

Learning-Adaptive Capability and Organizational Performance of Driving Schools in Meru County, Kenya

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Abstract

Driving schools contribute to road-user competence, mobility, employment creation and transport-sector safety, yet their organizational performance depends on their ability to respond to changing regulations, learner expectations, technologies and competitive conditions. Many schools operate with limited formal learning systems, irregular staff development, weak knowledge-sharing routines and reactive approaches to regulatory change. This study examined the effect of learning-adaptive capability on the organizational performance of driving schools in Meru County, Kenya. The study was anchored on Organizational Learning Theory and supported by Dynamic Capabilities Theory. A descriptive-correlational research design was adopted. The target population comprised 104 respondents drawn from top, middle-level, and operational-level management across 26 driving schools. A census approach was applied, and 79 usable questionnaires were returned. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire, the validity and reliability of which were confirmed prior to the main survey. The collected data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation and simple linear regression. The findings established that learning-adaptive capability was highly practised through staff training, competence development, regulatory adaptation, knowledge sharing and professional development. Learning-adaptive capability had a positive and statistically significant effect on organizational performance, explaining 48.2% of its variation ($R^2 = 0.482$), thereby rejecting the null hypothesis. The study concluded that employee development, institutional knowledge sharing, and regulatory adaptation enhanced service quality, customer satisfaction, operational efficiency, and competitiveness. It recommended that driving-school managers institutionalize continuous staff development, structured knowledge-sharing practices, regulatory update mechanisms, and role-specific professional development to strengthen organizational performance and promote sustainable institutional growth within the driver-training sector.

Keywords: *Learning-adaptive capability, organizational learning, organizational performance, driving schools, staff development, regulatory adaptation, Kenya.*

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1. Introduction

Organizational performance reflects an institution's ability to transform its resources and capabilities into financial, operational and customer-related outcomes (Almatrooshi et al., 2020; Richard et al., 2021). In service organizations, performance is commonly assessed through revenue growth, customer satisfaction, customer retention, market position, service quality and operational efficiency (Anning-Dorson, 2021). Within driving schools, these outcomes also depend on the capacity to respond to changing learner expectations, regulatory requirements, technology and competitive pressures. Possessing vehicles, instructors and physical facilities may therefore be insufficient unless these resources are continuously renewed and effectively deployed (Helfat & Peteraf, 2021).

Driving schools operate as educational, commercial and regulated service institutions. They must provide competent training, satisfy learners, maintain efficient administrative systems and comply with transport-sector requirements. These interconnected demands may render established routines ineffective when customer expectations, regulations and technologies change. Organizations operating in changing environments consequently require capabilities that support learning, innovation and timely adaptation (Fainshmidt et al., 2020; Witschel et al., 2022).

Learning-adaptive capability refers to an organization's capacity to acquire, interpret, share and apply knowledge when modifying decisions, routines and service-delivery practices (Crossan et al., 2020). In this study, it comprised staff training, competence development, regulatory adaptation, knowledge sharing, professional development and employee motivation. Training develops employee knowledge, while knowledge sharing distributes expertise across organizational levels. Adaptation converts acquired knowledge into revised practices, whereas professional development sustains employee competence and commitment (Brix, 2020; Real et al., 2021).

Organizational Learning Theory explains that institutions improve when they identify errors, generate knowledge, and integrate lessons into organizational routines (Argyris & Schön, 1978). Individual experience contributes to organizational performance only when it is interpreted collectively and embedded in procedures, decisions and service practices (Crossan et al., 2020). Dynamic Capabilities Theory similarly proposes that organizations sustain performance by sensing environmental changes, seizing emerging opportunities and reconfiguring their competencies and resources (Teece et al., 1997).

Empirical evidence associates organizational learning with innovation, responsiveness, continuous improvement and business performance (Brix, 2020; Real et al., 2021). However, existing studies have predominantly examined general service firms, manufacturing organizations and technology-oriented enterprises, providing limited evidence from regulated driver-training institutions. Kenyan studies have also examined innovation capabilities broadly without isolating learning-adaptive capability among driving schools (Mutuku & Karanja, 2021; Mwitwa & Mutwiri, 2022). This study therefore examined how staff learning, knowledge sharing, professional development and regulatory adaptation influenced the organizational performance of driving schools in Meru County, Kenya.

1.1 Problem Statement

Driving schools are expected to provide competent instruction, maintain reliable administrative systems, satisfy learners and comply with changing transport-sector requirements. Meeting these expectations requires managers and employees to continually update their knowledge, strengthen competence and adjust organizational routines. However, some service institutions experience inconsistent service quality, inefficient coordination, weak customer retention and limited growth because their resources and routines are not regularly renewed in response to environmental change (Fainshmidt et al., 2020; Helfat & Peteraf, 2021). This suggests that vehicles, instructors, and administrative systems may not sustain performance without deliberate learning and adaptive mechanisms.

Learning within small service institutions is often informal and dependent on individual experience. Knowledge acquired through customer interactions, daily operations and regulatory processes may remain with individual employees rather than being shared and embedded in institutional procedures (Crossan et al., 2020). Inconsistent staff development, weak knowledge sharing, and poor communication of regulatory updates may result in repeated errors, inconsistent procedures, and inadequate use of customer feedback. Limited professional development may also weaken employee competence, motivation and service-delivery capacity (Brix, 2020; Cegarra-Navarro et al., 2021).

Previous studies have established positive relationships between organizational learning, innovation and performance. Brix (2020) linked organizational learning with sustainable innovation in Denmark, while Real et al. (2021) associated knowledge acquisition and application with business performance in Spain. Mwiti and Mutwiri (2022) found that innovation-oriented strategies enhanced service-enterprise sustainability in Meru County. However, these studies examined general firms and did not isolate learning-adaptive capability among regulated driving schools. This study addressed the resulting contextual and conceptual gap by examining its effect on enrolment, revenue, customer satisfaction, customer retention, market share, and operational efficiency among driving schools in Meru County, Kenya.

1.2 Research Objective

To evaluate the effect of learning-adaptive capability on the organizational performance of driving schools in Meru County, Kenya.

1.3 Research Hypothesis

H₀₁: Learning-adaptive capability has no statistically significant effect on the organizational performance of driving schools in Meru County, Kenya.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

The study was anchored on Organizational Learning Theory, advanced by Argyris and Schön (1978). The theory explains how organizations acquire, interpret, share, and apply knowledge to improve decisions, routines, and performance. It distinguishes between single-loop learning, which corrects immediate errors without changing underlying assumptions, and double-loop learning, which revises the rules, values, and practices that lead to recurring problems (Argyris & Schön, 1978). In driving schools, immediate correction may address an isolated scheduling error, whereas deeper learning may involve redesigning the scheduling system to eliminate persistent delays.

Organizational experience only becomes valuable when it is interpreted, communicated, and incorporated into institutional practices. Crossan et al. (2020) conceptualized learning as a multilevel process involving intuition, interpretation, integration, and institutionalization. Individual employees identify problems or opportunities, groups develop shared understanding, and management embeds accepted knowledge into procedures and service standards. Accordingly, staff training improves organizational performance when acquired knowledge is shared and applied rather than retained by individual employees (Brix, 2020).

The theory supports learning-adaptive capability because staff competence, knowledge sharing, regulatory adaptation, and professional development enable driving schools to revise their instruction, customer service, and administrative practices. However, learning does not automatically improve performance. Organizations may retain inaccurate knowledge or fail to implement valid lessons due to inadequate resources, weak leadership, employee resistance, or poor communication (Cegarra-Navarro et al., 2021).

Dynamic Capabilities Theory complemented Organizational Learning Theory. The theory proposes that organizations sustain performance by sensing environmental changes, seizing opportunities, and reconfiguring internal competencies and resources (Teece et al., 1997; Helfat & Peteraf, 2021). Learning supports environmental interpretation, informed decision-making, and transformation of organizational routines. Organizational Learning Theory, therefore, explains how knowledge becomes institutionalized practice, while Dynamic Capabilities Theory explains how such knowledge enables adaptation and improved competitiveness. Together, the theories predict that driving schools with effective staff training, knowledge sharing, regulatory responsiveness, and professional development achieve stronger service quality, customer satisfaction, and operational efficiency.

2.2 Empirical Review

Learning-adaptive capability enables organizations to acquire knowledge, develop employees, share experience, and adjust operations in response to environmental change. Its practices include environmental scanning, staff training, knowledge sharing, reflection, experimentation, and continuous improvement. These practices can enhance performance by improving employee competence, reducing repeated errors, strengthening regulatory responsiveness, and promoting efficient service delivery (Crossan et al., 2020; Cegarra-Navarro et al., 2021).

Brix (2020) examined organizational learning and sustainable innovation in Denmark and established that organizational learning supported experimentation, knowledge creation, continuous improvement and adaptation. Although the findings demonstrated the importance of learning systems, the study focused on general Danish firms whose structures and operating environment differ from those of Kenyan driving schools. Real et al. (2021) similarly investigated organizational learning, entrepreneurial orientation and business performance among firms in Spain. Knowledge acquisition and application strengthened organizational performance and the ability to exploit emerging opportunities. However, the study did not address regulated training institutions or the particular learning requirements of driving schools.

Studies grounded in dynamic capabilities provide related evidence. Fainshmidt et al. (2020) associated resource reconfiguration with organizational adaptation and performance, while Helfat and Peteraf (2021) emphasized that capability development enables firms to align resources with changing opportunities and threats. Witschel et al. (2022) further linked dynamic capabilities with strategic renewal and digital transformation. Nevertheless, these studies examined capabilities broadly and did not isolate staff training, knowledge sharing,

professional development, and regulatory adaptation as dimensions of learning-adaptive capability.

Evidence from emerging economies also supports the relationship. Anning-Dorson (2021) found that innovation capability enhanced customer responsiveness, service differentiation and competitiveness among African service firms. Edeh et al. (2020) similarly established that innovation strategies improved market responsiveness and operational performance in Nigeria. In Kenya, Mutuku and Karanja (2021) found that innovation practices enhanced service efficiency and customer satisfaction, while Njuguna and Kinyua (2022) associated technology adoption with communication and operational coordination. Mwangi and Wanjau (2022) also linked innovation capability with customer retention, market positioning and efficiency.

In Meru County, Mwititi and Mutwiri (2022) established that continuous improvement, customer responsiveness and market adaptation enhanced service-enterprise sustainability. However, the study covered service enterprises generally and did not isolate learning-adaptive capability within driving schools. Consequently, contextual and conceptual gaps remained. The present study addressed these gaps by examining staff training, competence development, regulatory adaptation, knowledge sharing, professional development, and employee motivation as predictors of organizational performance among driving schools in Meru County, Kenya.

3. Methodology

The study adopted a quantitative research approach to objectively examine the effect of learning-adaptive capability on the organizational performance of driving schools in Meru County, Kenya (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). A descriptive-correlational research design was employed. The descriptive design summarized learning-adaptive practices and organizational performance outcomes, while the correlational design examined the relationship between the variables without manipulating existing organizational conditions (Kothari, 2004; Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

The target population comprised 104 respondents drawn from 26 driving schools operating in Meru County. Each school contributed one top-management respondent, one middle-level-management respondent, and two operational-level-management respondents. A census approach was adopted because the target population was small and accessible. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire containing demographic questions and five-point Likert-scale statements measuring learning-adaptive capability and organizational performance. A pilot study involving 10 respondents from driving schools in Isiolo County was conducted. Content validity was established through expert review, while construct suitability was supported by the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha against the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Cronbach, 1951; Hair et al., 2022).

The collected data were cleaned, coded, and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences. Means and standard deviations summarized the study variables, while Pearson Product Moment Correlation and simple linear regression examined the relationship and predictive effect of learning-adaptive capability on organizational performance. Diagnostic tests for normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, and independence of errors confirmed that the regression assumptions were satisfied. Statistical significance was evaluated at the 5% level (Gujarati & Porter, 2021; Field, 2024).

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Response Rate

The study administered 104 questionnaires to respondents drawn from 26 driving schools in Meru County. Of these, 79 questionnaires were completed, returned, and found suitable for analysis, representing a response rate of 76.0%. The remaining 25 questionnaires were not returned, accounting for 24.0% of those administered. The response rate was considered adequate for conducting descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation analysis, and simple linear regression. Furthermore, the participation of respondents from top-, middle-, and operational-level management ensured that the study captured strategic, supervisory, and operational perspectives regarding learning-adaptive capability and organizational performance. Table 1 presents the response-rate results.

Table 1: Response Rate

Response category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Returned questionnaires	79	76.0
Unreturned questionnaires	25	24.0
Total questionnaires administered	104	100.0

4.2 Descriptive Analysis of Learning-Adaptive Capability

The study assessed the extent to which driving schools applied learning-adaptive practices. As presented in Table 2, learning-adaptive capability recorded a composite mean of 3.96 and a standard deviation of 0.79, indicating a high level of practice. The findings show that respondents generally agreed that their driving schools promoted employee learning, shared knowledge, and adjusted their operations in response to external requirements. The relatively low standard deviation indicates that respondents held broadly consistent views.

Adaptation to regulatory changes recorded the highest mean ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 0.72$). This finding indicates that driving schools regularly adjusted their training and administrative practices to comply with changing regulatory requirements. The low variation in responses demonstrates strong agreement regarding the importance of regulatory responsiveness.

Staff training improving employee competence recorded the second-highest mean ($M = 4.03$, $SD = 0.77$). This suggests that training programmes enhanced employees' ability to perform their responsibilities, communicate with learners and consistently apply organizational procedures. Respondents also agreed that professional development improved staff motivation ($M = 3.96$, $SD = 0.79$), indicating that development opportunities strengthened both employee competence and willingness to perform.

Effective knowledge sharing recorded a mean of 3.91 ($SD = 0.80$), while frequent staff training attained a mean of 3.88 ($SD = 0.82$). Although these practices were rated highly, the results suggest that driving schools could further strengthen formal training and internal knowledge-sharing systems. Support for staff professional development recorded the lowest mean ($M = 3.84$, $SD = 0.85$), despite remaining within the high category. This result indicates a need for more consistent and structured professional-development opportunities.

Table 2: Descriptive Analysis of Learning-Adaptive Capability (N = 79)

Statement	Mean	SD
The driving school frequently conducts staff training programmes.	3.88	0.82
Staff training has improved competence in the driving school.	4.03	0.77
The driving school adapts to regulatory changes affecting driver training.	4.12	0.72
Staff shares knowledge effectively within the driving school.	3.91	0.80
The driving school supports staff professional development.	3.84	0.85
Professional development has improved staff motivation.	3.96	0.79
Composite mean/SD	3.96	0.79

4.3 Descriptive Analysis of Organizational Performance

The study assessed organizational performance using learner enrolment growth, revenue growth, customer satisfaction, customer retention, market share improvement, and operational efficiency. As presented in Table 3, organizational performance recorded a composite mean of 3.90 and a standard deviation of 0.82, indicating a high level of performance. The findings show that respondents generally perceived their driving schools as achieving favourable financial, customer-related and operational outcomes.

Customer satisfaction recorded the highest mean ($M = 4.06$, $SD = 0.75$). This indicates that respondents considered learners generally satisfied with the services provided by their driving schools. Operational efficiency recorded the second-highest mean ($M = 4.01$, $SD = 0.78$), suggesting that the schools had improved the coordination and execution of their activities. The relatively low standard deviations for these indicators show that respondents held broadly consistent views.

Growth in learner enrolment was also rated highly ($M = 3.92$, $SD = 0.80$), indicating that the driving schools had attracted more learners. Customer retention recorded a mean of 3.88 ($SD = 0.83$), while revenue growth attained a mean of 3.84 ($SD = 0.86$). These findings suggest that the schools experienced favourable customer retention and financial outcomes.

Improvement in market share recorded the lowest mean ($M = 3.71$, $SD = 0.91$), although it remained within the high-performance category. This finding indicates that market expansion was less pronounced than customer satisfaction, operational efficiency, and learner-enrolment growth. Driving schools may therefore need to strengthen service differentiation, marketing, customer engagement, and market-coverage strategies to improve their competitive position.

Table 3: Descriptive Analysis of Organizational Performance (N = 79)

Statement	Mean	SD
The driving school has experienced growth in learner enrolment.	3.92	0.80
The driving school has experienced revenue growth.	3.84	0.86
Customer satisfaction at the driving school is high.	4.06	0.75
The driving school has a high customer retention rate.	3.88	0.83
The driving school has improved its market share.	3.71	0.91
The driving school has improved operational efficiency.	4.01	0.78
Composite mean/SD	3.90	0.82

4.4 Pearson Correlation Analysis

Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis was conducted to determine the direction, strength, and statistical significance of the relationship between learning-adaptive capability and organizational performance. As shown in Table 4, learning-adaptive capability had a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship with organizational performance ($r = .694$, $p < .001$). The positive coefficient indicates that increases in staff training, knowledge sharing, professional development, and regulatory adaptation were associated with improvements in organizational performance.

The magnitude of the correlation demonstrates that the relationship between the variables was substantial. Therefore, driving schools with stronger learning-adaptive capabilities were more likely to report improvements in learner enrolment, revenue growth, customer satisfaction, customer retention, market share, and operational efficiency. However, the correlation results only demonstrate an association between the variables and do not independently establish a causal relationship.

The finding supports Organizational Learning Theory, which proposes that acquiring, sharing, and applying knowledge improves organizational routines and performance. It also supports Dynamic Capabilities Theory, which explains that learning and adaptation enable institutions to reconfigure their resources and competencies in response to environmental change.

The finding is consistent with Brix (2020), who established that organizational learning promoted sustainable innovation and continuous improvement. It also agrees with Real et al. (2021), who found that knowledge acquisition and application improved business performance. Similarly, Mwitwi and Mutwiri (2022) established that continuous improvement and responsiveness to market changes enhanced business sustainability among service enterprises in Meru County. The present finding extends this evidence to regulated driver-training institutions.

Table 4: Pearson Correlation Analysis

Variable/Statistic	Learning-Adaptive Capability	Organizational Performance
Learning-Adaptive Capability		
Pearson correlation	1	.694**
Sig. (2-tailed)	—	.000
N	79	79
Organizational Performance		
Pearson correlation	.694**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	—
N	79	79

Note. **Correlation is significant at the .01 level (two-tailed).

4.5 Bivariate Linear Regression Analysis

A simple linear regression analysis was conducted to assess the effect of learning-adaptive capability on organizational performance. As shown in Table 5, the model yielded a correlation coefficient ($R = .694$), indicating a strong positive relationship between the variables. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = .482$) indicated that learning-adaptive capability explained 48.2% of the variation in organizational performance. The adjusted R^2 ($R^2 = .475$) was close to the unadjusted value, demonstrating that the model retained substantial explanatory power after accounting for sample size. The remaining 51.8% of performance variation may be attributed to service innovation, technology, leadership, market demand, competition, and other organizational factors not included in the model.

Table 5: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.694	.482	.475	.405

Dependent variable: Organizational performance. Predictor: Learning-adaptive capability.

The ANOVA results in Table 6 show that the regression model was statistically significant ($F(1,77) = 71.647$, $p < .001$). The findings indicate that learning-adaptive capability significantly predicted organizational performance and that the model's explanatory power was not attributable to chance.

Table 6: ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	13.732	1	13.732	71.647	.000
Residual	14.758	77	.192		
Total	28.490	78			

Dependent variable: Organizational performance. Predictor: Learning-adaptive capability.

The coefficient results presented in Table 7 indicate that learning-adaptive capability had a positive and statistically significant effect on organizational performance ($B = .718$, ($SE = .078$, ($\beta = .694$, ($t = 9.151$), $p < .001$). The unstandardized coefficient implies that a one-unit improvement in learning-adaptive capability was associated with a 0.718-unit increase in organizational performance.

The finding suggests that staff training, knowledge sharing, regulatory adaptation, and professional development strengthen employee competence, service consistency, and operational responsiveness. It supports Organizational Learning Theory, which proposes that organizational performance improves when individual knowledge is shared and embedded in institutional practices. It also supports Dynamic Capabilities Theory by demonstrating that employee learning and adaptation enable organizations to reconfigure their competencies in response to environmental change.

The finding aligns with Brix (2020), who linked organizational learning to continuous improvement and sustainable innovation. It is also consistent with Real et al. (2021), who established that knowledge acquisition and application improved business performance, and Mwiti and Mutwiri (2022), who linked continuous improvement and market responsiveness with service-enterprise sustainability. The present study extends this evidence by demonstrating that learning-adaptive capability predicts performance within regulated driver-training institutions.

Table 7: Regression Coefficients

Predictor	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	Standardized Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	1.108	.306	—	3.621	.001
Learning-adaptive capability	.718	.078	.694	9.151	.000

Dependent variable: Organizational performance.

5. Conclusion

The study established that learning-adaptive capability had a positive and significant influence on the organizational performance of driving schools in Meru County. Staff training, competence development, regulatory adaptation, knowledge sharing and professional development were associated with improved learner enrolment, revenue, customer satisfaction, customer retention, market share and operational efficiency. Regulatory adaptation was the most established learning practice, while professional development support received the lowest rating, though it remained high.

Learning-adaptive capability explained 48.2% of the variation in organizational performance, leading to rejection of the null hypothesis. The study therefore concluded that driving schools that continuously develop employees, share knowledge, and incorporate lessons into organizational practices achieve stronger performance. The findings support Organizational Learning Theory by confirming that knowledge acquisition, sharing, and application improve performance. They also support Dynamic Capabilities Theory by demonstrating that learning enables institutions to reconfigure their competencies in response to regulatory, customer, and competitive changes.

The findings should be interpreted with caution because the cross-sectional design captured respondents' perceptions at a single point in time, performance was assessed using self-reported measures, and the study was limited to Meru County.

6. Recommendations

Driving-school management should establish continuous, role-specific staff-development programmes for instructors, administrators and managers. Schools should institutionalize regulatory learning by monitoring changes, communicating new requirements and incorporating them into operational procedures. Knowledge sharing should be strengthened through review meetings, peer learning, mentoring and shared procedural guidance.

Management should provide equitable professional development opportunities and evaluate their effects on employee competence, customer satisfaction, compliance, and operational efficiency. Regulators should complement enforcement with clear guidance and practical training support. Further studies should examine driving schools in other countries using longitudinal and mixed-method approaches and investigate leadership, organizational culture, technology adoption, and regulatory intensity as possible mediating or moderating variables.

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