BUILDING A LEARNING CULTURE
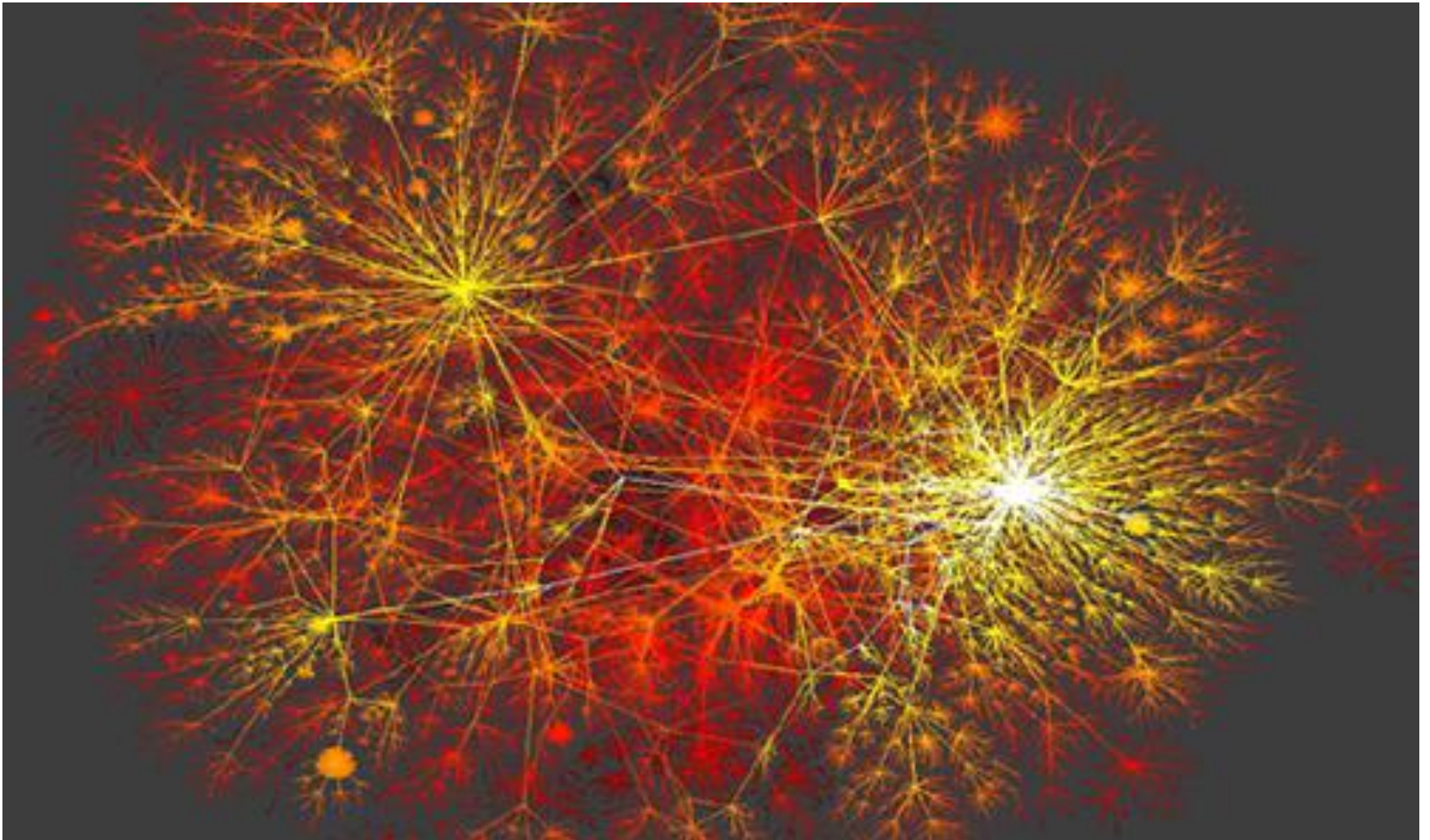
Karen E. Watkins, Ph.D.
Professor, UGA
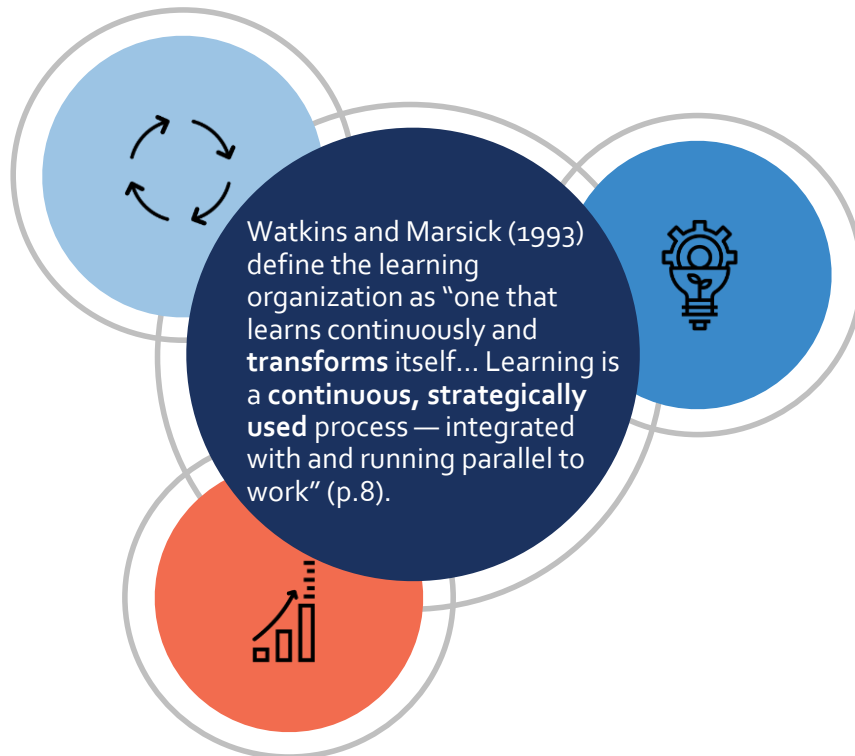Victoria J. Marsick
Professor, TC

Systems Today

The Learning Organization

Watkins and Marsick (1993) define the learning organization as "one that learns continuously and **transforms** itself... Learning is a **continuous, strategically used** process — integrated with and running parallel to work" (p.8).
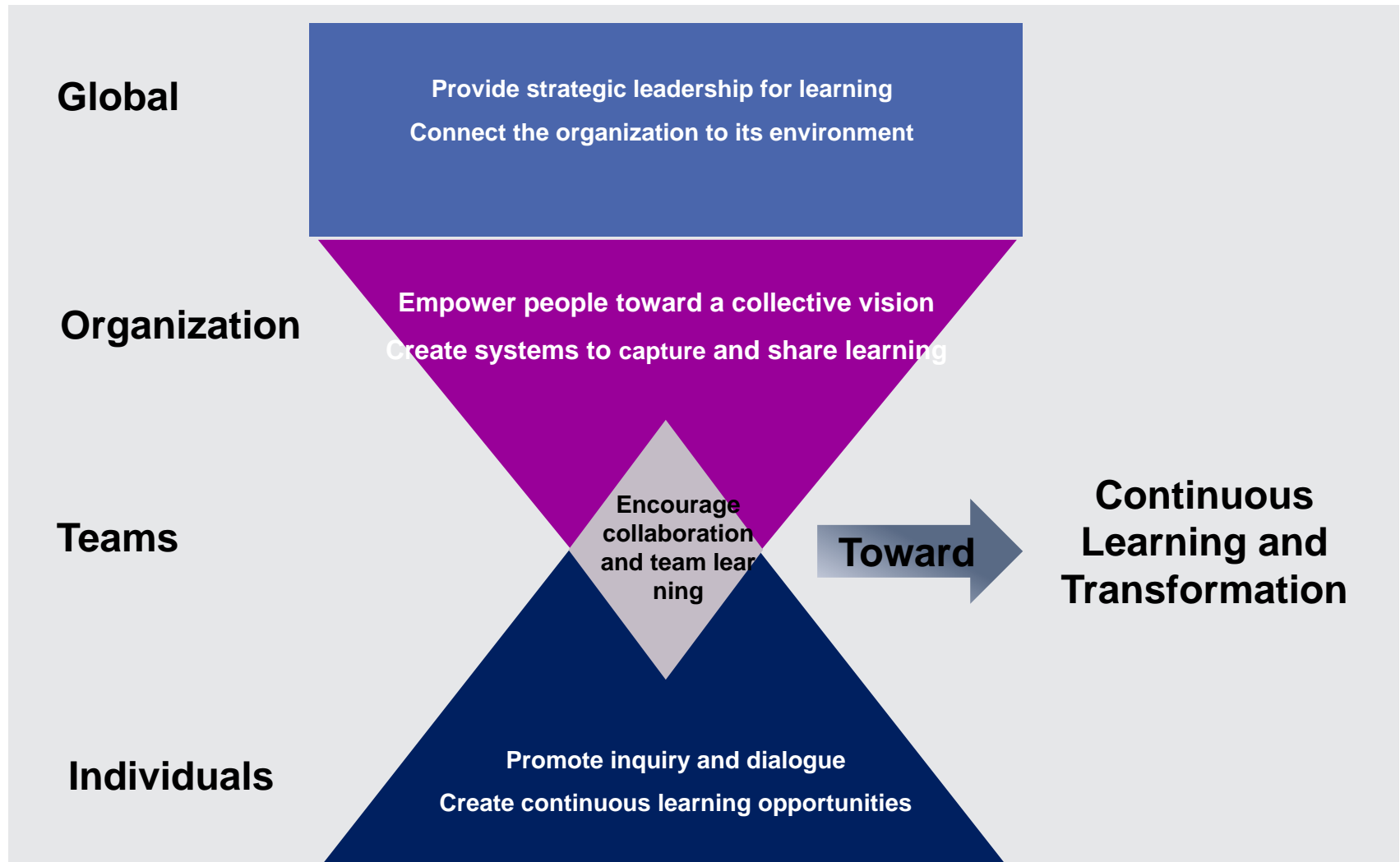
Three key components:
System-level, continuous learning

In order to create and encourage knowledge outcomes

That lead to improvement in the organization's effectiveness, and ultimately its value, as measured through both financial & non-financial [intellectual] capital
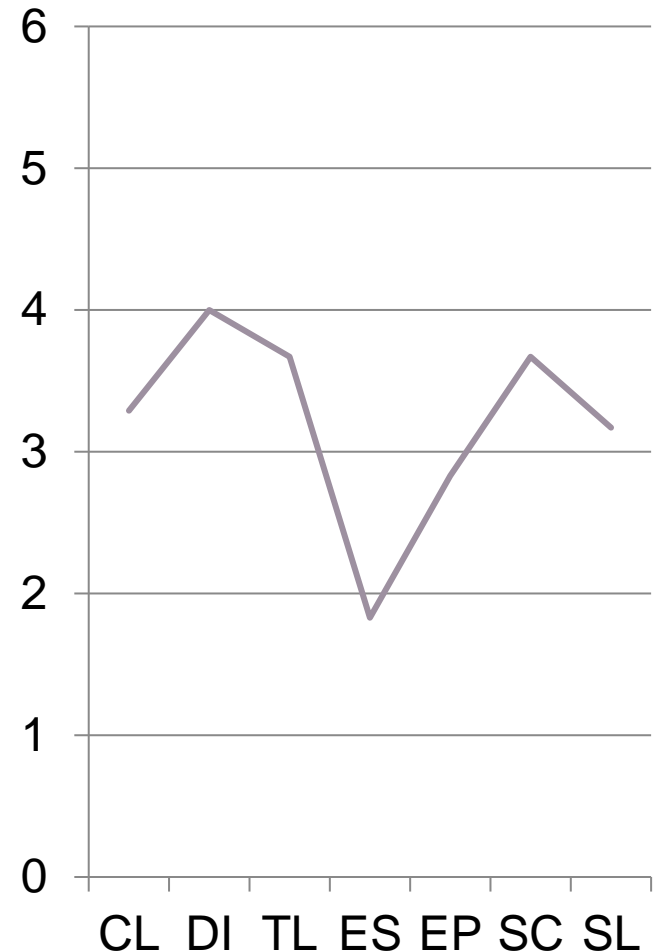
A Learning Organization- 7 Dimensions

Global

Provide strategic leadership for learning

Connect the organization to its environment

Organization

Empower people toward a collective vision

Create systems to capture and share learning

Teams

Encourage collaboration and team learning

Toward → **Continuous Learning and Transformation**

Individuals

Promote inquiry and dialogue

Create continuous learning opportunities

Watkins and Marsick, 1999

Graphing Your Results

Dimensions	Sum	Average
Continuous Learning	20	3.29
Dialogue & Inquiry	24	4.00
Team Learning	22	3.67
Embedded Systems	11	1.83
Empowered People	17	2.83
System Connection	22	3.67
Strategic Leadership	19	3.17
Financial Performance	18	3.00
Knowledge Performance	19	3.17
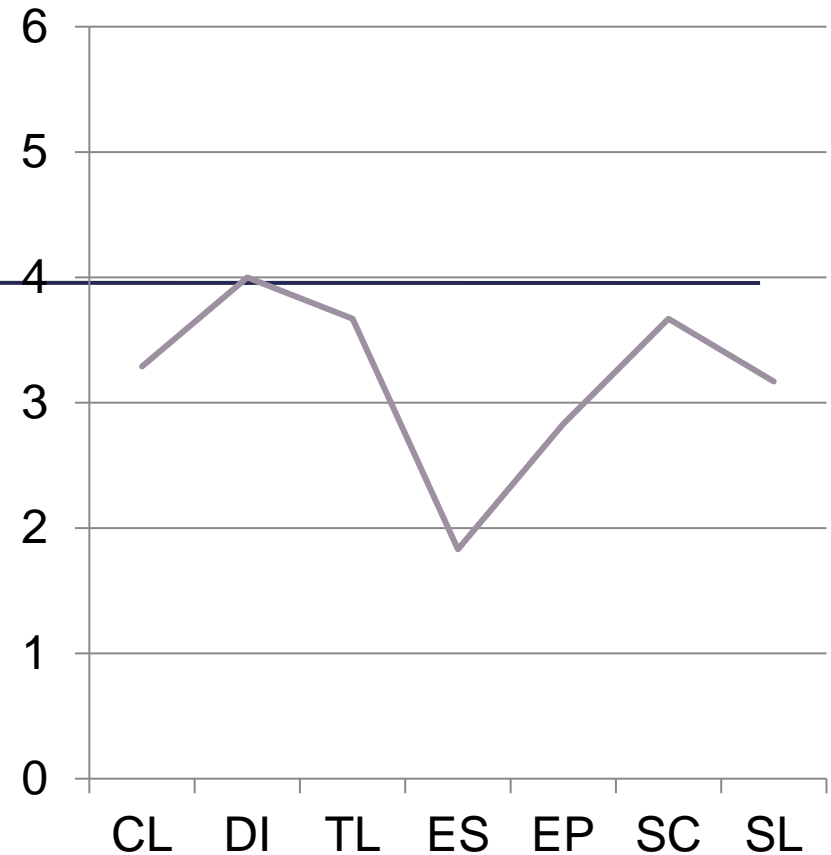
Interpretation

- Typically the average falls between 3 and 5
- Notice the patterns among the dimensions
- Pay attention to the highest and the lowest scores
- It might be helpful to chart frequency distributions for each of the items and standard deviations to show how respondents answered differently

Learning Culture – WHO Scholar Courses

#	LO Dimension	Sample Item	M	SD
1	Continuous Learning	**In my organization, people are rewarded for learning.**	**3.12**	1.51
2	Dialogue & Inquiry	**In my organization, people spend time building trust with each other.**	**4.17**	1.16
3	Team Learning	In my organization, teams/groups revise their thinking as a result of group discussion or information collected.	4.49	1.10
4	Embedded Systems to Capture & Share Learning	**My organization makes its lessons learned available to its members.**	**4.71**	1.17
5	Empowering People	My organization recognizes people for taking initiative.	4.27	1.24
6	Making Systemic Connections	**My organization works together with external partners to meet mutual needs.**	**5.11**	.94
7	Providing Leadership for Learning	In my organization, leaders continually look for opportunities to learn.	4.57	1.11

What is the learning culture in participants' organization?

Areas of Strategic Leverage

Areas of Strategic Opportunity

Interpreting your scores

- One of the best ways to understand these data is to think about what might be going on at the local level that would lead to a high or a low score.
- Looking at the areas of strategic advantage- why would this item or dimension be high in your context?
- Looking at the areas of strategic leverage– what is happening in your context that might lead people to score this low?
- What could you do to influence this score?
- Discuss your responses with the people from your region.

DLOQ across multiple studies

Teach to Reach Compared
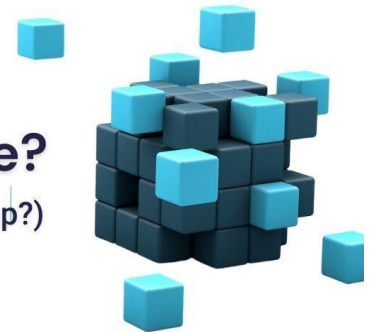
But How Do You Create A Learning Culture?
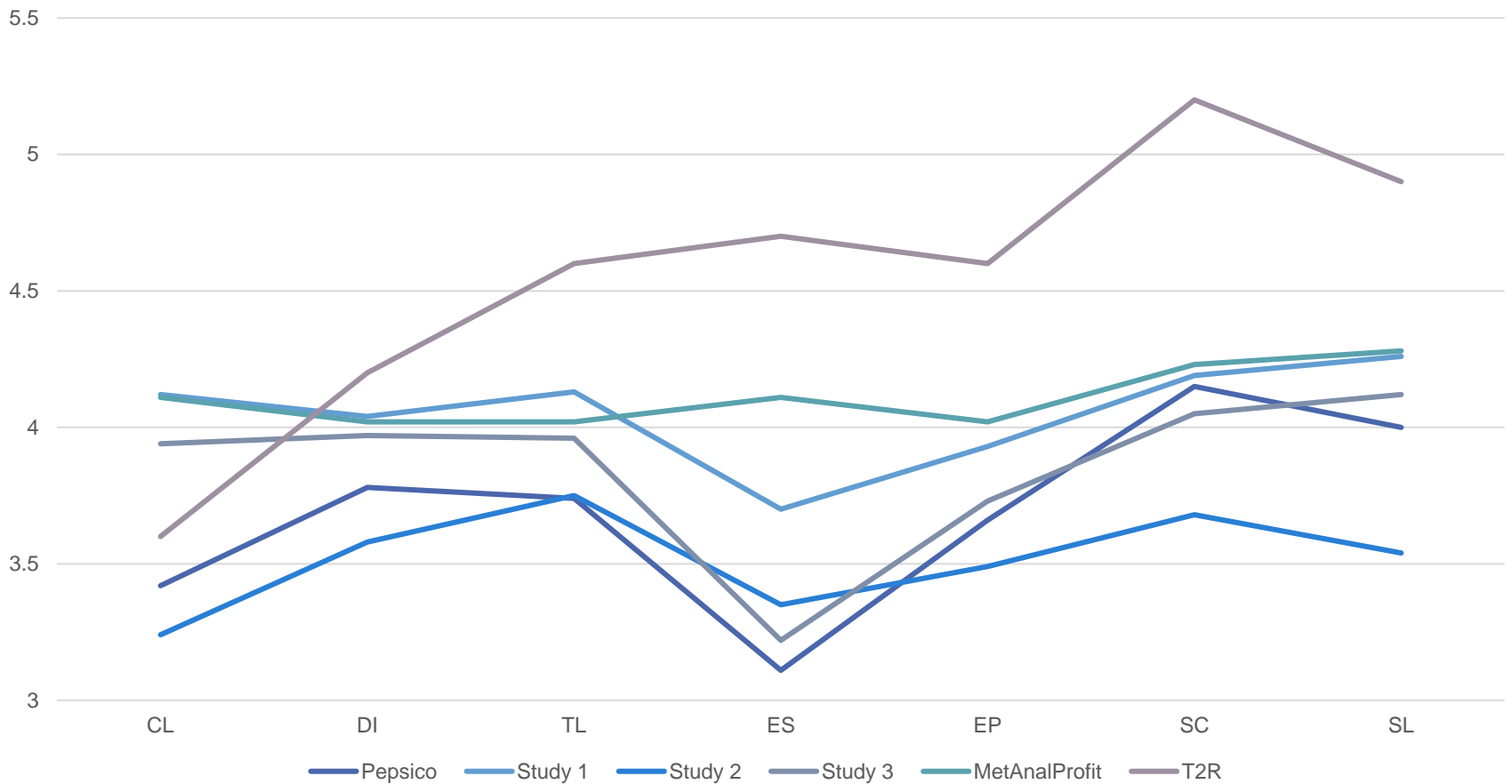
Enhancing Capacity for Change

- Creating a learning culture ensures a long-term enhanced capacity to adapt
- It also creates at least the possibility of more rapid responses
- It is fostered by an interdependent leadership culture

What is a Learning Culture? (and how does yours stack up?)

watershed

Leading Learning

The role of the leader in a learning culture

- The importance of leaders' behaviors in improving organizational performance is again clear in this study.
- Regression coefficients at diverse levels indicate that certain leader behaviors have a stronger effect on organizational outcomes than others.
- The leader's role in coaching and mentoring was significantly correlated with all three performance variables.
- Innovation and adaptation call on leaders to be learners themselves and to walk the talk

Learning From Mistakes

- Think about a time when you or another person in your unit made a mistake.

- What happened?

- How did the organization handle it?

- Share your reflections with the person next to you.

- What does the way organizations respond to mistakes tell you about the learning culture?

Conclusion

- A learning culture is formed in the **karma in the walls and halls, the interstices and intersections where people come together to accomplish work** for which they must learn their way through.
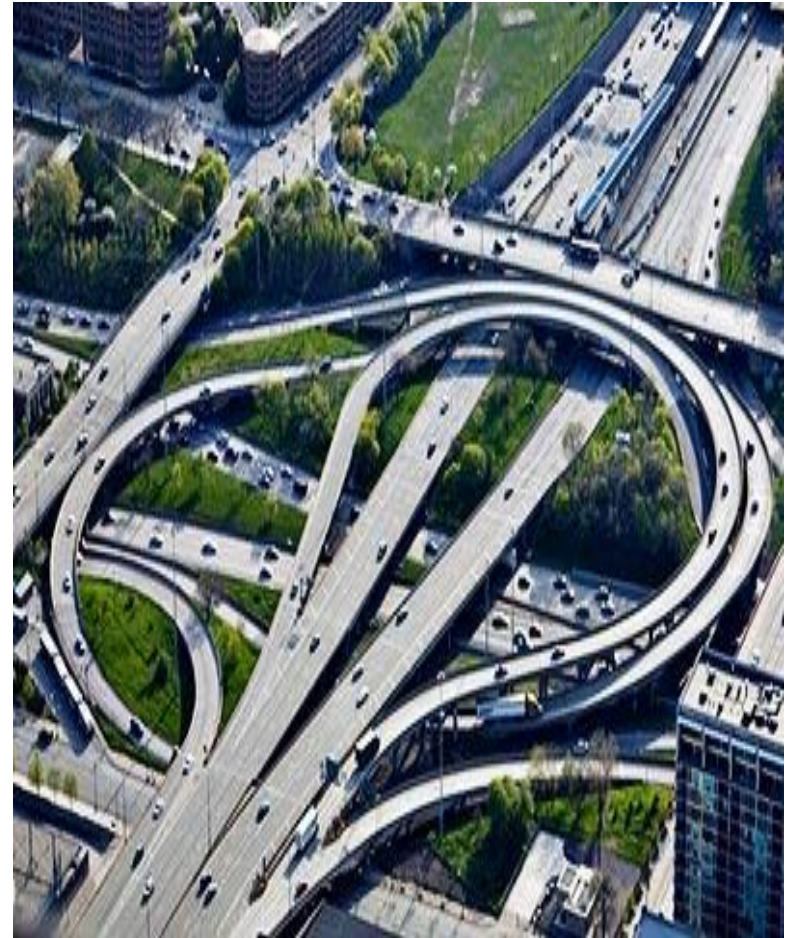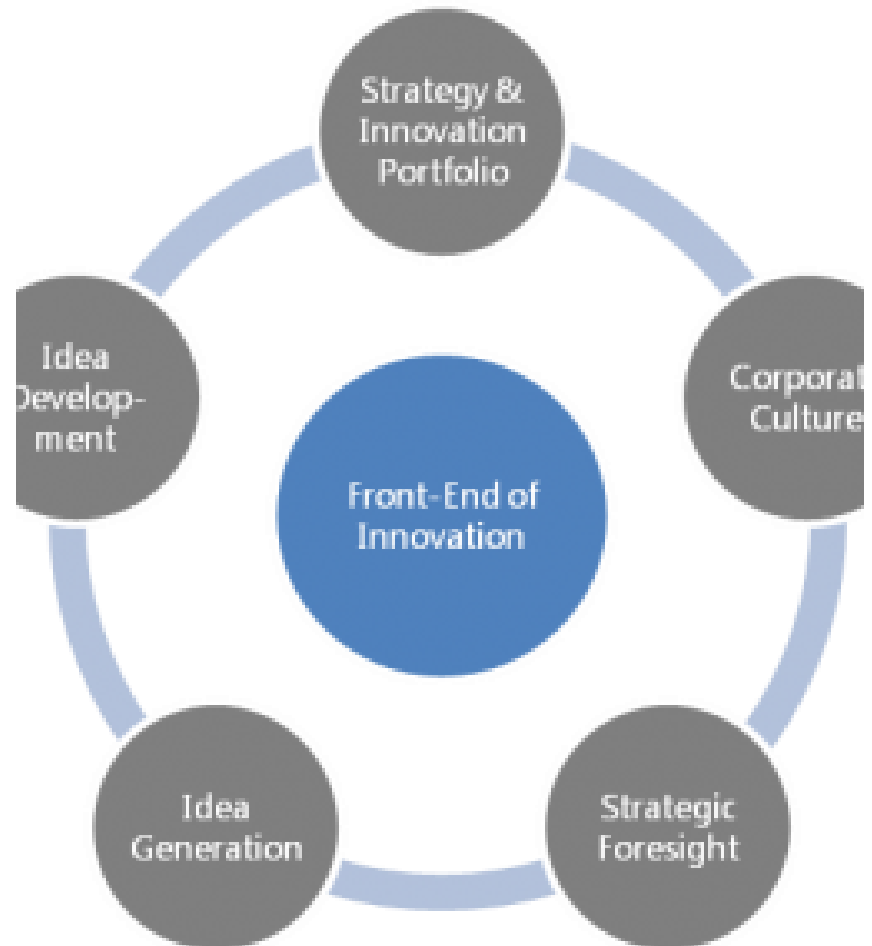
Conclusions Continued

- Organizations can and do create systems that encourage learning- particularly more **informal systems that encourage human creativity and invention**

Conclusion Cont'd

- This **knowledge performance** is critical to the long-term sustainability of organizations and systems