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Learning and leadership as key to organisational development : a study of how a non-governmental organisation (NGO) in the South African educational field grew from a regional entity into a national entity.

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Abstract

This study examines the nature of learning organisations with a special focus on how these organisations manage to sustain and reinvent themselves despite changing contexts. In particular, the study focuses on one NGO operating in the South African education field. The intention of this research report is to determine how the specified organisation has been able to sustain and expand its operations while remaining effective and relevant despite changing political, economic and social contexts. The findings of the study have been drawn from interviews held with key personnel who presently work or previously worked for the organisation under study. Data from the interviews was triangulated with data extracted from the organisation's annual reports. The data shows that the organisation grew from a regional entity to having offices all over South Africa. In order to do so, the organisation had to adapt to changing circumstances which it did by learning from experts and other organisations worldwide that were involved in similar pursuits. From these sources, the organisation learnt about innovative literacy materials and development strategies. The spearhead for many years behind these developments was a leader with a strong and charismatic personality and so, ultimately, it is difficult to distinguish between her personal learning and the organisational learning that took place.

Key terms
Learning, learning organisations, non-governmental organisations, interviews, common vision, visionary leadership and qualitative research.