandler.
- Binney, G., & C. Williams (1999) *Learning into the Future: Changing the way People Change Organizations*. London: Nicholas Brealey.
- Bloch, D., & N. Borges (2002) Organizational learning in NGOs: an example of an intervention based on the work of Chris Argyris, *Development in Practice*, 12(3&4): 258-271.
- Britton, B. (1998) The International NGO Training and Research Centre (INTRAC): Occasional Papers Series, *The Learning NGO*, Volume 17, pp13-32.
- Brown, L.D., & J. Fox (1998) *The Struggle for Accountability: The World Bank NGOs and Grassroots Movements*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Carlsson, J., & L. Wohlgemuth (Eds.) (undated). *Learning in Development Cooperation*, SIDA, Retrieved on 26 May, 2007. http://www.egdi.gov.se/pdf/20002pdf/2000_2.pdf

Chambers, R., & J. Pettit (2004) Shifting power: to make a difference: In Groves, L., Hinton, R. (eds.) *Inclusive Aid: Changing Power and Relationships in International Development*. London: Earthscan.

Cohen, D., V. Rosadela, & W. Gabrielle (2001) *Advocacy for Social Justice: a global action and reflection guide*, Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press.

Cornwall, A. (2001) *Beneficiary, consumer, citizen; Perspectives on participation for poverty reduction*, Sida studies No 2, Stockholm: SIDA.

Cornwall, A., G. Pratt & P. Scott Villiers (2004) *Participatory learning groups in an aid bureaucracy*. Lessons for change in policy and Organizations No. 11. Brighton: Institute of Development Studies.

Cummings, T.G., & C. G. Worley (1997) *Organization Development and Change* (6th ed.) UK: South Western College Publishing.

Daft, R.L., & R.L. Lengel (2000) 2nd Edition, *Fusion Leadership: Unlocking the subtle forces that change people and organizations experience*, Sanfrancisco, California: Berret-Koechler Publishers.

DanChurchAid (2000) Evaluation of the CSC Programmes, Final Report, Unpublished.

David, R., & A. Mancini (2004) *Going Against the flow: making organizational Systems part of the solution rather than part of the problem*. Lessons for Change in Policy and organizations No.7. Brighton: Institute of Development Studies.

David Skyrme Associates. (2003) *Insights, No 3*, Retrieved on 26, May 2005, from <http://www.Skyrme.com/insights/3morg.htm>.

Debede, G. (2002) Guest learning and adaptation in the field: a Navajo Case study, *Development in Practice*, 12(3&4), 258-271.

Deusterberg, T. (2001) *Riding the Next Wave: Why this Century will Be a Golden Age for Workers, the Environment and Developing countries*, Indianapolis, Indiana: Hudson Institute.

Dewey, J. (1933) *How we think: A restatement of the relation of reflective thinking to the educative process*, Chicago: D.C Health.

Earl, S., & F. Carden (2002) Learning from complexity: The International Development Research Centre's experience with Outcome Mapping, *Development in Practice* 12(3&4), 258-271.

Easterby-Smith, M. (1997) Disciplines of Organizational Learning: contributions and critiques: *Human relations* 50(9) 1085-2013.

Edwards, M. (1997) *Organizational Learning in Non Governmental Organizations: What have we learned?* Washington DC: World Bank.

Edwards, M. (1997) *Organizational learning in non-governmental organization: what have we learned?*, Public Administration and Development, Vol.17, 235-250.

Edwards, M., & D. Hulme (1996) *Beyond the Magic Bullet: NGO Performance and Accountability in the Post-Cold War World*, West Hartford, CT: Kumarian Press.

Elkington, J. (1997) *Carnibals with Forks: The Triple Bottom Line of 21st Century Business*, Oxford: Capstone.

Ellerman, D. (1999) Global institutions: transforming international development agencies into learning organizations, *Academy of Management Executives* 13(1): 25-35.

Ellerman, D. (2002) *Should development agencies have official views?* Oxfam GB, Carfax Publishing.

Estrella, M., J. Blauert, D. Campilan, G. John, G. Julian, G. Irene, J. Deb, & R. Roger (2000) *Learning from Change: Issues and Experiences in Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation*, London: IT Publications.

Eyben, R. (2003) *Donors as Political Actors: Fighting the Thirty Years War in Bolivia*. IDS Working Paper 183, Brighton: Institute of Development Studies.

Finger, M., & S.B. Brands (1999) The Concept of the learning organization: applied to the transformation of the public sector: in M. Easterby Smith, L. Arujo and J Burgoyne (Eds.) *Organizational learning and the learning organization*, London: Sage.

Flood, R.L.(1999) *Rethinking the Fifth Discipline: Learning Within the Unknowable*. London: Routledge.

Fowler, A. (1997) An NGDO Strategy: *Learning for Leverage*, Oxford.

Freire, P. (1970) *Pedagogy of the oppressed*, New York: Continuum.

Garvin, D. A. (1993) Building a learning organization: *Harvard Business Review*, July – August 1993, pp78-91.

Geene, J. (2005, September) Organizational Learning: *Sustainable Livelihoods*, pp 16-17.

Goleman, D. (1998) Emotional Intelligence, Issues in Paradigm Building: In Cherniss C., and Goleman, D (Eds.). *The emotionally Intelligent Workplace: How to Select For, Measure and*

Improve Emotional intelligence in Individuals, Groups, and Organizations, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Hailey, J., & R. James (2002) Learning leaders: the key to learning organizations, *Development Practice*, 12(3&4), 258-271.

Hillhorst, D., & N. Schmiemann (2002) Humanitarian Principles and Organizational culture: everyday practice in Medecins Sans frontiers- Holland, *Development in Practice* 12(3&4) 258-271.

Hinton, R., & L. Groves (2004) The Complexity of Inclusive Aid: In Groves, L and Hinton, R (eds.) *Inclusive Aid: Changing Power and Relationships in International Development*. London: Earthscan.

Hobley, M., & D. Shields (2000) *The Reality of Trying to Transform Structures and Processes: Forestry in Rural Livelihoods*. ODI Working Paper No 132. London: ODI.

International NGO Training and Research Centre (INTRAC): Occasional Papers Series, *The Learning NGO*, Volume 17, pp13-32.

Kamanga, G., Nankhuni, F., Nkhandwe, S., & L. Katundu (1995). *Evaluation of CSC Projects and Programmes*, Final Report, Blantyre.

Kelleher, D., K. McLaren, & R. Bisson (1996) *Grabbing the Tiger by the Tail: NGOs Learning for Organizational Change*, Ottawa: CCIC.

Kelleher, D., & the Gender at Work Collaborative (2002) *Organizational learning: a borrowed toolbox?* Oxfam GB, Carfax Publishing.

Kolb, D. (1984) *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Englewood Cliffs: Printice-Hall.

Korten, D., & R. Klauss (1984) *People Centred Development*, Connecticut: Kumarian Press.

Larbi-Jones, E. (2004) *Working for pro-poor change in Brazil: Influencing Partnerships*. Lessons for Change in Policy and Organizations No 10. Brighton: Institute of Development Studies.

Lawson, M. (2000) *The current Context of the Malawian NGO Sector*. A Report prepared to inform the strategic assessment of CABUNGO, Unpublished.

Maholtra, Y. (1996) *Organizational Learning and Learning Organizations: An Overview*. Retrieved, 26 May 2006 from <http://www.brint.com/papers/orglmg.htm>.

Marshall, J. (2001) *Self-reflective Inquiry Process*. In P. Reason And H Badbury (eds) *Handbook of Action Research: Participative Enquiry and Practice*. London: Sage.

Mebrahtu, E. (2002) Perceptions and Practices of monitoring and evaluation: international NGO experiences in Ethiopia, *Development in Practice* 12(3&4): 258-271.

Merron, K. (1997) *Riding the Wave: Designing Your Organization's Architecture for Enduring Success*, New York: John Wiley and Sons.

Mhango, A. (1998, June) *Fund-Raising*. Paper presented at the Development centre Workshop on NGOs, Blantyre Sports Club.

Morgan, G. (1986) *Images of Organization*: Nonaka, B., Takeuchi, I and H (1995): *The Knowledge Creating company*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Musyoki, S. (2002) Can Bilateral Programmes become learning organizations? Experiences from institutionalizing participation in Keiyo Marakwet in Kenya, *Development in Practice* 12(3&4): 258-271.

Olson, E., & G. Euyang (2001) *Facilitating Organizational Change: Lessons from Complexity Science*. San Francisco: *Practicing Organizational Development Series*: Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer.

Padaki, V. (2002) Making the Organization learn: demystification and management action, *Development in Practice* 12(3&4): 258-279.

Padaki, V. (2000b) Organizational development revisited, *Management Review* 12(2):45-46.

Pasteur, K., & P. Scott- Villiers (2004) *If relationships matter, how can they be improved? Learning about relationships in development*. Lessons for Change in Policy and Organizations No. 9. Brighton: Institute of Development Studies.

Pedler, M., J. Burgoyne & T. Boydell (1991) *The Learning Company*, London: McGraw Hill.

Pedler, M. (1994) *A Learning Company Guide to Action Learning*, Learning company Project.

People in Aid (1997) *The People in Aid Code of Best in the Management and Support of Aid Personnel*, London: Overseas Development Institute.

Powell, M. (1999) *Information Management for Development Organizations*, Oxford: Oxfam GB.

Power, G., M. Maury, & S. Maury (2002) Operationalizing bottom-up learning in international NGOs: barriers and alternatives, *Development in Practice* 12(3&4): 258-271.

Roche, C. (1999) *Impact Assessment and Advocacy in Impact Assessment for Development Agencies: Learning to value Change*, Oxford: Oxfam.

Robbins, S. P. (2001) *Organizational Behavior*, London: Prentice Hall.

Roper, L., & J. Pettit (2002) *Development and the Learning Organization: an introduction*, Boston: Oxfam.

Saunders, M., P. Lewis, & A. Thornhill (2000) *Research methods for Business Students*. England: Harlow.

Schein, E. (1992) *Organizational Culture and Leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey- Bass.

Scot-Villiers, P. (2002) The Struggle for organizational change: how the Action Aid Accountability, Learning and Planning Systems emerged, *Development in Practice* 12(3&4): 258-271.

Senge, P. (1990) *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*, New York: Currency Doubleday.

Senge, P., C. Roberts, R. Ross, B. Smith, & A. Kleiner (1994) *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook: Strategies and Tools for Building a Learning Organization*. London: Nicholas Brealey.

Slim, H. (1993) *Institutional Learning Review and Future Priorities*, Unpublished SCF-UK paper.

Smillie, I., & J. Hailey (2001) *Managing for Change: Leadership Strategy and Management in South Asian NGOs*, London: Earthscan Publications.

Smith, M.K. (2001a) *Chris Argyris: theories of action, double-loop learning and organizational learning*: the encyclopedia of informal education.

Swedish Mission Council (2002) *Directions for SMC's work with Organizational development and Capacity Building*, Sundbyberg: SMC.

Thin, N. (1997) *Learning through the Joint Funding scheme: The Taxing Issue of Adding Value in DFID/BOND Supplement to DFID/BOND JFS Workshop on lesson Learning*, London: DFID/BOND.

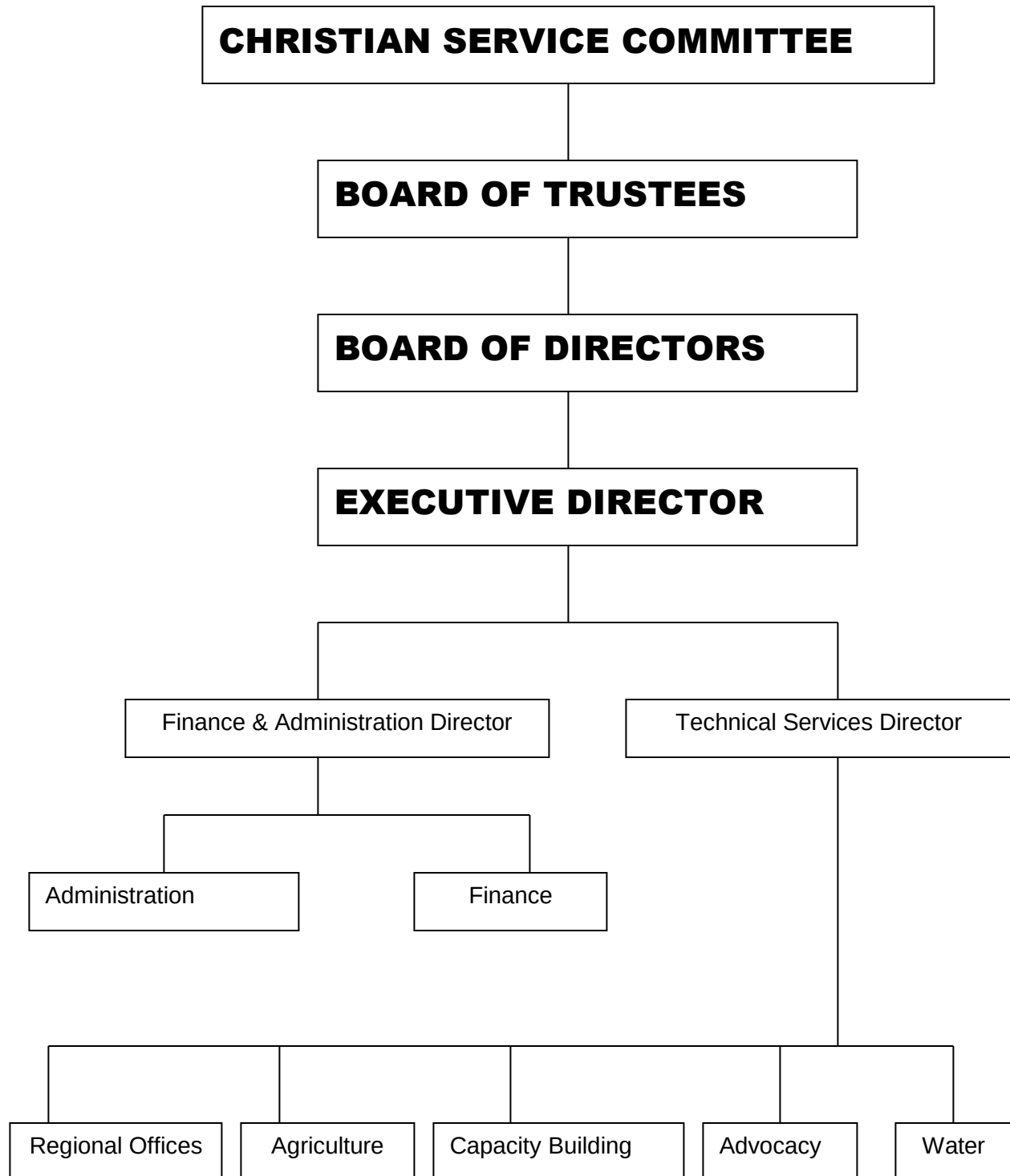
Twigg, J., & D. Steiner (2002) Mainstreaming disaster mitigation: challenges to organizational learning in NGOs, *Development in Practice* 12(3&4): 258-271.

Veneklasen, L., & V. Miller (2002) *A New Weave of People, Power and Politics: The Action Guide for Advocacy and Citizen Participation*, Oklahoma City: World Neighbors.

Wallace, M. (2002) The learning process of the local Capacities for peace project, *Development in Practice* 12(3&4): 258-271.

Wycoff, J. (1995) *Transformation thinking: Tools and techniques that open the door to powerful new thinking for every member of your organization*, London: Berkeley Publishing Group.

APPENDIX 1



APPENDIX 2

The Learning NGO Questionnaire

Please indicate the following:

The 'organization' under consideration in this questionnaire is:

Read through each of the following statements and place a tick in the box which best describes your view.

Characteristic	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Staff are rewarded for the contribution they make to the organization's learning e.g. through positive feedback, time off for study, employee recognition.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					
2. The organization uses systematic procedures for the regular monitoring, review and evaluation of all of its project, programme and advocacy activity.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					

Characteristic	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
3. Information flows freely throughout the organization, crossing departmental, sectional and locational boundaries without hindrance. I.e. people do not hold on to information which would be useful to others.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					
4. The organization has mechanisms for 'remembering' the experience of its current and previous work through the development of readily accessible databases, resource / information banks and information retrieval systems.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					

Characteristic	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
5. The organization systematically uses its learning to improve its own practice (quality improvement) and / or to influence the policy and practice of other organizations (advocacy).	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					
6. Policy making involves people at most levels in the organization, according to what they can contribute to the process and not simply their status.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					

Characteristic	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
7. Monitoring and evaluation reports (and field visit reports where appropriate) are routinely analyzed to identify what has been learned from the work and what lessons could be applied in the future.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					
8. The organization enters into open co-operative relationships with other organizations in order to share and encourage mutual learning from each other's experience.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					

Characteristic	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
9. The organization has enough built in capacity to encourage staff to take periods of time out from their daily operational responsibilities in order to reflect on their work experience and learn lessons from it.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					
10. Managers at all levels create a climate which encourages experimentation and acknowledges that mistakes are an inevitable part of this e.g. managers admit their own mistakes; blaming is minimized so that people can openly and honestly discuss the issues.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					

Characteristic	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
11. The organization encourages its staff to develop a wide range of contacts with other agencies and to actively learn from their experience. Networking is seen as an important and legitimate activity and time is allowed for this.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					
12. It is easy to access information on the lessons learned from other parts of the organization.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					
13. The organization is not vulnerable to losing its experience when individuals leave. For example, staff who leave the organization go through a systematically recorded de-briefing to ensure that the organization retains as much as possible of their knowledge and contacts.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					

Characteristic	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
14. The organization is prepared to change its practice and priorities to reflect new knowledge and insights in its efforts to constantly improve its effectiveness ie the organization does not hold on to outdated work practices and priorities simply because change is 'uncomfortable'.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					
15. Learning is built into the organization through the development and updating of systems, operational procedures and other ways of sharing the lessons gained from individuals' experience.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					

Characteristic	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
16. The organization has a systematic database (not necessarily electronic) of all its main areas of work activity, which can enable staff and 'outsiders' to identify where expertise resides.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					
17. The organization regularly focuses on a theme of its work and draws conclusions based on an analysis of all of its practice experience and an understanding of the current 'state of the art'.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					
18. Staff have access to a wide range of communication media (including email) and are encouraged to share information using media (including electronic media such as the internet and bulletin boards).	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					

Characteristic	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
19. Individuals, groups and sections view each other as working partners and constantly strive to find out and meet each others' expectations and needs.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					
20. Resources and facilities for individual development are made available to all members of the organization. eg systems for coaching and mentoring; guidance through management supervision or staff development specialists; access to distance learning and self-study materials; attendance at training events and conferences.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					

Characteristic	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
21. The organization is linked to a wide range of networks and uses its contacts with other agencies to gather useful knowledge and skills and to benchmark (i.e. the art of comparing an organization's performance with the best practices of other organizations in key areas of activity) itself against best practice.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					
22. The organization uses a continuous improvement approach when analyzing the knowledge and experience gained from its practice. Staff are encouraged to constantly ask themselves "How could we do this better?"	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					

Characteristic	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
23. The learning gained by one part of the organization is quickly made available to others even if at first it may appear to be of little immediate relevance.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					
24. The organization is constantly building its capacity and innovating based on what it has learned.	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
COMMENTS					

Notes:

APPENDIX 3

Table 3.3: Rating Of CSC by Junior Staff

The Learning NGO Questionnaire –Calculation Sheet 1(Adapted: M. Sterlin (1998)

Name of Organization								
No of Respondents								
Enter the total scores of each respondent for each Organizational Learning area in the respective columns. The averages of the totals indicate the NGOs strengths and weaknesses.								
Respond. No.	Learning Culture	Gathering Experience	Discovering	Communicating	Drawing Conclusions	Remembering	Integra-ting	Applying
1	5	9	11	8	11	11	8	11
2	3	9	7	6	3	6	5	7
3	7	9	10	5	9	5	4	9
4	6	10	10	6	7	9	9	10
5	7	6	5	5	5	6	4	4
6	4	7	6	2	8	4	4	2
7	7	6	6	4	6	5	6	7
8	7	8	8	7	10	10	5	9
9	6	7	10	5	6	3	6	7
10	7	1	0		0	5	0	0
11	4	6	8	4	6	7	7	7
12	2	8	2	8	8	3	1	5
13	6	8	9	7	6	7	7	9
14	5	6	6	5	4	4	4	4
15	5	6	5	3	6	3	5	4
16	8	8	11	8	6	10	10	7
17	1	4	7	1	10	9	3	7
18	2	6	11	4	7	4	0	4
19	0	4	2	1	6	4	2	6
20	5	9	8	9	9	10	8	7
21	8	6	10	8	8	11	10	7
22	2	3	7	2	8	9	3	8
23	3	6	6	3	8	6	3	6
24	2	5	3	6	9	2	4	4
25	4	7	4	7	6	4	5	6
26	7	8	7	3	8	5	5	5
27	2	6	8	2	8	3	6	4
28	4	3	2	7	5	4	4	5
29	5	3	6	6	5	6	4	7
30	3	6	5	5	10	6	4	3
31	4	6	8	5	7	5	5	3
32	4	5	7	2	7	4	2	4
33	5	7	9	3	8	6	5	3
34	7	6	9	3	9	3	4	5
35	4	4	8	5	7	6	3	2
36	6	5	8	3	8	2	6	4
37	6	5	7	2	7	2	5	4
38	6	4	6	3	7	3	6	3
39	7	5	6	3	7	2	5	3
40	3	2	8	4	8	2	3	3
41	6	5	9	6	7	4	3	3
42	4	5	6	2	5	3	2	3
43	9	5	10	4	8	6	3	3
44	5	5	8	3	5	3	3	1
45	6	3	7	3	4	3	4	4
46	7	3	8	3	5	1	4	1
47	5	7	8	3	7	1	3	3
Totals	231	272	332	208	324	237	212	233
Ave	4.9	5.8	7.1	4.4	6.9	5.0	4.5	5.0
SD	2.020	2.010	2.506	2.072	2.003	2.686	2.215	2.476

APPENDIX 4

Table 3.4: Rating Of CSC by Senior Staff

The Learning Questionnaire–Calculation Sheet No 2. (Adapted: M. Sterlin, 1998).

Name of Organization	
No of Respondents	

Enter the total scores of each respondent for each Organizational Learning area in the respective columns. The averages of the totals indicate the NGOs strengths and weaknesses.

Respond. No.	Learnin g Culture	Gathering Experience	Discovering	Communicating	Drawing Conclusions	Remembering	Integrating	Applying
1	9	10	8	5	8	8	8	9
2	3	4	4	4	7	7	5	5
3	9	5	8	5	9	5	8	9
4	8	7	7	6	7	7	8	7
5	6	6	7	4	5	2	3	4
6	8	5	3	7	5	9	6	8
7	9	6	8	5	5	7	6	5
8	9	9	11	5	9	7	7	8
Totals	61	52	56	41	55	52	51	55
Ave	7.6	6.5	7.0	5.1	6.9	6.5	6.4	6.9
SD	2.134	2.070	2.507	0.991	1.727	2.138	1.768	1.959

APPENDIX 5

Table 3.5: Rating Of CSC by both Juniors and Seniors: Calculation Sheet 2(Adapted: Marc Sterlin (1998))

Respo. No.	Supportive Culture	Internal Experience	External Learning	Communication Systems	Drawing Conclusions	Organization Memory	Integrating Learning	Applying Learning
1	5	9	11	8	11	11	8	11
2	3	9	7	6	3	6	5	7
3	9	9	11	5	9	7	7	8
4	7	9	10	5	9	5	4	9
5	6	10	10	6	7	9	9	10
6	7	6	5	5	5	6	4	4
7	4	7	6	2	8	4	4	2
8	7	6	6	4	6	5	6	7
9	9	6	8	5	5	7	6	5
10	7	8	8	7	10	10	5	9
11	8	5	3	7	5	9	6	8
12	6	6	7	4	5	2	3	4
13	8	7	7	6	7	7	8	7
14	9	5	8	5	9	5	8	9
15	6	7	10	5	6	3	6	7
16	7	1	0	4	0	5	0	0
17	3	4	4	4	7	7	5	5
18	4	6	8	4	6	7	7	7
19	2	8	2	8	8	3	1	5
20	6	8	9	7	6	7	7	9
21	5	6	6	5	4	4	4	4
22	5	6	5	3	6	3	5	4
23	8	8	11	8	6	10	10	7
24	1	4	7	1	10	9	3	7
25	2	6	11	4	7	4	0	4
26	0	4	2	1	6	4	2	6
27	5	9	8	9	9	10	8	7
28	8	6	10	8	8	11	10	7
29	2	3	7	2	8	9	3	8
30	3	6	6	3	8	6	3	6
31	2	5	3	6	9	2	4	4
32	9	10	8	5	8	8	8	9
33	4	7	4	7	6	4	5	6
34	7	8	7	3	8	5	5	5
35	2	6	8	2	8	3	6	4
36	4	3	2	7	5	4	4	5
37	5	3	6	6	5	6	4	7
38	3	6	5	5	10	6	4	3
39	4	6	8	5	7	5	5	3
40	4	5	7	2	7	4	2	4
41	5	7	9	3	8	6	5	3
42	7	6	9	3	9	3	4	5
43	4	4	8	5	7	6	3	2
44	6	5	8	3	8	2	6	4
45	6	5	7	2	7	2	5	4
46	6	4	6	3	7	3	6	3
47	7	5	6	3	7	2	5	3
48	3	2	8	4	8	2	3	3
49	6	5	9	6	7	4	3	3
50	4	5	6	2	5	3	2	3
51	9	5	10	4	8	6	3	3
52	5	5	8	3	5	3	3	1
53	6	3	7	3	4	3	4	4
54	7	3	8	3	5	1	4	1
55	5	7	8	3	7	1	3	3
Totals	292	324	388	249	379	289	263	288
Ave	5.0	5.9	7.1	4.5	6.9	5.3	4.8	5.2
SD	2.235	2.015	2.483	1.961	1.950	2.647	2.242	2.487

APPENDIX 6

TABLE 3.6: The Learning NGO Questionnaire – Analysis Sheet (Adapted From B. Britton (1998))

Instruction

Go through each of the questions in the questionnaire. Place your scores for each question (from 0 to 4) in the appropriate space below. Add up the totals for each column. This will give you an indication of your organization's broad strengths and weaknesses since the maximum score is 12 for each column.

Supportive Culture	Internal Experience	External Learning	Communicate on Systems	Drawing Conclusions	Organization Memory	Integrating Learning	Applying
Q1	Q2		Q3		Q4		Q5
	Q9	Q8		Q7		Q6	
Q10		Q11	Q12		Q13		
Q20	Q19		Q18	Q17	Q16	Q15	Q14
		Q21		Q22		Q23	Q24
Totals	Totals	Totals	Totals	Totals	Totals	Totals	Totals

Note: **Q** = Question Number in the Questionnaire.

APPENDIX 7

Table 4.3: Respondents Assessment on Specific Characteristic

Characteristic	Strongly Agree %	Agree %	Somewhat Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly Disagree %	Total N=55
Creating Supportive Culture						
Rewarding Staff contribution	11	22	22	36	9	100
Encouraging experimenting & allowing mistakes	0	35	24	21	20	100
Encouraging individual development	10	16	16	40	18	100
Gathering Internal Experience						
Systematic M&E	10	24	24	38	4	100
Built in spare capacity to allow staff to reflect on lessons learnt	2	42	33	18	5	100
Staff work as teams and meet each others needs	9	22	22	32	15	100
Accessing External Learning						
Open cooperation with other organizations	22	51	16	9	2	100
Wide range of contacts at all staff level	9	10	25	40	16	100
Links with wide range of networks	42	27	18	9	4	100
Communication Systems						
Information flows freely	7	21	53	15	4	100
Easy access to information in whole organization	2	9	20	49	20	100
Encourage electronic information sharing	5	7	25	25	38	100
Drawing Conclusions						
M&E reports are routinely analyzed	4	18	31	38	9	100
Regular analysis around identified theme of work	13	53	25	7	2	100
Continuous improvement	9	55	27	7	2	100
Applying the learning						
Systematic use of learning	4	27	29	31	9	100
Change according to new knowledge and insights	9	15	16	44	16	100
Building capacity & innovation	5	20	35	38	2	100
Integrating Learning						
Policy making involves staff at all levels	4	18	15	27	36	100
Operating systems assist learning	4	38	45	9	4	100
Learning is made available throughout the organization	2	15	20	43	20	100
Developing Organizational Memory						
Range of mechanisms for remembering	5	25	25	30	15	100
Systematic debriefing of leaving staff	5	7	11	53	24	100
Systematic database of project to identify expertise	13	25	29	22	11	100

Dear Martha:

The revision is well done. I have included a few more comments. Please review them carefully. Also note the following:

- 1) You need to paginate the pages and format the spacing properly.
- 2) Refer to style manuals on how to write page numbers for Table of Contents. Remember that the pages preceding the main text which starts at the Introduction page are paginated with lower case Roman numerals. You start pagination with Arabic numerals from the Introduction page. See paginations in books.
- 3) For Tables in which you presented data, Use Table 1, 2, 3, etc. instead of Appendix 1, 2, 3. When you refer to them in the text, you can state: According to Table 6, Appendix _____. You can place all the Tables under one Appendix by the way. Changing these would not require much work.
- 4) It is important that you place the References before the Appendix which should come at the end.

I have about three more weeks before I return to Malawi. You can send me your revised work anytime.

Your research paper is coming up very well indeed and keep up the good work and give the paper a finishing touch.

Regards,

Tesfaye