

Implementing a learning community¹

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Why implement a learning framework : A scenario

Visualize the situation. Bob's school is coming up for assessment. The dominant educational policy is C21st relevant learning in the middle years. Boy's education is not longer the flavour. Literacy and numeracy are passé. C21st learning and the middle years.

Bob's results in this area aren't all that impressive. His staff tell him the middle years students aren't learning how they used to. They don't sit still and listen. They don't do homework. They're not motivated to learn quadratic equations, why the Crusades occurred or to read Othello.

His regional director gives him advice. Give the students diaries that have study notes in them.

The president of the parent group gives him advice. Give them lap tops.

The highly paid consultant gives him advice. Assess their learning styles. Use whole brain teaching.

Bob's got a problem. Where does he start ?

Bob has learnt how to read ledgers. The bottom line is that the middle years students aren't learning. They were 30 years ago when he began to teach. They were still learning 15 years ago when he began to move up the administrative ladder. Why aren't they learning now ?

Bob convenes a meeting of the leadership team. Why aren't the students learning ? They have tried integrated studies, authentic learning, higher order thinking, Bloom, de Bono, even multiple intelligences. One colleague mentions the X generation. Another mentions the Y Gen. Bit by bit they suggest some key concepts, 'buzz words' that have emerged re learning and education over last 20 years.

Bob decides that his staff needs to know more about contemporary ideas on learning. If they can understand recent ideas on learning then they should be more able to put in place teaching that matches how their students learn. He call in a consultant. Her advice is "*Get them learning !*"

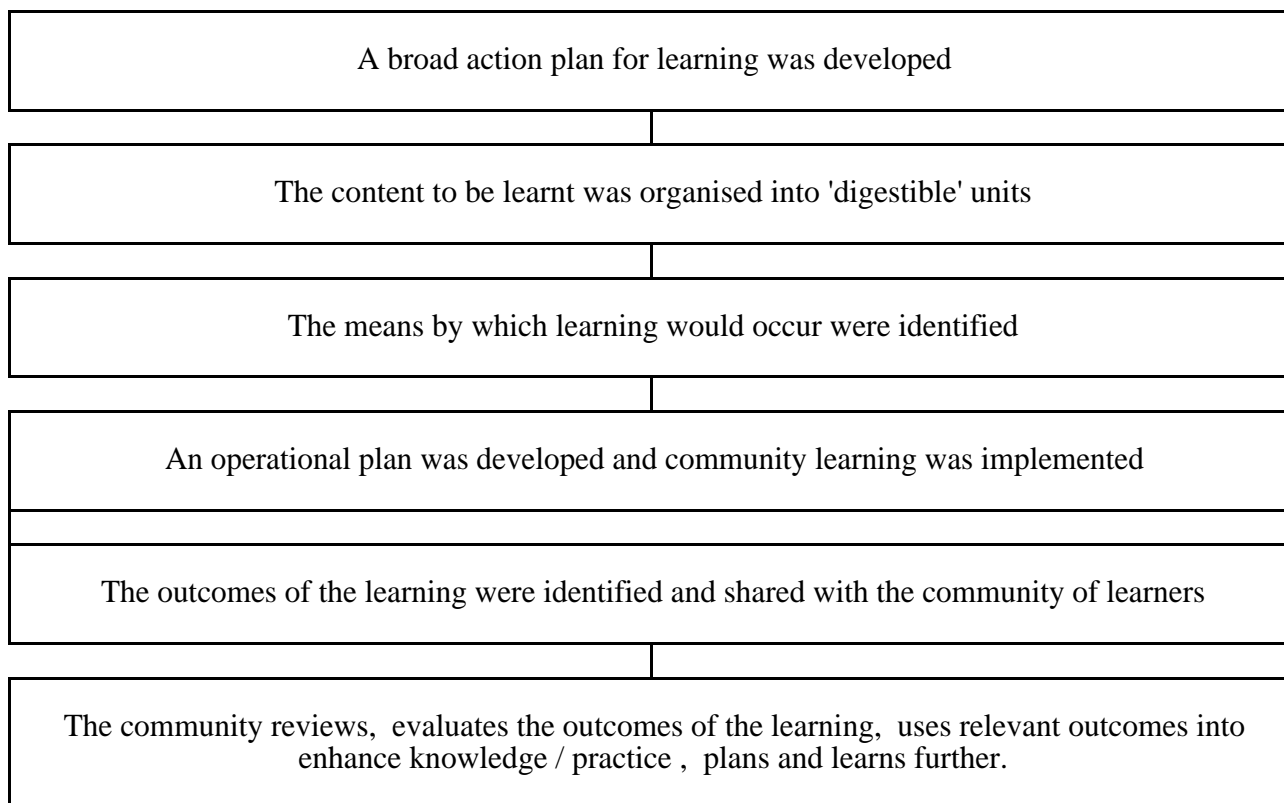
School improvement involves the learning organisation learning. Often, however, this is easier said than done. This paper examines some options for operationalising organisational learning. Leadership at various levels is necessary to initiate and guide aspects of the learning.

A case study : Whole school change

As an example, let us look at leading a school community to improve the quality of its teaching by explicating the extent to which its teaching practice is referenced on an understanding of learning. The school's goal was to improve the extent to which its teaching procedures reflected more closely how C21st adolescents learn. It recognized that beliefs and theories that worked 10-15 years ago were no longer relevant. The leadership team found the learning interactions approach acceptable and requested a professional development program that would contribute to achieving this goal. This program involved a school community learning.

¹ Munro J. (2003). Implementing learning organisations in schools: a learning foundation. Part of keynote paper presented at the Metropolitan Principals' Conference, Geelong, June, 2003.

The following key steps were involved in the learning :

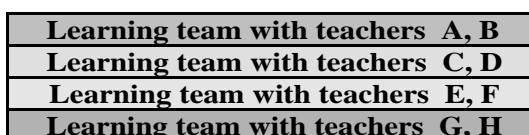
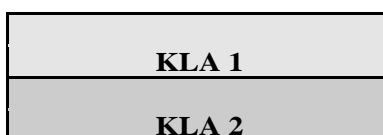
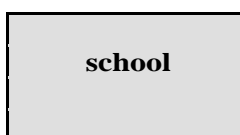


Leadership at various levels initiated and guided aspects of the improvement.

Developing the action plan

The action plan for how the staff learning might proceed included the school leadership

- explicating and operationalising its vision.
- judging the relevant existing knowledge of the staff, that is, what they knew about learning and the procedures it could take for identifying and collating this knowledge
- deciding what would be the unit of change or growth. In any institutional learning program, it is necessary to identify the unit for growth or change. The school decided on the 'professional action learning team', a sub group of each KLA as the unit for growth and the KLA as the unit for collating the learning outcomes. The KLA leaders or HoDs would be seen as 'leaders of learning'. They would need to be trained in various capacities for this role (coaching, leading learning teams, analysing content area teaching in terms of its learning demands, unpacking topics, cognitive task analysis). We needed to identify the skills, knowledge and attitudes they would need to be leaders of learning.



Unit for collating learning

Unit for learning

- examining the processes it had in place for staff learning and the processes it might need to implement to provide a broader range of staff learning opportunities. Within each KLA the staff worked in small collaborative learning teams in which they could pursue action research projects.

The school leadership team used the model of learning in two ways:

- to understand how Twenty - first century adolescents learn; how they frame up challenges, how they organise and use what they know, how they learn.
- to foster the learning of its staff. For this purpose it examined how groups of teachers in each KLA framed up goals and used what they knew.

The two aspects were integrated into a set of learning activities for students and staff. The early aspects of the model of learning involve developing a vision of the learning outcomes, identifying what is known and specifying a broad pathway. This is shown in the broad based action plan for learning in Figure 2.

Figure 2: An action plan for learning

<p>Effective learning -teaching initiative : 3 year vision</p>
<p>In three years time :</p> <p>What will students be doing ? What processes will they be learning ? How will they be learning more effectively ? How do we achieve positive learning and reasonable outcomes for all students ? How will teaching ensure optimal access to learning outcomes? How will behavior difficulties be minimised ?</p> <p>What will teachers be doing ? Appropriate pedagogy and effective classroom management for C21st ? Metaphors for effective learning and teaching (personal journey, growth).</p> <p>What will the institution be fostering ? ' How will the school organisation 'see' its students : Total person' concept. What will it validate and resource at the teaching level ? What will it be saying re effective learning and teaching ?</p>
<p>Development process</p>
<p>The context for teachers learning and changing their practice Teaching as a developmental process. Teachers as learners, what teachers need to know about personal development. Dimensions of development: (1) preparedness to change (2) ability to adapt, change (3) learning in context ; learning in different social and cultural contexts (4) individual differences in learning, multiple ways of learning.</p>
<p>Institution fostering and directing the development. The institution's management team develops an implementation plan for the initiative. Issues include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clarifying, explicating ELT policy, action plan at the institutional level • opportunities provided by institution to consolidate, review, plan ahead • how individual teacher growth is fostered, how feedback is provided to staff
<p>Teaching the leaders of learning : KLA heads as instructional leaders. How HODs are trained to direct, facilitate and manage development in their KLAs. HODs seen as team leaders of effective learning and teaching in their KLAs. They need to be trained as managers of teachers and teaching</p>
<p>Improving teachers' knowledge of effective L&T principles. Teachers explicate their beliefs re ELT, increase their knowledge of ELT and map these into improved teaching procedures, identify options they have in their teaching for describing, analysing and solving problems.</p>
<p>Professional teaching team approach to manage the development in each KLA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • processes of the team are negotiated, action plan is developed by the KLA team • each member has responsibility for particular aspects of ELT, members working in PALTs plan and implement action research projects that examine teaching aspects of the learning interactions. • means for monitoring progress are identified, procedures for collating new knowledge at the KLA level are implemented.
<p>Where are we now ?</p>
<p>Vision of preferred outcomes, stated explicitly by staff, KLA teams, administration, community and presented at school meeting.</p> <p>Identification and audit of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • existing knowledge of staff re effective learning and teaching, how students in C21 differ from earlier students in what they know, expectations, how to learn, negotiate their identities, re successful teaching in C21 • resources available (eg, procedures for determining how students learn), staff perception of students' needs, available existing data, students' and parents' perceptions of needs • what staff, KLAs believe they need to be able to improve teaching, what they need to learn, staff preferences re resources, institutional support, the processes that need to be in place, beliefs re effective use of time, 'fair' distribution of load to achieve success . • what staff believe are reasonable outcomes for students ? Should all students have positive / the same outcomes ? How accessible are learning outcomes for all students ? For which learning characteristics is access limited and are behavior problems more likely ? <p>Staff review current L &T practice and their perception of students' needs, the processes that need to be in place.</p> <p>Institutional plan for prioritising activities (in terms of time, resources), plan for operationalising, implementing, monitoring and evaluating programme.</p>

The school leadership team recognized the complexity of the staff learning outcomes to be achieved for genuine improvement to occur and mapped the action plan into a content plan that involved an 'un-packing' of the content to be learnt. It also recognised the need for a teaching plan by which staff would have time to explore and implement aspects of the learning interactions model in their teaching and for each KLA to consolidate its knowledge about 'best practice pedagogy'. It integrated these into an operational plan that described how the various aspects were implemented.

The content to be learnt was organised into 'digestible' units The learning interactions framework was broken into three sections, with one section to be investigated each year. The plan followed by the school is shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3 : The content to be learnt

Focus for the year	Key activities
Knowing what, how and why your students know	<p>Staff investigate the first four learning interactions. These target what students know and how they use this to learn. It included a consideration of what students know about</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a topic, how their knowledge is organised (learning style, multiple ways of knowing, different ways of knowing) • how to learn, • why to learn, their motives and goals for learning, their attitudes to learning and themselves as learners • being motivated • how to learn by reading
Helping your students learn	<p>Staff investigated the learning interactions that target changing knowledge. It included a consideration of how students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use preferred learning styles, multiple ways of knowing • learn in specific contexts initially, build episodic and procedural knowledge of a topic and then to decontextualise what they have learnt, • learn about how to learn, to broaden their use of learning strategies in content areas • learn more positive, functional attitudes to learning and themselves as learners • learn positive attitudes to what they are learn • learn how to convert information to knowledge • learn how to review, consolidate what they have learnt. • learnt to encode new knowledge in long term memory • learn to transfer, generalize, think innovatively and creatively about what they have learn, learnt to automatise what they have learnt.
Applying the learning interactions model	<p>Staff applied the learning interactions model</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to target special groups, for example, boys and literacy, girls and numeracy, learning difficulties, gifted learning • to Internet learning, hyper text literacy, teaching effective information handling strategies • to understand how gender and culture influence student learning .

How the community will learn The procedures that would be used to facilitate staff learning were identified and are shown in the sequence in Figure 4.

Figure 4 : The sequence of teaching procedures for staff learning

staff identify goals for learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify current problems in teaching as a need for change • identify goals for learning
explicate current knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • collate what they know about how students learn, • explicate and reflect on their beliefs and theories of learning • identify what they don't know but would like to know about learning
become aware of new ideas as options, possibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • become aware of the learning interactions model as an option for understanding learning; develop an awareness how learning can be unpacked or unravelled from something that is too big and amorphous to something that is manageable and can be broken into digestible segments. • decided whether they were intuitively reasonable and whether they could in principle target identified problems in teaching.
contextualise the new ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contextualise aspects of the model in their KLA by mapping it into a set of teaching procedures for example, if they were challenging students in Year 8 maths, what would they be doing and what would the students be doing • evaluate their teaching and see options for fine-tuning how they teach.
see teaching procedures modelled in their classes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • observe possible novel teaching practice demonstrated, operationalised in their teaching, • were coached to implement the procedures.
trial new teaching procedures in action research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analyse problem areas in their teaching from a learning perspective and identify areas in which they could improve / fine-tune their teaching • within each KLA in PALTs develop an action research learning plan for using students' existing knowledge, design, trial and evaluate novel teaching procedures in their classrooms
evaluate, collate the outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • report their trialing to their KLA team and to the school in a poster that showed how the procedure trialed influenced student achievement, engagement and interest, what students learnt about how to learn and their attitudes to the topic and subject
up-date their teaching	<p>fine-tune their teaching to accommodate changes in approach to learning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how it can become part of regular teaching practice - code of teaching that characterises the school's core approach to pedagogy.

Skilling the leaders of community learning

This sequence of staff learning was led and supported by a KLA leadership team that had a sufficiently high level of instructional leadership to foster and guide the staff learning process. The KLA leaders were seen by the school leadership team as 'leaders of learning and leaders in learning'. The KLA leadership team was aware that it didn't have 'all the answers' but was certainly able to 'ask the appropriate questions' so that student learning was consistently targeted.

Given the critical role of the KLA leaders or HODs as instructional leaders in learning and of learning, an action plan was also developed. This indicated the necessary of skill and knowledge development for them. This is shown for one school in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Skilling leaders in learning and of learning.

Outcome	Indicator
develop professional action learning teams within in each KLA, understand how PALTs learn and work, with members of the KLA teams taking the running on particular aspects and issues/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussed and analysed the notion of PALTs • Analysed the work of particular examples of PALTs • Identified the key learning actions of each PALT and each participant
led in the development of a learning enhancement action plan, managed and directed the implementation and monitoring the work of the team, identified mechanisms for collecting data and put in place procedures for group goal setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysed the steps involved in implementing an applied action research investigation • Applied this to 2 or 3 possible projects in their KLA • Reported the outcomes of the Leaders of Learning group
coached individual staff members and groups in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ways of thinking • novel teaching procedures • attitudes, dispositions to improving one's practice 	Planned and implemented coaching interventions for individual staff and small groups
facilitated the on-going learning, development and contribution of individual team members, both in collaborative groups and individually	Analysed adult group learning processes in terms of Belbin's framework, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the roles played by various Belbin types, • identified procedures for fostering activity by each type, • procedures for balancing the activity of the various types and • integrating the outcomes of the various types

An operational or implementation plan

The operational plan for one school during a year is shown in Figure 6. During this year the school investigated the teaching procedures that targeted the first four learning interactions. These related generally to students using what they already knew to learn. The plan shows the intended outcomes and the indicators that learning had occurred.

Figure 6 : Operational plan for researching teaching procedures for using what students know

Outcome : staff	How it was achieved
engaged in analysis of how learning occurs from the perspective of effective learner interactions	During the first PD day staff identified the conditions for effective learning and collated their outcomes into an integrated framework for examining learning
audited what they know about the learning process and implications for effective teaching	Group knowledge of learning in each KLA was audited. Staff completed a questionnaire that examined how confidently they believed they could discuss each of the key interactions.
analysed their teaching in terms of the extent to which it facilitates each of the learner interactions	Staff will use the content developed in the PD day to analyse their teaching and from this to develop a self-enhancement action plan
examined (that is, collected data about) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the different ways in which students in their classes learn • how well their students frame up goals for learning and develop learning pathways • how well their students go about showing what they know • how well their students transfer and generalise what they know • how motivated their students are to achieve, their motives and goals for learning 	Individual staff in each KLA will research particular aspects of this and then each will take the lead in developing procedures for assessing each aspect in their classes. When the data has been collected, they can analyse the outcomes and discuss implications for teaching
developed procedures for analysing the demands their teaching and the content they will teach makes on how students learn, worked in teams to develop procedures for examining what students know in the topics they will be teaching in near future at the beginning of a topic	KLA staff in groups analysed a topic they teach in the near future in terms of what it demands re conceptual and procedural knowledge, ways of learning, automatised knowledge
as part of a self-enhancement action plan, each staff member engaged in a small scale teaching project in their KLA area examine particular aspects of what students know about learning, for example, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the different ways in which students in their classes know a topic, how their knowledge is organised (learning • style or preference, multiple ways of knowing, different ways of knowing • how well their students frame up goals for learning and develop learning pathways • how well their students show what they know • how motivated their students are to achieve, their motives and goals for learning, what students know about being motivated • what students know about how to learn, eg., how to ask questions, how to learn in groups • students' attitudes to learning and themselves as learners, how they can use classroom behaviour to infer learning attitudes to /beliefs. 	Each staff member undertook a classroom research project to examine the effectiveness of particular teaching procedures associated with students' existing knowledge. They worked on their project in collaborative pairs (PALTs) in each KLA group and provided peer feedback and coaching for their partner. They developed and implemented their research projects as follows: they <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • used the model of learning developed in the PD day to analyse the demands their teaching makes on what students know. • selected a topic they were to teach in the near future and developed a set of innovative teaching procedures to • investigate while teaching the topic. They discussed the innovative procedures at a KLA meeting. • developed procedures for assessing each the effectiveness and value of the teaching procedures in their classes. • implemented the procedures while teaching the topic and observed how they affected students learning in four areas; level of student achievement, student engagement in learning, student knowledge about how to learn the topic and student attitude to learning the topic. • analysed the data collected and identified the implications for teaching in the future

<p>reported the outcomes of their innovation in a poster to the staff. The outcomes were outlines to the staff as a whole. As well, all posters were on display. All staff were informed of the outcomes of each project. Individual staff and KLAs were encouraged to discuss the projects of other staff and identify ones that they may trial in their teaching in the future.</p>	<p>Each staff member described their project and its outcomes in a poster that was presented at a whole school professional development activity. Each poster described</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the content area and year level taught • the issue or problem in teaching to be targeted • the innovative teaching procedures and how they were implemented • student outcomes in terms of (1) level of achievement, (2) student engagement in learning, (3) knowledge about how to learn the topic and (4) attitude to learning the topic.
<p>debriefed in their KLA group; they</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reviewed each innovative teaching procedure and how it could be improved in future use • identified ways of improving the research projects • identified the gains in KLA teaching knowledge • developed an action plan for future innovative teaching research projects. 	<p>Staff members debriefed in their KLA group; they</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evaluated each teaching procedure in terms of its ease of implementation, use and impact on learning outcomes • identified ways of improving each teaching procedure in future use • identified ways of improving the research projects in the future • identified the gains in KLA teaching knowledge • how the KLA could benefit from the innovative teaching procedures used in other KLAs • developed an action plan for future innovative teaching research projects.
<p>engaged in two small scale teaching projects in their KLA areas examine the different ways in which students learn</p>	<p>KLA groups undertake two small classroom projects to examine the effectiveness of particular procedures. Ways of developing, implementing, assessing and reporting each project to the staff.</p>

Outcomes of the community learning

A key aspect of learning is the display of the learning outcomes at various times during the learning. The knowledge gained by each teacher can become group knowledge by being shared with other members of the KLA or teaching group and with the school community.

Each teacher reported the novel teaching procedure they trialed in the action research and the observed student outcomes. Each outcome was described in terms of the comparative level of achievement of students with earlier years, level of student engagement, students' knowledge of how to learn and their attitude to the topic being taught. These outcomes are shown for four teachers in Figure 7.

Figure 7 : The outcomes of the use of novel teaching procedures for four teachers .

topic	how taught in past	Teaching approach trialed	Student outcomes
Years 10 and 12 woodwork projects making a tackle box, tool box	Teacher demonstrates procedure and all students make the same item	Students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • given outline of the project, • decide whether the project is useful • modify it to suit their interests • make links with projects they have already made re skills, materials, hardware, tools and processes they used. • plan a possible pathway based on their design and operate within particular constraints 	Making links with previous work increased <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • level of autonomy and motivation/ satisfaction with the task • quality of outcome • knowledge of how to plan
Year 9 mask making to incorporate cultural and historical and functional aspects	Looked at posters, photocopies, books of masks and finished masks (that had the underlying features covered).	Students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • challenged to make a 'raised profile' mask, • used their knowledge of having built anything earlier • saw examples of partially completed masks at different stages of development to identify procedures for obtaining a 3-D feature. • developed explicit pathways for making their masks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • higher quality masks • more able to manage / direct their own learning
Year 10 geography; economic, social life in PNG compared with Australia	Start with pretest on unit, use maps and information sources to collect information re the country	Students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • decided to study PNG, • closed their eyes, visualized a normal day living in Aus, list the key activities in which they engage, repeat this for living in PNG, and jotted down key points. • worked in small groups to discuss living in PNG, consolidated and collated ideas to develop a set of social economic indicators of quality of life. 	Students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more engaged, asked more questions, more enthusiastic re follow up work, • wanted to learn. • when they accessed information sources they had questions they wanted answered • higher outcomes.
Year 10 History ; emergence of the super powers, communism and capitalism	Teacher centred; provided an overview, map out unit, define communism and capitalism	Students ' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • put into words what they knew, • identified key words and ideas, gave examples of each, • discussed their images of key words and ideas • said questions they could ask • identified what they knew re differences between communism and capitalism by drawing pictures of each and comparing, • summarised the main ideas. 	Students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learnt the topic more easily, showed higher understanding • applied the ideas better, • showed higher on-task behaviour, more interested.

Review, enhance knowledge / practice and continue the learning

This phase of the community learning involves two aspects of reflection on practice: community members (1) reflect evaluatively on what has been learnt and identify valuable outcomes of the learning and (2) reflect 'into the future, contemplating possible directions for future learning.

The community reviews and evaluates the outcomes of the learning. In the above case study innovative teaching procedures were evaluated in terms of their relevance for enhanced pedagogy and an understanding of learning at the KLA level. Staff identified how they could incorporate these into their teaching and to develop them further. At the school level the implications of outcomes for the school's code of teaching were identified. Schools can identify the extent to which the learning has assisted them to achieve aspects of their community goals or visions.

The community also plans and learns further. Schools can identify how they can re-orient their goals or visions and how they might approach the next aspect of their vision. The school identifies new priorities or goals for its learning and implements the next phase of the learning agenda.

Summary

This implementation framework can be used to foster learning in organisations.