

Effectiveness of Organisational Learning Capacity in Local Non-Governmental Organisations in Ghana: An Examination of Britton's (1998) Eight Learning Functions

*Sugar Emmanuel Frank Kordzo Adukonu
Ernest Laryea Okorley
Moses Kwadzo*

Abstract: Organisational learning capacity is critical to the sustainability and effectiveness of local non-governmental organisations, especially in dynamic and resource-constrained environments. This study examines the state and effectiveness of organisational learning capacity in local non-governmental organisations in Ghana's Volta Region, using Britton's 1998 eight learning functions as an analytical framework. The broader study employed a convergent parallel mixed-methods design collecting both quantitative and qualitative data using both structured questionnaire and in-depth interview. However, this manuscript reports only the descriptive quantitative analysis derived from the questionnaire component. The quantitative findings reveal moderate to effective learning capacities across supportive learning culture, information management, and learning application functions. The findings highlight that notable deficiencies persist in areas such as incentive systems, organisational memory, and external experience gathering. The findings also highlight the importance of integrated learning systems and offer practical recommendations for enhancing organisational learning in the non-governmental organisation sector.

Keywords: Britton's Learning Functions, Descriptive Analysis, Ghana, Learning Capacity, Ngos, Organisational Learning.

INTRODUCTION

The ability of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to apply knowledge acquired from their experiences and those of other

stakeholders in the NGO sector is essential for the continuous functioning and effective delivery of social services. An effective strategy to ensure continuous improvement is to cultivate organisational learning capabilities. Nonetheless, due to their primary operations in dynamic and hostile environments, several factors continually affect NGOs' capacity to operate as learning organisations. This has led to a renewed interest in discerning the factors that influence NGOs and their importance for survival and operation. Considering the significance of local non-governmental organisations (LNGOs) in aiding marginalised populations in society, the study examined the core principles of the state and the effectiveness of organisational learning capacity (OLC) in LNGOs within the Volta Region of Ghana.

BACKGROUND

NGOs have become indispensable actors in advancing social change, poverty alleviation, and sustainable development. In both developed and developing nations, their effectiveness increasingly depends on their ability to learn, adapt, and innovate in response to dynamic environments (Assoratgoon & Kantabutra, 2023; Garvin, 1993). Organisational learning capacity has thus emerged as a cornerstone for NGO sustainability and impact, enabling them to remain relevant in rapidly changing socio-economic landscapes (Çınar & Eren, 2015; Çömlek, 2025; Goh et al., 2012).

Across Africa, NGOs play a pivotal role in complementing state efforts to address poverty, inequality, and governance challenges. Yet, many face persistent constraints such as dwindling donor support, weak institutional structures, and limited mechanisms for organisational learning (Arhin, 2016; Arhin et al., 2018; Fuseini et al., 2022). These challenges underscore the importance of building adaptive capacity through robust learning systems that integrate both internal and external experiences. Strengthening organisational learning functions in African NGOs is therefore critical for enhancing resilience, fostering innovation, and ensuring long-term sustainability in resource-constrained environments (Adjei et al., 2020; Shava, 2020).

The operation of local NGOs in Sub-Saharan Africa is shaped by interrelated structural, financial, and cultural realities that directly influence the eight learning functions. Structurally, many local NGOs have lean staffing arrangements, weak information-management systems, limited monitoring and evaluation capacity, and high staff turnover, which constrain systematic reflection, documentation, knowledge transfer, and the development of organisational memory (Arhin et al., 2018; Kumi et al., 2025; Okorley & Nkrumah, 2012). Financially, dependence on short-term and project-specific donor funding often prioritises immediate outputs and

external accountability over investment in staff development, knowledge repositories, experimentation, and long-term learning systems (Adjei et al., 2020; Arhin, 2016; Kumi et al., 2025; Shava, 2020) . Competition for scarce donor resources may also discourage open exchange of lessons among organisations. Culturally, hierarchical decision-making, deference to authority, and limited tolerance for openly discussing failure can restrict critical questioning, upward feedback, and collective sense-making (Mutongwizo, 2018; Shava, 2020). At the same time, communal work practices, informal networks, and participatory engagement provide important foundations for teamwork, experiential learning, and locally grounded knowledge sharing (Fuseini et al., 2022; Sackey et al., 2017). These realities indicate that the effectiveness of Britton's learning functions depends not only on formal procedures but also on the resource environment, leadership practices, and organisational culture within which local NGOs operate (Arhin, 2016; Arhin et al., 2018; Okorley & Nkrumah, 2012; Shava, 2020) .

This study addresses this gap by evaluating the organisational learning capacity of local non-governmental organisations in the Volta Region of Ghana, guided by Britton's (1998) eight learning functions framework. The research provides critical insights into the strengths and weaknesses of current practices, informing both theory and practice in organisational management.

The choice of Britton's framework is justified by its extensive application among NGOs and development agencies worldwide as a diagnostic tool for assessing organisational learning systems. Existing literature demonstrates that organisations applying the framework tend to strengthen knowledge sharing, adaptive management, and stakeholder engagement, while continuing to face challenges in institutionalising organisational memory and aligning reward systems with learning objectives (Britton, 2002, 2005; Vushe, 2018). Empirical evidence from the public sector organisation further supports its relevance; for example, Adukonu and Ankamah (2025), in a study of Ghana Revenue Authority, found that Britton's framework effectively identified strengths in collaborative learning and weaknesses in reflection and documentation processes. These findings suggest that the model provides a comprehensive and practical lens for examining organisational learning capacities, making it particularly suitable for assessing LNGOs in the Volta.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Britton's Eight Learning Functions

Britton (1998, 2005), posited that effective organisational learning in NGOs is achieved through eight key functions: supportive learning culture,

gathering internal experience, accessing external experience, communication systems, mechanisms for concluding, developing organisational memory, integrating learning into strategy and policy, and applying learning. This systemic approach offers a comprehensive tool for diagnosing and enhancing learning capacity in complex organisational settings.

Organisational Learning Theory (OLT) and Capacity

Organisational learning is defined as the process by which organisations improve capabilities through the acquisition, retention, and sharing of knowledge (Argyris & Schon, 1978; Garvin, 1993; Maclean et al., 2023). The literature underscores that learning capacity, rooted in OLT and reflected in both formal structures and informal practices, is essential for adaptation, innovation, and long-term survival (Alegre & Chiva, 2008; Appietu-Ankrah et al., 2024; Kalmuk & Acar, 2015).

OLT was first articulated by Argyris and Schön (1978) in *Organisational Learning: A Theory of Action Perspective*. The theory emphasises the creation of a conducive learning environment where social interactions enable the generation, dissemination, and application of knowledge within organisations. It highlights that learning occurs at both micro-levels (individuals and groups) and macro-levels (organisational structures and systems), with each influencing the other (Barta et al., 2015).

From this perspective, organisations are seen as systems of action in which members must acquire knowledge of processes, norms, and strategies to achieve collective goals (King, 2024; Sullivan & Nonaka, 1986). Learning involves the continuous collection and analysis of information, adaptation of behaviours, and integration of strategies and values into organisational culture (Kuabara & Takahashi, 2019). This process ensures that knowledge is embedded in organisational memory and transmitted across levels for purposeful use (Antunes & Pinheiro, 2020; Levitt & March, 1988). For LNGOs, organisational learning provides a framework to capture, store, and share knowledge in ways that enhance innovation, adaptability, and sustainability (Jackson et al., 2005; Ricciardi et al., 2020). By fostering a culture of information exchange, learning from failures, and encouraging ongoing education, NGOs can align resources with community needs and remain relevant in dynamic environments (Basten & Haamann, 2018).

The theory also underscores the importance of leadership in sustaining learning capacity which requires leaders to understand the nature of learning, anticipate ongoing changes, and design strategies to adapt effectively (Bar-Yam et al., 2002; National Research Council, 2000). This

is particularly critical for LNGOs in Ghana, which operate in complex socio-political and cultural environments. Scholars continue to recognise OLT as a valuable lens for evaluating how organisations acquire and apply knowledge (Britton, 2002; Vathis, 2017). In the case of LNGOs in Ghana, OLT offers a robust framework for examining how these organisations build learning capacity by integrating internal and external experiences.

To operationalise the key principles of OLT, this study adopts Britton's (1998) Eight Learning Functions Framework. The framework translates the abstract concepts of organisational learning into measurable organisational processes. By assessing these interconnected functions, the framework provides a comprehensive approach for evaluating the extent to which local NGOs create, share, institutionalise, and utilise knowledge for improved organisational effectiveness.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilised a convergent parallel mixed-methods design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), collecting quantitative data through structured questionnaires and qualitative data through in-depth interviews. The present manuscript reports only the descriptive analysis of the quantitative questionnaire data; the qualitative findings are not analysed in this paper.

The target population comprised all registered local NGOs in the Volta Region. Multi-stage sampling yielded 90 respondents from 111 registered NGOs, ensuring broad representation across districts and sectors (Non-Profit Organisation Secretariat, 2022). The multi-stage sampling technique, commenced with the categorisation of the eighteen districts into three clusters of six according to their geographical positioning. A random sampling method was subsequently employed to choose 80% of registered LNGOs from each district and cluster for the purpose of quantitative data gathering, using a revised edition of Britton's Learning NGO Questionnaire which measures perceptions across eight learning functions on a scale ranging from 0 to 4. The local NGOs constitute the unit of analysis employing a key informant research approach aimed at directors or their representatives in senior management positions representing each LNGO. Participants were selected according to four inclusion criteria: (a) they must possess executive authority over strategic planning and resource distribution, (b) they should have at least three years of operational experience within the LNGO to provide historical context, (c) they must directly manage monitoring, evaluation, and learning activities, and (d) the NGOs represented must be locally established and officially registered. The selection of executive key informants is essential since they can offer an in-depth evaluation of the

organisational learning environment and management practices, which field personnel might not completely perceive. The approach seeks to improve the quality of the gathered data while minimizing common method bias by utilising reverse-coded items and safeguarding respondent anonymity.

Descriptive analysis was conducted using means and standard deviations to assess the level of effectiveness for each learning function. Scores were interpreted as follows: 0-0.44 (ineffective), 0.45-1.44 (moderately ineffective), 1.45-2.44 (moderately effective), 2.45-3.44 (effective), 3.45-4.00 (highly effective).

FINDINGS

Organisational Learning Capacity

The mean scores for the eight learning functions ranged from 2.41 to 2.73, indicating moderate to effective learning capacity of the LNGOs that were studied (Table 1). The average learning capacity was 2.54, suggesting adequate performance that could be further strengthened.

Table 1: Mean Ratings of Organisational Learning Capacity under Britton's (1998) Eight Learning Functions

Function	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Supportive learning culture	2.46	0.71	Effective
Internal experience gathering	2.64	0.76	Effective
Communication systems application	2.64	0.68	Effective
Mechanisms for drawing conclusions	2.64	0.65	Effective
Applying learning	2.54	0.78	Effective
Integration into strategy/policy	2.49	0.59	Effective
Accessing external experience	2.45	0.79	Effective
Developing organisational memory	2.41	0.80	Moderately Effective
Average	2.54	0.72	Effective

Source: Authors' Fieldwork (2023)

Thorough analysis of the result in Table 1 shows that the LNGOs shows effectiveness across all variables with supportive learning culture achieving a mean score of 2.46, indicating that most NGOs are effective in fostering environments conducive to learning. High marks were given to experience and knowledge sharing (mean = 2.73) and innovation (2.58). However, deficiencies were noted in staff incentives (2.16) and addressing organisational/individual biases (2.29).

Internal experience gathering also achieve a mean score of 2.64 demonstrating effectiveness of LNGOs, particularly in teamwork (3.01) and

knowledge sharing (2.82). However, systematic review of projects and time for reflection were less robust (2.40 and 2.36, respectively). Accessing external experience was rated effective (2.45), with the NGOs being effective in collaborations and debriefing after external training (2.56-2.66). However, only moderate effectiveness was observed in proactive networking (2.31) and sharing lessons from external visits (2.17).

Communication systems scored 2.64, reflecting effective information flow and use of both traditional and digital channels (2.56-2.73). Transparency and knowledge transfer across teams were highlighted as strengths, though some NGOs reported restricted access to information. Development of organisational memory showed the lowest mean (2.41), indicating moderate effectiveness. While some NGOs had established databases and cross-referenced records (2.53), gaps remained in systematic knowledge retention and transfer during staff turnover (2.32).

Integration of learning into strategy and policy was rated as effective (2.49), especially in systems for knowledge dissemination (2.63) and participatory decision-making (2.54). However, leveraging feedback for strategy formulation lagged behind (2.26). Application of learning was effective (2.54), with NGOs demonstrating the ability to adapt practices, scale impact, and build staff capacity based on lessons learned (2.66-2.67).

DISCUSSION

Supportive Learning Culture

The findings suggest that many LNGOs in Ghana have been relatively effective in cultivating environments that support organisational learning. This is achieved through mechanisms such as reward systems, inclusive decision-making, experimentation, and structured opportunities for staff to challenge assumptions. These practices align with OLT, which emphasises that a favourable atmosphere for social interaction, knowledge creation, and application enhances organisational effectiveness (Adukonu et al., 2025; Barta et al., 2015; Elbawab, 2024).

The failure to institutionalise robust reward mechanisms, establish comprehensive knowledge management systems, and provide consistent staff development opportunities undermines the sustainability of these learning cultures. This mirrors broader African scholarship, where NGOs often struggle to embed learning due to resource scarcity, hierarchical leadership, and donor dependency (Arhin et al., 2018; Carreno, 2024; Shava, 2020). Globally, Garvin (1993) and Levitt and March (1988) argue

that without formalised systems, learning remains ad hoc and fails to translate into long-term organisational memory or strategic adaptation.

The study revealed that the Ghanaian NGOs are making progress in creating supportive learning cultures, yet lack of institutional systems poses a risk. To strengthen resilience and sustain innovation, it is crucial to enhance reward structures, implement knowledge management practices, and focus on staff development.

Internal Experience Gathering

The findings validate earlier observations by Amanor and Moyo (2008) and Britton (2005) that NGOs which actively collect internal experiences, through staff debriefing sessions, documentation of case studies, and participation in cross-project learning exchanges, are more successful in transforming lessons into improved programme proposals and implementation strategies. Similarly, Kothari and Cooke (2001) emphasise systematic reflection sessions and structured knowledge sharing to enhance the quality of interventions by embedding learning into organisational processes.

Despite these strengths, approximately 34% of NGOs exhibited deficiencies in this area. This aligns with Akonor (2017), Britton (2002) and Ebrahim (2005) who found that many organisations struggle to institutionalise systematic gathering and application of lessons due to resource constraints and weak monitoring and evaluation systems. Such weaknesses undermine service delivery effectiveness, as Palermo et al. (2018) argue that NGOs must complement government poverty alleviation programmes like LEAP by leveraging internal learning to refine interventions.

Deficiencies in institutionalising systematic lesson capture and application reflect broader challenges where African NGOs often operate with limited resources, fragmented documentation practices, and donor-driven priorities that discourage reflective learning (Shava, 2020). Globally, however, high-performing NGOs embed structured reflection and knowledge management into their organisational routines, ensuring that lessons are systematically captured and applied (Levitt & March, 1988; Roper & Pettit, 2002).

Notwithstanding the LNGOs strength in teamwork and knowledge sharing, the absence of institutionalised reflection and systematic review processes constrains their ability to fully leverage internal experiences. Strengthening monitoring and evaluation systems, formalising debriefing practices, and investing in documentation infrastructure are critical steps toward enhancing OLC and service delivery effectiveness.

Accessing External Experience

The findings regarding accessing external experience are consistent with Alegre and Chiva (2008), who contend that organisational learning is strengthened when NGOs engage with external actors to acquire new knowledge and experiences, which are then assimilated and distributed internally to improve service delivery efficiency. Similarly, Amanor and Moyo (2008) emphasise that NGOs engaging with external actors are more effective in adapting interventions to meet stakeholder needs, underscoring the importance of external collaboration for organisational adaptability.

Despite the strengths identified, approximately 39% of LNGOs exhibited weaknesses in external experience gathering. This corroborates Edwards (1997) and Evenseth et al. (2022), who note that NGOs often fail to implement acquired knowledge due to limited inter-organisational collaboration. Within the Ghanaian space, Kpinpuo and Sanyare (2015) highlight that competitive dynamics in the NGO sector impede knowledge sharing, as organisations prioritise donor visibility over collective learning. Resource constraints further exacerbate these challenges, limiting the prioritisation of external learning functions (Basten & Haamann, 2018).

The findings reflect broader regional challenges where NGOs struggle to balance collaboration with competition for scarce donor resources (Mutongwizo, 2018; Shava, 2020). However, high-performing international NGOs tend to imbibe external learning into their organisational routines, leveraging partnerships, networks, and cross-sector collaborations to enhance knowledge acquisition and innovation (Naik & Houston, 2023; Roper & Pettit, 2002).

Addressing these deficits requires strategic collaboration aligned with OLT (Orsato et al., 2019). By institutionalising mechanisms for external knowledge acquisition, such as formal partnerships, joint training programmes, and structured debriefs, LNGOs can strengthen their adaptive capacity, reduce duplication of efforts, and enhance service delivery effectiveness.

Communication Systems

The findings corroborate Amanor and Moyo (2008) and Sackey et al. (2017), who emphasise the effectiveness of community-engaged communication forms such as social media and local radio. Ghanaian NGOs that adopted these strategies, blending traditional cultural communication methods with modern digital platforms, were more successful in integrating stakeholder feedback into their operations. This demonstrates

that communication systems, when inclusive and multi-channel, can strengthen transparency, accountability, and responsiveness in NGO programming.

Nonetheless, approximately 34% of NGOs exhibited deficiencies in communication capacity. This is consistent with Akonor (2017) and Dzisah (2019), who documented challenges related to inadequate information management, limited use of digital technologies, and reliance on top-down communication structures. Such weaknesses hinder knowledge flow, reduce lesson sharing, and constrain organisational adaptability. These challenges are not unique to Ghana; similar patterns have been observed in other developing countries, where smaller NGOs struggle to institutionalise communication training and campaigns (Ihlen et al., 2015; Mutongwizo, 2018; Shava, 2020).

The lack of institutionalised information management systems and participatory communication practices limits the capacity of the LNGOs to utilise communication effectively as a learning function. Strengthening digital infrastructure, investing in staff training, and embedding participatory communication mechanisms are critical steps toward enhancing organisational learning capacity and service delivery effectiveness.

Mechanisms for Drawing Conclusions

The findings indicate that LNGOs in Ghana demonstrate effective capacity in deriving actionable insights from experience. Strengths include communal responsibility for learning and data-driven decision-making, both of which reflect organisational cultures that value collective reflection and evidence-based adaptation. This aligns with Britton (2005) and Roper and Pettit (2002), who argue that NGOs capable of drawing meaningful conclusions from their experiences tend to be more agile, innovative, and impactful. Similarly, Naik and Houston (2023) highlight the importance of reflective after-action reviews, which allow staff to discuss successes and failures, identify problems, and implement necessary changes.

Developing organisational cultures that prioritise critical reflection and questioning is therefore essential. As Baguios (2016), Britton (2005) and Roper and Pettit (2002) emphasise, NGOs must embed learning review procedures into their strategic planning cycles, involving diverse stakeholders through participatory methods to make sense of outcomes. Flexibility in modifying programs and policies based on lessons learned is a hallmark of effective learning organisations.

However, approximately 34% of NGOs in the study area exhibited ineffectiveness in analysing past actions and extracting valuable insights. This weakness is often constrained by donor control and unhealthy competitiveness within the NGO sector (Akrofi, 2016; Kpinpuo & Sanyare, 2015). The absence of formal knowledge management practices and structured staff debriefings further limits the ability to institutionalise reflection. These challenges mirror broader patterns where NGOs in Africa struggle to balance donor accountability with internal learning priorities (Naik & Houston, 2023; Shava, 2020).

OLT underscores that effective knowledge acquisition depends on integrating lessons into behavioural patterns and strategies (Levitt & March, 1988; Sullivan & Nonaka, 1986). Without such integration, learning remains fragmented and fails to inform long-term organisational change.

The capacity of LNGOs to maximise learning is hindered by the absence of institutionalised reflection mechanisms, despite the significant strides in promoting communal responsibility and data-driven decision-making. To enhance organisational learning and ensure sustainable impact, it is essential to strengthen knowledge management systems, implement structured after-action reviews, and mitigate donor-driven constraints.

Developing Organisational Memory

The findings support earlier studies that documented examples of LNGOs in Ghana successfully developing robust organisational memory systems. Amanor and Moyo (2008) and Arhin et al. (2018) observed that NGOs which methodically recorded their activities and conducted frequent assessments were more successful in preserving and utilising institutional knowledge to guide future programming. Similarly, Kothari and Cooke (2001) and Quang and Tuamsuk (2024) note that non-profit organisations that allocate resources toward establishing comprehensive record-keeping systems, staff training in knowledge management, and cross-project learning forums demonstrate stronger capacity to build unified institutional memory and apply insights gained from past experiences.

Despite these positive examples, many NGOs remain constrained in developing effective organisational memory. Akonor (2017) and Dayson (2019) identify barriers such as insufficient formal knowledge management practices, elevated staff turnover, and suboptimal knowledge-sharing methods, all of which contribute to the loss of valuable insights. Britton (2005) further observes that southern NGOs frequently lack the resources, technical skills, and leadership commitment necessary to sustain organisational memory systems.

Challenges faced by NGOs in Africa include limited funding, weak documentation, and short-term donor priorities, impacting long-term knowledge retention (Mutongwizo, 2018; Okorley & Nkrumah, 2012; Shava, 2020). In contrast, effective global NGOs institutionalise knowledge through repositories and succession planning to ensure organisational memory and continuity (Levitt & March, 1988; Sullivan & Nonaka, 1986).

Some Ghanaian NGOs are making progress in developing organisational memory, but the lack of institutional systems in the sector limits sustainable learning. To strengthen this memory, investment in knowledge management infrastructure, staff training, and leadership commitment is essential for capturing and applying lessons to future strategies.

Integrating Learning into Strategy and Policy

The findings corroborate earlier studies showing that LNGOs have successfully formalised mechanisms for capturing, disseminating, and applying lessons learned from their operations. Petruney et al. (2014), Sawadogo-Lewis et al. (2022) and Suárez and Marshall (2014) document how NGOs institutionalised regular reflections, after-action reviews, and knowledge management systems, fostering cultures of openness, creativity, and continuous improvement. These practices enhance NGOs' ability to integrate learning into strategic decision-making, thereby improving efficiency and adaptability.

The study reveals that a number of NGOs in the Volta Region exhibit deficiencies in integrating learning into strategy and policy. This aligns with Akrofi (2016) and Okine (2022), who argue that Ghanaian NGOs often face challenges in embedding lessons into policy frameworks due to insufficient resource allocation, limited staff capability, weak knowledge-sharing cultures, and poor linkages between field implementation and higher-level decision-making. These constraints result in fragmented learning processes that fail to inform long-term organisational strategies.

Similar challenges have been observed in Uganda and Zimbabwe, where NGOs struggle to institutionalise learning due to donor dependency, hierarchical organisational cultures, and limited investment in staff development (Mutongwizo, 2018; Naik & Houston, 2023; Shava, 2020). Globally, however, effective NGOs embed learning into their strategies by institutionalising participatory decision-making, feedback loops, and knowledge dissemination systems (Petruney et al., 2014; Suárez & Marshall, 2014).

Addressing these gaps requires Ghanaian NGOs to establish effective OLC strategies through the institutionalisation of new procedures, systematic generation of knowledge, and structured dissemination practices. As Patky (2020) suggests, embedding learning into policy and strategy is not only a technical exercise but also a cultural shift, requiring leadership commitment, resource investment, and participatory governance structures.

Application of Learning

The findings are consistent with studies showing that Ghanaian NGOs have successfully applied lessons learned from prior experiences by integrating learning mechanisms into strategic planning, facilitating collaboration, and adopting flexible funding models (Akrofi, 2016; Kpinpuo & Sanyare, 2015; Sackey et al., 2017). These organisations have documented and shared lessons across the sector, thereby influencing broader practices and strengthening collective capacity. Baguios, (2016), Britton (2005) and Roper and Pettit (2002) noted that NGOs succeed when they embed feedback loops, adaptive management, and cultures of continuous learning into their operations. Partnerships and networks further enhance access to knowledge and resources, enabling NGOs to innovate and expand impact. Britton (2005) and Patky (2020) emphasise that LNGOs can adapt and innovate by acquiring, maintaining, transmitting, and utilising knowledge, while also extending learning to others through capacity building and advocacy.

Despite these strengths, the findings reveal that not all LNGOs were successful in establishing mechanisms for integrating learning into strategies and policies or for transferring and applying acquired knowledge to guide future actions. This limitation is consistent with Garvin (1993), who argued that organisations often excel at generating or acquiring new information but struggle to implement it effectively in operations. Similarly, Akrofi (2016), Baguios (2016), Britton (2005), and Roper and Pettit (2002) highlight that many NGOs in developing nations face difficulties in embedding learning due to lack of coordination, cultural barriers, donor demands, and capacity constraints in staff skills, time, and resources.

These challenges reflect broader structural realities where NGOs in Africa operate under donor-driven agendas that prioritise short-term outputs over long-term institutional learning (Shava, 2020). Globally, however, successful NGOs demonstrate that embedding learning into organisational routines, through adaptive management, participatory governance, and strategic flexibility, enhances sustainability and resilience (Levitt & March, 1988; Mutongwizo, 2018; Roper & Pettit, 2002).

The absence of institutionalised mechanisms for embedding learning into policy frameworks and strategy constrains long-term effectiveness. Strengthening coordination, reducing donor-driven constraints, and investing in staff capacity are critical steps toward ensuring that applied learning translates into sustainable organisational change and sector-wide impact.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings indicate that local NGOs in the Volta Region generally possess effective OLC across Britton's eight learning functions. Strengths include knowledge sharing, teamwork, innovation, and the use of communication systems, all vital for continuous improvement and adaptability. Despite overall effectiveness, notable deficiencies persist. Incentive structures for learning participation are weak, and mechanisms for systematic knowledge retention and external networking require strengthening. These gaps may hinder long-term sustainability and the ability to replicate best practices. Enhancing OLC requires structured reward systems, regular feedback mechanisms, and investment in knowledge management infrastructure. Partnerships with other NGOs, academic institutions, and sector stakeholders can facilitate experiential learning and innovation.

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