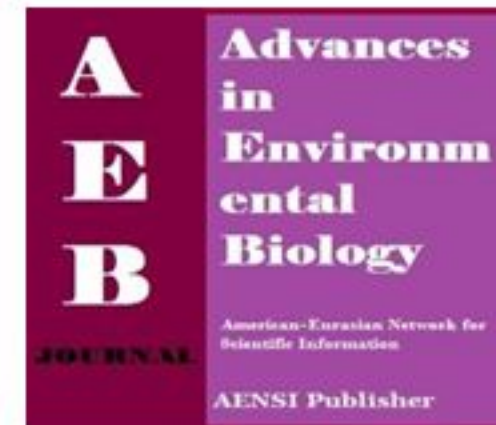




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Organizational Development in Learning Organizations

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ABSTRACT

In today's world, scientific and technological developments are rapidly underway. In order to respond to these changes quickly and effectively, organizations attempt to keep up with such developments, prepare a context of growth and expansion for themselves, and act appropriately in different conditions by turning into learning organizations. Thus, according to research and given today's complex and changing environment, it can be explicitly claimed that in future competition will be different from today and organizational development toward learning organizations guarantees their survival. In the same vein, after describing the problem and theoretical basics of the research, this paper examines previous research through reviewing procedures in order to explain the role of organizational learning in facilitating changes within organizations and finally to offer ways for improving the path so as to assist organizations toward purposeful development.

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INTRODUCTION

The world is constantly changing. If change, development and innovation were not necessary, human life would have probably remained at a basic state or maybe even at an animalistic level, hence no change in knowledge, attitude and behavior. If humans did not feature variability and modification, they would have stayed within a narrow framework of thinking and their path of progress would have been blocked. Peters [1], one of the experts of management in America, believes that change is the basic premise that governs public and private organizations in the contemporary world. He further states that the use of the word change in this context does not have enough semantic coverage and comprehensiveness because this acceleration is the result of the pace and scope of change that mark various alterations in practices and procedures. The ability to respond and adapt to changes in society and the use or lack of change as a constructive force are borderlines of distinction between victory and defeat [1]. On the other hand, a learning organization attempts to expand its capacity for continuous adaptation to change and development; and on the other hand, individuals in such organizations learn that this is an essential and pivotal need [2]. Therefore, in order to be able to adjust to these changes, organizations are faced with two major problems: the first issue is how an organization can develop so that it can be consistent with environmental changes in a better and more desirable way. The second issue is how human resource, as the most strategic resource, can direct an organization so as to realize the goals of the organization as well as those of its own.

*2. Theoretical Foundations of the Study:**2.1. Organizational Change:*

Organizational change can also mean that the activities of an organization change from its current position (status) to a different status [3]. Hanson argues that organizational change is the process of change and alteration that occurs in attitudes, structures, policies, intentions or products of some of the organizational units [4]. In fact, development is a change in the environment, structure, technology, or people of an organization [5]. Organizational development is a strategy "to improve the organization" that was introduced in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Its bases are the insights and knowledge gained from group dynamics, theory, and application that can resolve many important human issues in organizations. Organizational development addresses organizations and individuals within organizations as well as how they function. It also discusses planned changes that encourage individuals, groups and organizations to perform better.

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Planned change requires general awareness, hard and diligent work over time, having a consistent and goal-oriented approach, and a valid knowledge of organizational dynamics and how to change them. A valid knowledge is obtained from behavioral sciences such as psychology, social psychology, sociology, anthropology, systems theory, organizational behavior, organizational theory and management practice. The result of these sciences is organizational development that provides guidelines to improve the adaptation between individuals and an organization, between an organization and its environment, and among organizational components such as strategy, structure, and processes. These guidelines are performed through development programs and activities that aim to solve problems in a particular, problematic situation[6].

2.2. Models of Organizational Development:

Contemporary scholars agree on the fact that organization development is a planned change which takes place in organizational contexts. With this assumption, regardless of the classification of different organizational development strategies, the main theories of organizational development are presented in table (1), considering the fact that these models generally deal with different aspects of change in organizations.

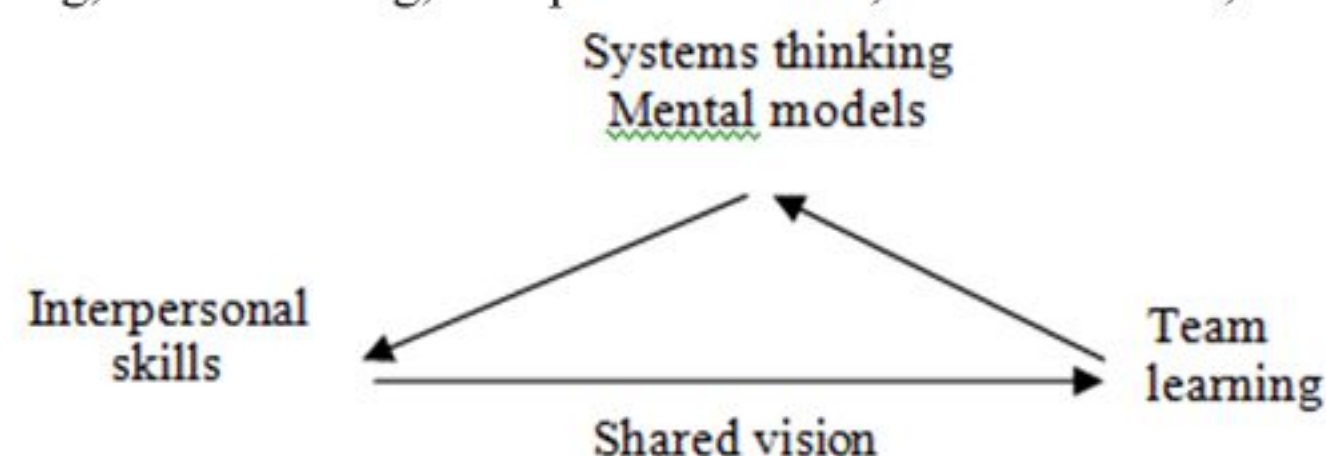
Table 1: Major Models of Organizational Development .

Summary of Actions	Year	Title and Presenter of the Model
Three-stage process of change.	1940	Three-stage model of Kurt Lewin
Developing Lewin's model of evolution into a seven-step process.	1958	Ronald Lippitt, Gene Watson and Bruce Westley's Development Model
A normative model of learning and change for planning that indicates the relationships between goals, planning and action in the process of development.	1964	Shepherd's model of peer research in action
Advising development agents to diagnose organizational problems; to locate them and discover these issues.	1976	The Marvin Weisbord Six-Box Model for Organizational Change
A model for organizational development in designing and re-performing employment.	1980	Hackman and Oldham model
Five stages of development.	1984	Ralph Kilmann's model of comprehensive change
Plotting major variables in the process of change caused by external environment.	1992	Burke-Litwin model of individual and organizational performance
Development programs through team-building	1993	. Katzenbach and Smith's generic model of effective team working
Identifying key elements in the process of change.	1997	Cummings and Worley model of effective organizational change
Drawing a model to represent the problem.	1998	Jerry Porras flow analysis model
Providing a two-dimensional matrix of critical success factors and development process.	1997	Clark and Manton Model of Two-Dimensional Matrix
Evaluating the role of leadership in supporting the development process by using cultural symbols.	1996	Brooks' Leadership of a cultural change process
Providing a four-level model for creating development in the construction industry of Saudi Arabia.	2001	Salman al Sudairy's organizational change model
Provide a conceptual framework to explain the role of communication in organizational development.	2005	Elving's Conceptual model of the role of communication in organizational change

* - Developed and summarized by the author based on [6].

2.3. Learning Organization:

A learning organization learns over time to change and revolutionize its functions. It can be argued that an organization is a learning organization when it can change and improve the domain of its behaviors through a communicative process [7]. According to studies by Dixon [8], a learning organization is an organization that creates structures and strategies to promote organizational learning. In fact, it is a modified model that offers new ways of thinking about the organization by acquiring knowledge, as well as by interpreting and distributing institutional information and memory [9]. In academic discourse, the American model to create a learning organization, developed and proposed by Peter Senge [10], is presented in Figure (1) which includes five dimensions: systems thinking, team learning, interpersonal skills, mental models, shared vision.

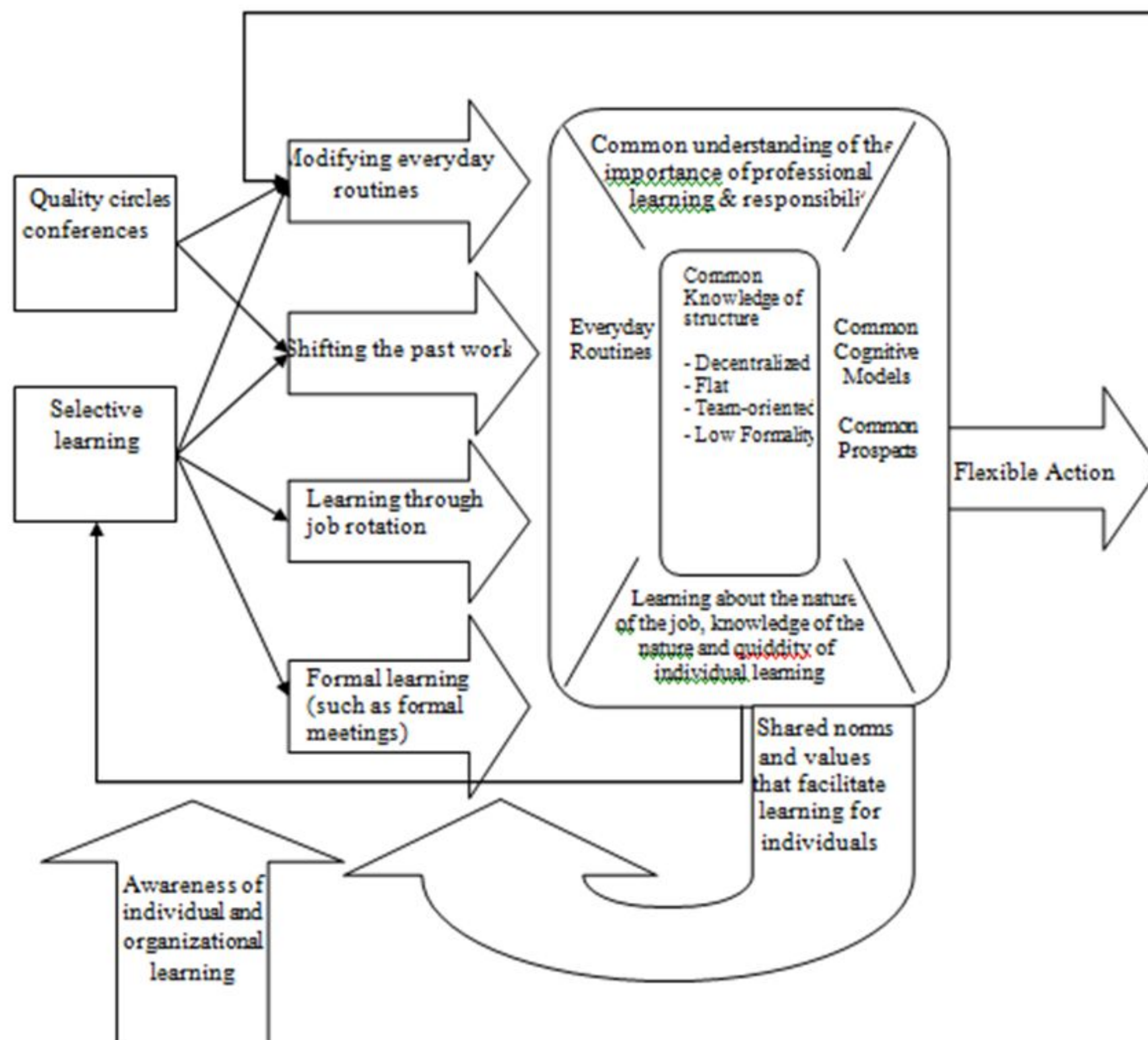


* - Developed by the author based on [10]

Fig. 1: Model for creating a learning organization.

Ortenbald [11], in line with the concept of learning organization, has conducted a literature review, identified four main aspects regarding this issue, and provided a model (Figure 2) by explaining what must be done in order to move toward becoming a learning organization. These four areas are:

1. Organizational learning: awareness of the need for different levels of learning and knowledge in an organization.
2. On-the-job training: formal learning has certain limitations and cannot easily be put into practice. While on-the-job training, because acquired in the business environment, is much easier to be turned into action.
3. Learning Structure: in this structure, an organization is flexible; and an organic organization is better than a bureaucratic one.
4. Learning Conditions: facilitates individual learning and, in fact, creates the conditions for learning, but does not control it.



* - Developed and summarized by the author based on (11)

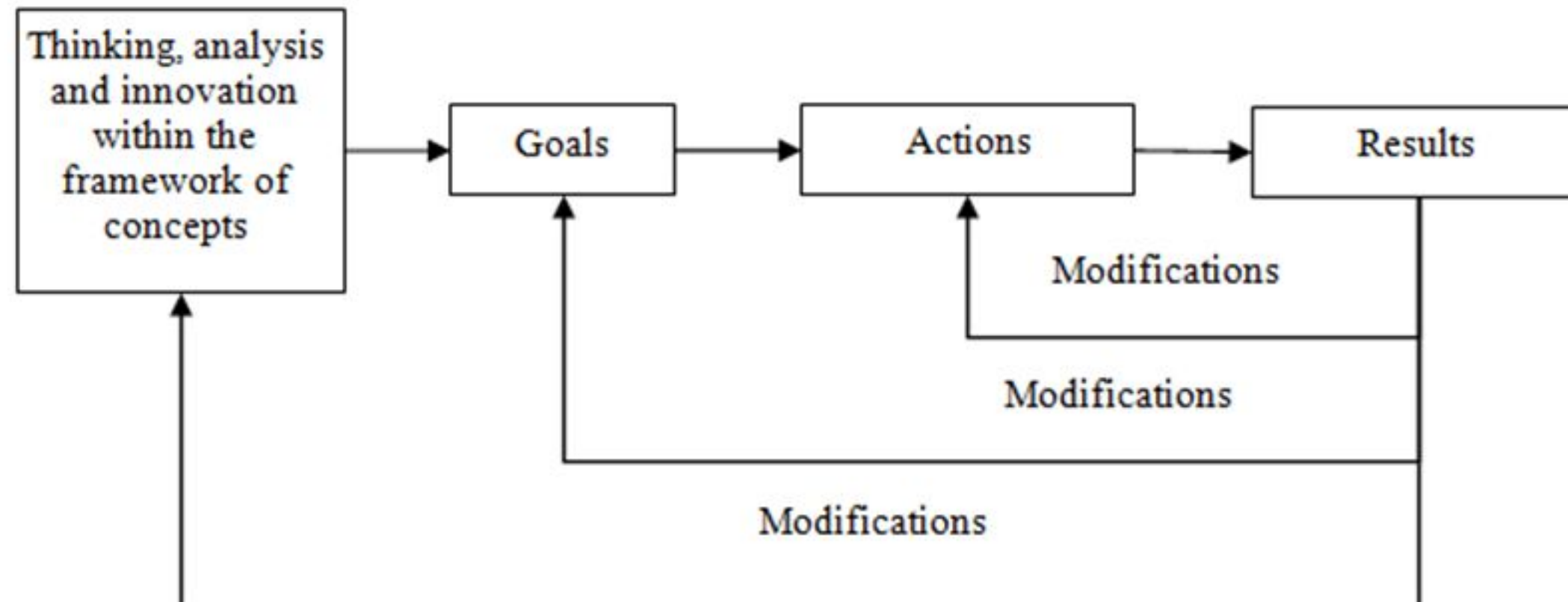
Fig. 2: Model of a learning organization.

2.4. Levels of Organizational Learning:

Organizational learning occurs when there is a change of ideas and views that leads to new views to be transmitted through communication and interaction to all levels of the organization. Organizational learning is a dynamic process that allows the organization to adapt to environmental changes. In organizational learning, different perspectives get close to one another and every process is modified compared to the past [12]. The learning process is established based on presentations, functions and evaluation systems. Argyris and Schön, after explaining the development of organizational knowledge to the theory of practice, as shown in figure (3), present three types of learning as follows [13].

- Single loop learning: provides the possibility of improvement in organizational activities. Single loop learning refers to a kind of beneficial learning that changes practice strategies, with fixed governing variables and values.
- Double loop learning: provides the possibility of changing the values and governing parameters. In other words, double loop learning makes it possible to change practice strategies and governing variables in terms of two types of feedback.

- Secondary organizational learning: provides the possibility for an organization to improve its ability in previous learning processes and can be defined as another type of second loop learning. In secondary learning, individuals need to know how they learn through single and double loop learning. Problems explicitly focus on the last two levels of learning. In their analysis, problems that arise in organizational learning are much dependent on the problems of the theory in use, or beyond, on the worldview of the organization. In fact, they emphasize the fact that double loop learning is in conflict with patterns of resolution in an organization.



* - Developed by the author based on (13)

Fig. 3: Levels of Organizational Learning.

3. Research Methodology:

This research is conducted in the form of a review and as a descriptive study. Using a variety of sources including books, articles and databases, this study evaluate the validity of different viewpoints on organizational development, organizational learning, the need for organizational development and learning in organizations and the process of development in learning organization. The most important aspects are thus put forward.

4. The Role of Organizational Learning in Organizational Development:

Environmental changes on the one hand and intra-organizational needs rooted in the increase of staff knowledge and insight due to the tremendous progress of knowledge and technology on the other hand have caused the two outer and inner forces to propel organizations toward changes [14]. Donald Sean argues the community is in everlasting transition and permanent transformation. Thus he rejects the possibility of permanently using a fixed knowledge over one's course of life. Learning is necessary for understanding, leading, managing and influencing these permanent changes. Learning makes it possible to identify the nature of the perpetual transition of communities, institutions and organizations [15].

Peter Senge [16] defines the learning organization as an organization within which it is impossible not to learn because learning is institutionalized as a part of its life. He also describes the learning organization as a group of people who are constantly increasing the creative potential of what they are willing to produce. He recognizes the learning organization as an organization with an inherent philosophy to survey, react to, and respond to change, complexity and lack of certainty. For Senge, the concept of the learning organization is associated with a complex organizational environment and lack of certainty. He believes that organizational learning is the only sustainable source of advantage for an organization. Accordingly, Senge has proposed the learning-based development approach.

In the learning-based development approach, it is not merely the strategies, structures and systems that change, but also the thought behind these structures, strategies and systems. In the learning-based development approach, individuals play the most important role in creating change, can think about themselves and resist against those who try to change them [16].

In the past two decades, substantial efforts have been made to develop theoretical and practical models of organizational change. One of these waves of recent research, which has gained much attention, is the use of concepts and theories of organizational learning in development models. In the learning-based development approach, organizational capabilities are created by focusing on double loop or creative learning [17]. If learning skills have to differentiate between organizations, the present competitive context is better suited to the need for development. Thus, an organization should focus on constructive learning. This type of learning enables organizational system to be challenged and act above change and not just adapt to it [18].

Researchers and practitioners have stated that if organizations have to change, they should be extensively capable of learning from experiences and sowing the seeds of learning. The capacity for change and continuous improvement depends on organizational learning. Since learning has to flow continually in the changing

environment, it must become an integral part of daily routines and activities [19]. The learning organization does not only train its staff, but also develops its learning context at all organizational levels and continuously evolves itself [20].

The main purpose of the concept of the learning organization is an evolution toward the common goals of the organization: growth and accomplishment. An organization can sustain itself only by creating this change. The philosophy of organizational learning is continuous learning, according to accelerating environmental changes, towards sustainability and survival [21]. In fact, this approach does not view organizational development top-down, rather a transformation can occur bottom up. Richard L. Daft [9] believes that we see today a strategic shift by effective organizations in the world from strict and extended hierarchical systems toward flexible, decentralized and flat systems that feature cooperation, fluidity, adaptivity and a wide availability of information at various organizational levels. Therefore, in today's environment, only those organizations can endure that are flexible and able to quickly and effectively respond to the opportunities and challenges of this century, recognize change as a blessing rather than a threat, and commit themselves to quickly embrace constructive changes [22].

5. Discussion and Conclusion:

Without a doubt, the most fundamental asset of any organization is knowledge and the organization that has this blessing will certainly deal with challenges in a better way will be more successful in this competitive era. In the 1980's and 90's and in the face of extreme environmental changes, organizations concluded that they must learn to deal with such adversity, with the difference that the speed of organizational learning should be faster than organizational change. So the concept of organizational learning was introduced and quickly became popular. But in the new millennium, many international organizations believe that merely a learning organization is not enough, rather an organization can only be successful if it is progressive as well as instructive.

Since the present era is called the era of learning organizations and its members at all levels (managerial and non- managerial) undertake to forget old thoughts and ideas to work together in the best way on the one hand and to realize organizational programs on the other, dealing with dynamic domains has brought some researchers so far to believe that the only way for future organizations is to turn into continuous learning systems. Thus, we are pushed to present documentary definitions of the learning organization and its feature as well as the implementation process of its application in order to understand learning organizations and drive our own organization (universities) toward organizational learning. Organizations that fail in their efforts to change will lose the opportunity to survive. The theory of learning organizations is, in this regard, understood and evaluated. As this belief goes, organizations that are incapable of taking control of learning at the organizational level will simply disappear in the face of competing organizations since maintaining sustainable competitive interests is impossible without learning and developing new knowledge [23].

The key to organizational success is learning-based development; therefore, appropriate improvement strategies must be sought to assist organizations toward purposeful change. To this end, the manager should establish a strategic vision in relation to learning so as to make it a central, available element and a valuable tool for achieving long-term results; play the role of leadership in the development process and assume the responsibility for creating an organization that is able to repair itself and be exposed to new challenges. Since learning should flow continuously within the context of change, it should become an integral part of normal, everyday activities of the organization. Particular attention to aspects and parameters of learning previously mentioned can have an important role in achieving this goal

Based on this study, the following items are noteworthy for future research:

- Studies on assessment methods of organizational learning and localizing them in learning organizations.
- Strengthening and fostering organizational learning in consistency with organizational development.
- Identifying the relationship between organizational learning and development in organizations.

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