

Immunisation health worker capacity and performance management: Unlocking success through learning

Overview

Most Linked countries identify the need strengthen health worker capacity and performance management as critical for reaching immunisation targets and recovering from immunisation backsliding. Multiple factors affect health worker performance and, by extension, immunisation programme performance. But what are the most important factors influencing health worker (HW) performance?

Linked, in partnership with Curatio International Foundation (CIF), gathered government and partner (WHO and UNICEF) representatives from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, and Uzbekistan for a workshop in Batumi, Georgia in July 2023 and follow-up virtual exchange in September 2023 to share experiences and discuss approaches to strengthen organizational learning culture as strategy to improve immunisation programme performance. This brief summarizes key learnings that arose from this learning exchange.

Learning culture: definition and benefits

The majority opinion globally suggests that health worker motivation is one of the most important factors in immunization program performance, and this was also reflected in the initial perception of the participating countries. However, a global organizational learning assessment by The Geneva Learning Foundation which examined middle and low-income countries from 2020–2022 showed that organizations scored particularly low in continuous learning; surprisingly, immunization health worker performance had almost no correlation with motivation, but it was strongly correlated with the presence of a learning culture within the immunisation programme.¹

Learning culture means *the capacity of the work environment to support learning and change.*

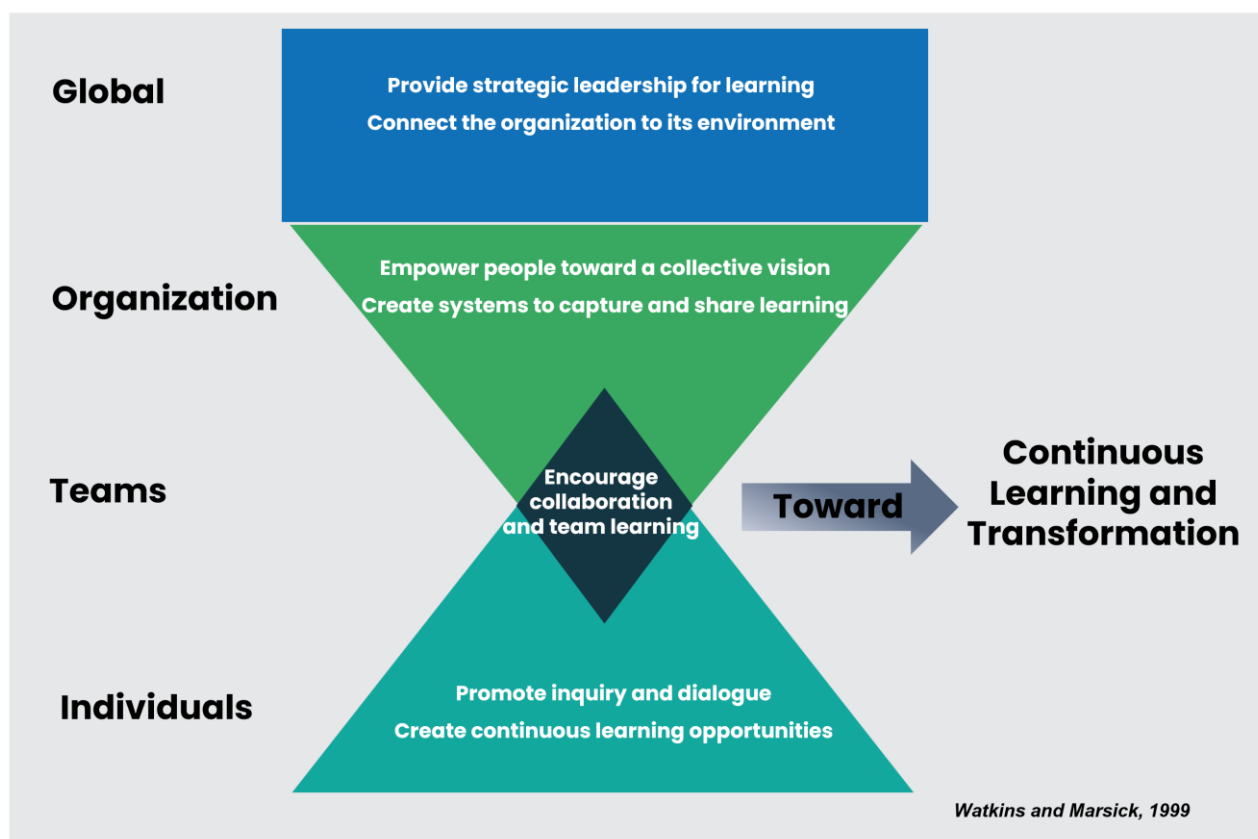
Linked invited experts on learning culture to discuss the concept of learning culture and how a learning organisation, such as an immunisation programme, is defined. Key learnings from that discussion include:

- Organizations can and do learn but most of the time, that learning is unplanned and tacit.
- A learning organization is one that learns continuously and transforms itself.

¹ Jones, Ian, et al. (2022). IA2030 Case Study 7. Motivation, learning culture and programme performance (1.0). The Geneva Learning Foundation. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7004304>

- Learning is a continuous, strategically used process—integrated with and running parallel to work.
- A learning organization arises from the total change strategies that institutions of all types are using to help navigate their challenges.
- Learning organizations proactively use learning in an integrated way to support and catalyze growth for individual workers, teams and other groups, entire organizations, and (at times) the institutions and communities with which they are working.

A Learning Organization – 7 Dimensions



How to assess learning culture: DLOQ and learning dimensions

What can you do to better understand (“diagnose”) what areas of health worker capacity strengthening are most needed in your context, and then work to address those specific areas? The workshop participants learned about **Dimensions of a Learning Organization Questionnaire [DLOQ]** and conducted an exercise with the tool to realize how their organization supports and uses learning at an individual, team and organizational level (Annex 1). The country teams responded to 21 questions, for each item, determining the degree (from 1 to 6) to which it was or was not true of their organizations. The participants learned how that data would apply to the relevant 7 learning dimensions (Table 1), how they would be used by organizations to identify their

strengths to build upon, and what would be the areas of greatest strategic influence for becoming a learning organization.

Table 1: learning dimensions

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

Following the workshop, the Georgia country team shared their new knowledge on learning culture and the assessment tool with Georgia PHC service providers. The two largest PHC facility networks then conducted their own DLOQ study and presented the results at a follow-up virtual exchange (Annex 2. DLOQ: Georgia experience).

How to strengthen learning culture

Organizations can and do create systems that encourage creativity and innovation. Fostering a learning culture will support an immunisation programme’s capacity to identify challenges and strategies to address them, and to adapt service delivery to incorporate these strategies. It will make programmes more resilient and increase its rapid response capabilities.

It is critical for organisations to understand that formal learning and education systems are a foundational component of HWs knowledge and skills, but the most significant learning actually happens “on the job”, when learning practices are embedded into regular work.

Traditional

- Review meetings on data tracking (monthly, quarterly, annual; integrated or vertical); reorient to also include an ongoing component of HWs sharing their case studies on topics chosen by the group.
- Supportive supervision (integrated or vertical; management & service delivery oriented); shift to focus more on mentoring/coaching and OJT methods
- Exchange visits, with site visits that include a major focus on OJT methods of improving HW capacity

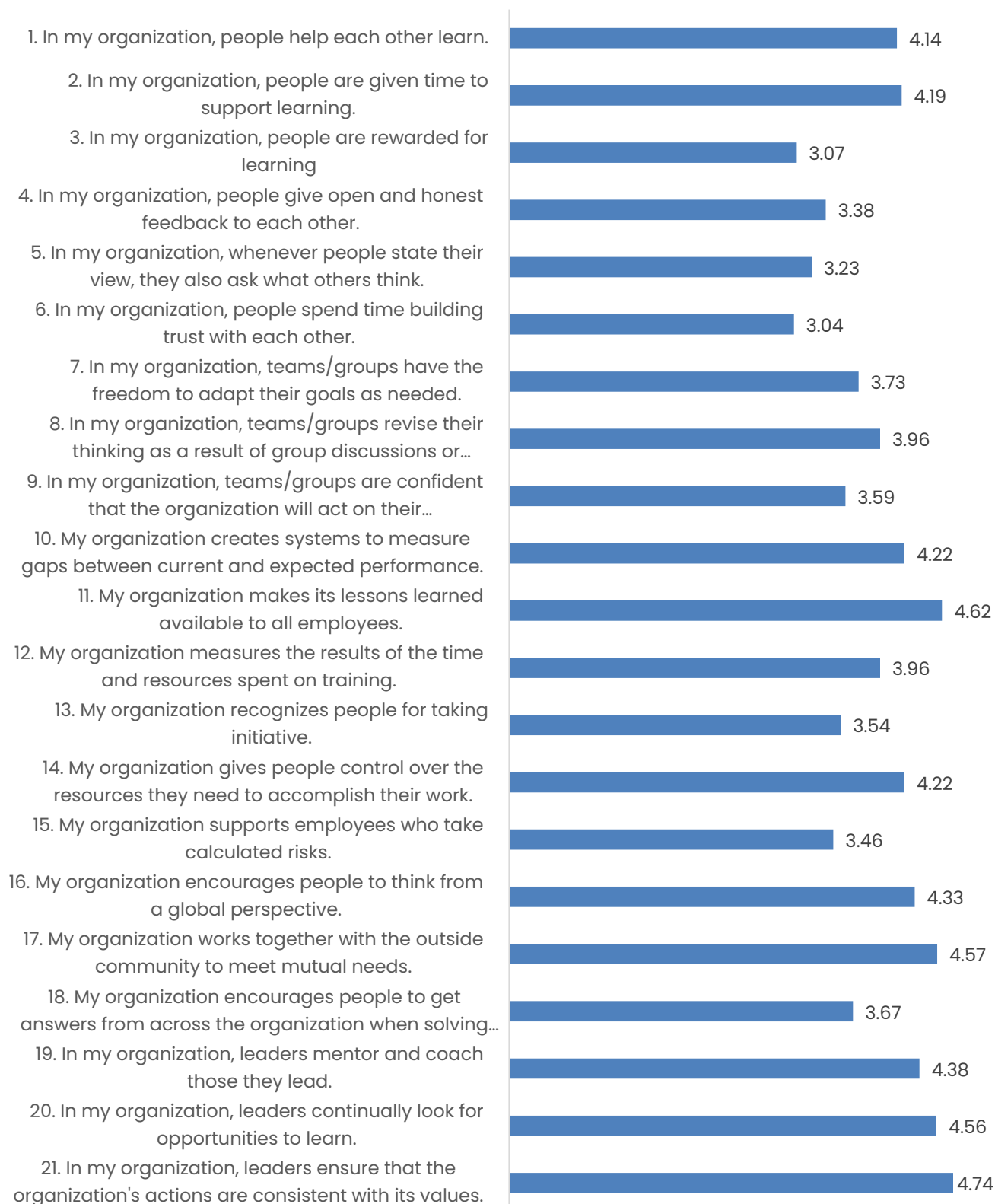
Exploratory

- Behavioral science methods that incorporate Human Centered Design, Continuous Quality Improvement, Service Experience Strengthening, etc., such as revising work plans with communities to ensure services are meeting the needs of all local population groups and are convenient and friendly.
- Peer learning collaboratives (e.g., Linked) with a focus on adult learning (active demonstrations)
- Communities of Practice (can be informal WhatsApp groups, etc.) that feature cross sharing on specific approaches to improve HW capacity (e.g., Georgia sharing its learning culture diagnostics today)

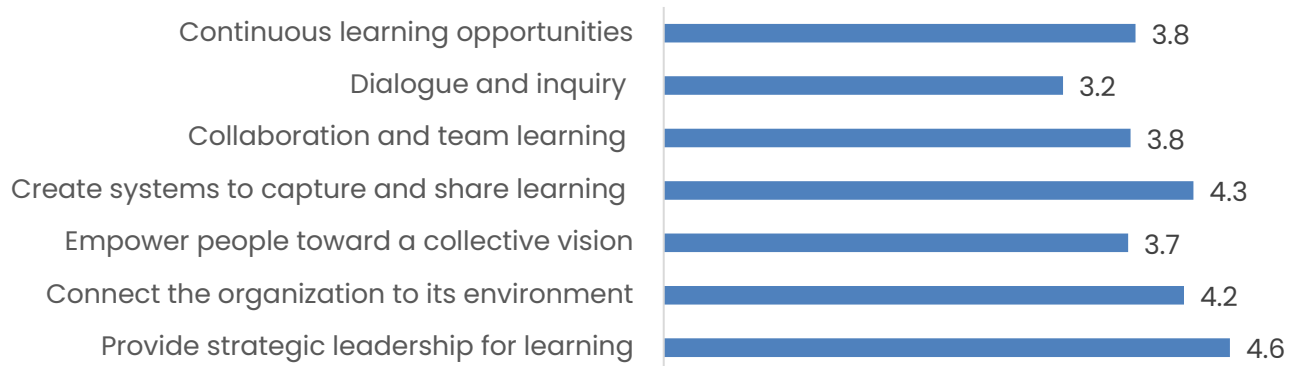
Both traditional and exploratory learning approaches, when blended and implemented well, can be very effective. However, the right interventions should be selected based on a country's specific weakest areas of learning and performance. Additionally, **leadership** and **how mistakes are managed** are other key factors influencing learning culture. Leaders who coach, mentor, and encourage learning from mistakes have a stronger effect on organizational outcomes than others.

Annex 1: DLOQ exercise: Batumi Workshop results and interpretation

DLOQ – Batumi workshop participants (n=28)



DLOQ, Learning Culture dimensions, Batumi workshop participants (n=28)



Annex 2. DLOQ: Georgia experience

When: August-September 2023.

Participating Facilities: The two largest PHC networks in Georgia: Medcapital (2 branches in Tbilisi and 25 participants) and Evex (9 branches countrywide, 64 participants) – both, well performing and poorly performing.

Who: managers; doctors and nurses who are involved in immunization service provision. High-level management engaged.

Methodology – Dimensions of Learning Organization Questionnaire (DLOQ) with 21 Questions and instruction were translated into Georgian Language and shared with facilities. The survey instructors were preliminarily trained.

Period of data collection and analysis – 2 weeks.

Analysis: DLOQ questions are divided to show the learning culture on different levels:

Individual level – (Q 1 – 6)

Team/Group level – (Q 7,8,9)

Organization level – the rest of the questions

Participants were asked to give the scores to each question from 1 – almost never to 6 almost always.

The collected data were translated into the relevant learning dimensions:

1 – Continuous learning opportunities

2 – Dialogue and inquiry

3 – Collaboration and team learning

4 – Create systems to capture and share learning

5 – Empower people toward a collective vision

6 – Connect the organization to its environment

7 – Provide strategic leadership for learning.

Results: Most of the participants gave the answers with highest or close to the highest score. No considerable difference among the scores of managers, doctors and nurses within facilities or networks. Lower scores received dimensions # 5,6, and 7 in both networks that may conclude concerns to the following context:

#5: People are not involved in setting, owning, and implementing a joint vision; responsibility is not distributed close to decision-making so that people are not motivated to learn for what they are held accountable.

- People are not helping to see impact of their work on the entire enterprise; people do not scan environment and do not use information to adjust work practices; organization is not linked to community.
- Absence of leaders model, champion and support learning; leadership does not use learning strategically for business results.

Medcapital results showed more challenges at the organization level; dimensions # 5,6, and 7 slightly differed between the two branches. Medcapital associated the difference with the late initiation of immunization program services in one of the two facilities.

In general, immunization coverage rates of Medcapital facilities correlated with DLOQ results.

According to DLOQ, **Evex Network** also revealed the challenges at the organization level. Its two branches showed lower scores at every level. As the network manager explained, the HWs of those branches are always highly demanding and motivated to improve.