THE OPERATION OF THE SECOND CHANCE SCHOOLS IN GREECE AS LEARNING ORGANIZATIONS: AN ASSESSMENT OF THE CURRENT SITUATION

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how Second Chance Schools (SCS) in Greece function as Learning Organizations (LOs) through the perspectives of SCS directors. Using interviews with directors, the study identifies several critical barriers and enablers affecting the functionality of SCS as LO. Findings reveal alignment between directors' views and previous research, emphasizing shared challenges in effectively implementing LO practices due to limited professional development, unstable staffing, and insufficient State support. Directors observe that the reliance on part-time, under-resourced educators weakens school cohesion and diminishes LO potential, while institutional frameworks often fail to support the transformative goals of SCS. Despite these obstacles, directors remain cautiously optimistic, advocating for improved hiring practices, timely funding, and stronger institutional support.

Keywords: Second Chance Schools, Learning Organization, Formal and Adult Education in Greece, Educational Leadership, Institutional Barriers and Facilitators, Improvement.

1. INTRODUCTION

Second Chance Schools (SCS) in Greece were established several years ago to address educational gaps, particularly for adults who had not completed compulsory education. This initiative stemmed from major European policies of the 1990s aimed at tackling the challenges of the emerging knowledge society, especially those faced by school dropouts (European Commission, 1995).

Today, SCS play a crucial role in Greece's educational landscape, offering inclusive learning opportunities for marginalized groups, including the long-term unemployed, immigrants, and individuals from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds (Nikolopoulou, 2017; Oikonomou & Lazaridou, 2024). In terms of curriculum (Vekris & Hondolidou, 2003), these schools adopted the concept of "Multiliteracies," a relatively new approach at the time of their founding (New London Group, 1996). Administratively, SCS were designed to operate as learning organizations, rather than within rigid, bureaucratic structures—a critical factor for their effectiveness (Doukas, 2004). However, when SCS were first introduced, the School as Learning Organization (SLO) concept, which gained traction in the 1990s, was not widely recognized in Greece and was largely absent from the educational policies that addressed, and still address, mainstream primary and secondary schools.

In this context, after many years of operation, three key questions emerge:
1. To what extent do Second Chance Schools function as learning organizations (LO)?
2. What factors facilitate or hinder the operation of SCS as learning organizations?
3. What improvements could enhance the effectiveness of SCS as learning organizations in the future?

These questions, which probe how the learning organization model is structurally embedded within SCS, create a compelling research focus that intersects with the broader field of educational policy implementation and analysis (Viennet & Pont, 2017).

The first question, "To what extent do Second Chance Schools function as learning organizations?" has been explored in a previously published study (Oikonomou, 2023). This study, of which the methodology is shortly described in the methodology section, concluded that the SCS examined in the research show only moderate functioning as learning organizations. The data collected from both educators and learners indicate that SCS do not fully embody the transformative potential of the LO model. The main key findings that were identified in that study were the following:

- Moderate Performance as Learning Organizations:

The research revealed that the SCS do not operate as fully developed learning organizations. This is a significant weakness, as the absence of a robust LO framework limits the ability of these schools to achieve their primary educational goals, particularly in teaching and learning. Although educators generally believe in the values of learning organizations, they lack deep, comprehensive knowledge of the concept. The gap between theoretical understanding and practical implementation is evident in the way these schools function.

- Discrepancy Between Theory and Practice:

A key observation is the discrepancy between the theory of learning organizations and its application in SCS. This echoes Argyris and Schön's (Argyris & Schön, 1974· Argyris & Schön, 1996) distinction between espoused theory (what organizations say they do) and theory in use (what they do). While SCS claim to operate under the principles of learning organizations, the practical reality shows otherwise.

- Institutional Gaps:

The study identifies a serious gap between the goals of the SCS (as per the learning organization model) and the level of success in achieving these goals. This gap is quantitatively demonstrated through nearly two Likert scale points, indicating the need for substantial effort to bridge this gap.

- Comparison with Previous Research:

Previous studies on spontaneous, non-centrally planned implementations of learning organizations in the Greek educational system showed similar mediocre results. Like these earlier studies, this research found that SCS perform as basic, rudimentary learning organizations, far from the ideal transformative model envisioned in theory.

- Need for Improvement:

The study highlights the need for further research into the factors that either support or inhibit the functioning of SCS as learning organizations. It calls for deeper exploration into how this key aspect of the administrative structure can be improved to meet the theoretical goals of the institution.

This last key finding is important as it demands addressing the second and the third of the questions stated above. Therefore, the present work focuses on identifying the factors that either facilitate or hinder the operation of SCS as learning organizations and exploring potential improvements for the future.

In the following sections, this article will delve into the factors that either facilitate or hinder the functioning of Second Chance Schools (SCS) in Greece as learning organizations, as highlighted by the perspectives of school headmasters. The theoretical framework will provide a detailed

understanding of the learning organization concept and its relevance to the context of adult education in SCS. Following this, the methodology section will outline the approach taken to gather and analyze data, focusing specifically on the insights from school leadership. The findings will shed light on key structural and operational challenges faced by SCS and how these impact their ability to operate as learning organizations. The discussion will interpret these findings in depth, suggesting actionable recommendations for improving the organizational culture and effectiveness of SCS. Finally, the conclusion will reflect on the broader implications of the study and propose directions for future research in the field of adult education and organizational learning within the context of SCS.

The inquiry presented in this article holds broader implications not only for adult education in Greece but also for similar educational contexts globally. By analyzing the experiences and perspectives of headmasters within SCS, this study contributes to educational literature on the applicability of the learning organization model in alternative education settings.

This study's findings hold particular relevance for stakeholders, including educators, policymakers, and researchers, who seek to address the educational and social needs of marginalized populations through innovative organizational practices. By providing concrete recommendations for the improvement of SCS, this article aims to support educational leaders and decision-makers in fostering inclusive, effective learning environments that contribute to lifelong learning and social cohesion.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
2.1 The Concept of Learning Organization

The Learning Organization (LO) concept, closely linked to Organizational Learning, refers to an organization that views its learning processes as a critical catalyst for growth and success (Watkins & Marsick, 2010). Since the early 1990s, the LO concept gained immense popularity in management studies, largely due to the work of Peter Senge (1990), who introduced it as a practical framework for applied organizational learning. During the 1990s and early 2000s, interest in the LO model spread rapidly across various sectors, including private businesses, public services, healthcare, and education. However, as noted by Örtenblad (2013), this enthusiasm diminished over time, only to resurge recently, exemplified by the publication of the *Oxford Handbook of the Learning Organization* (Örtenblad, 2019).

The application of the LO concept in education developed significantly during the 1990s, with key contributions from scholars such as Fullan (1993, 1995), Chapman (1996), and Leithwood and Seashore Louis (1998). The Leadership for Organisational Learning and Student Outcomes Project (LOLSO) in Australia marked a turning point, producing substantial results and deliverables by the early 2000s (Mulford et al., 2004). As the concept of LO entered the field of educational theory, it was positioned as a component of transformative, emancipatory education. It became essential for schools to foster learning environments where the goal was not merely academic success, but empowering individuals to take control of their future (Fullan, 1993).

In the context of education, the LO model has been embraced as a response to neoliberal educational policies, emphasizing autonomy and the creation of learning environments where the purpose of learning is the acquisition of critical thinking and decision-making skills (Kools & Stoll, 2016). Schools as learning organizations promote continuous professional development, teamwork, and innovation, aligning with a holistic vision of learning for both educators and students (Hoy & Miskel, 2013; Rolff, 2016; Fischer, 2003).

However, as implied by Kalantzis and Cope (2012), a distorted version of the LO concept has emerged under the influence of New Managerialism, which focuses on efficiency and accountability, often at the expense of deeper educational goals. The challenge, therefore, lies in maintaining the emancipatory essence of the LO model, ensuring that it remains a tool for genuine educational transformation rather than a superficial management strategy.

2.2 Learning Organizations in Education: The Integrated Model

A critical recent contribution to the discussion of LOs in education is the "Integrated Model of the School as Learning Organization" developed by Kools and Stoll (2016). This model outlines the characteristics of a school functioning as a learning organization:

- Shared Vision: A collective focus on the learning of all students.
- Continuous Professional Learning: Creating and supporting continuous learning opportunities for all staff.
- Collaborative Learning: Promoting teamwork and cooperation among staff.
- Research and Innovation: Cultivating a culture of inquiry and experimentation.
- Knowledge Exchange: Systematically gathering and sharing knowledge within and beyond the school.
- External Learning: Engaging with the broader environment and learning from external sources.
- Leadership for Learning: Developing leadership that supports and encourages learning at all levels (Kools & Stoll, 2016; Stoll & Kools, 2017; OECD, 2018a; Welsh Government, 2019).

This holistic approach to schools as learning organizations emphasizes that learning is not limited to the classroom but extends to the professional development of educators and the continuous improvement of the institution as a whole (Kools et al., 2019; Kools, 2020).

2.3 Second Chance Schools in Greece: Educational Policy and Innovation

Second Chance Schools (SCS) in Greece emerged as a radical innovation in educational policy at the turn of the millennium (Pigiaki, 2006; Nikolopoulou, 2017). They were established as part of a broader reform in adult education, driven by the need to address educational and social inequalities. These schools align with European policies on lifelong learning and social inclusion, as outlined in the European Commission's documents (European Commission, 1995; European Commission, 2001). The innovative character of SCS is grounded in the concept of "New Learning," which integrates critical literacy and multiliteracies, emphasizing the development of individuals as active, empowered citizens (Kalantzis & Cope, 2012).

The SCS system has expanded rapidly since the mid-2000s, transitioning from a small experimental framework to a nationwide network of schools (Nikolopoulou, 2017). Today, SCS operate across all regions of Greece, providing educational opportunities to marginalized adults, including immigrants and prisoners, through their decentralized model of "branches" and "sub-branches." SCS have grown in popularity, even surpassing traditional evening secondary schools in enrollment numbers.

The central mission of SCS is to foster social cohesion by offering transformative learning experiences that empower students to become critical, active members of society. However, despite their popularity and apparent success, research by Oikonomou and Lazaridou (2024) has highlighted significant challenges that threaten the stability and effectiveness of the SCS system.

Issues such as inconsistent funding, staffing instability, and deviations from the original mission of SCS undermine the transformative potential of these schools.

3. METHODOLOGY

Before delving into the methodology of the present study, it is essential to provide a brief overview of the methodology used in the aforementioned study (Oikonomou, 2023), as the present study is its logical continuation. This overview will help contextualize the approach taken in this article and highlight the continuity between the two studies that represent two different phases.

3.1 Overview of the Previous Study

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to explore how Second Chance Schools (SCS) function as learning organizations. The study focused on a sample of six SCS within the Thessaly region of Greece, selected for their geographical location, size, and structure diversity.

Quantitative Component:

The study surveyed 196 educators using a structured questionnaire based on the Learning Organization Model (Kools & Stoll, 2016). The survey employed a five-point Likert scale to assess dimensions such as shared vision, collaboration, leadership, and professional development within the schools. The aim was to quantify how deeply learning organization principles were embedded in each SCS.

Qualitative Component:

To supplement the survey data, semi-structured interviews and focus groups were conducted with 30 learners. These discussions explored participants' experiences with the learning organization model and their perceptions of the challenges and opportunities in their schools. Thematic analysis was used to identify key themes, while field observations provided additional context through real-time insights into school dynamics (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

This study revealed that, while educators and learners recognized the value of the learning organization model, its practical implementation remained limited. The study's findings underscored a gap between theoretical aspirations and practical realities, serving as the foundation for the more focused inquiry of the present study (see also the Introduction).

3.2 Methodology of the Present Study

Building on the insights of the earlier study, the current research focuses on the perspectives of headmasters to gain a deeper understanding of the leadership dynamics and institutional factors that affect the functioning of SCS as learning organizations. This focus provides a complementary angle to the previous findings by examining the role of leadership in shaping the schools' capacity for continuous learning and adaptation.

Research Design:

This study adopts a qualitative case study design, concentrating on semi-structured interviews with school directors. The choice of a qualitative approach allows for an in-depth exploration of headmasters' experiences and their perceptions of the challenges and facilitators in applying the learning organization model (Stake, 1995). The study maintains the focus on the six SCS within the Thessaly region to ensure consistency with the previous research phase and to allow for a comparative analysis of findings.

Data Collection:

Directors from the selected SCS participated in the semi-structured interviews. Participants were chosen based on their leadership experience and their involvement in strategic planning and decision-making processes within their schools. The interviews were designed to probe their views on factors influencing the implementation of learning organization principles, such as staffing stability, funding, and school autonomy.

Data Analysis:

The interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), with a focus on identifying recurring themes related to leadership practices, institutional barriers, and potential pathways for improvement. This approach facilitated a nuanced understanding of how directors perceive their roles in fostering a learning organization culture within their schools. The findings were then cross-referenced with the themes identified in the previous study, providing a richer understanding of the systemic and leadership-related challenges in SCS.

Study Limitations:

While this study provides valuable insights into the role of school leadership, it is essential to note certain limitations. The qualitative focus on a small number of directors limits the generalizability of the findings, although the in-depth nature of the interviews provides a detailed understanding of the challenges faced by SCS. Additionally, as the study was conducted in the Thessaly region, results may not fully reflect the experiences and conditions of Second Chance Schools in other regions of Greece, which could have different socio-economic contexts or institutional challenges. The regional focus may therefore limit the broader applicability of the findings. Furthermore, the reliance on self-reported data from interviews introduces the potential for bias, as participants might present their schools in a more favorable light or emphasize certain challenges based on their personal experiences (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Despite these limitations, the study offers critical insights into the functioning of SCS as learning organizations and highlights key areas for future research and policy development.

4. FINDINGS

The findings presented in this section are based on data collected from headmasters of Second Chance Schools (SCS) in Greece. These findings offer insight into the challenges and limitations of SCS in functioning as learning organizations, particularly from the perspective of school leadership.

Internal Environment of SCS

1. Individual Level - Educators:
    o   Educators in SCS often lack formal training in the theoretical aspects of Learning Organizations, which limits their ability to engage fully with the model. Nonetheless, directors observed that many teachers develop implicit LO knowledge through their day-to-day interactions, absorbing practical learning concepts through experiential exposure. For example, teachers often adopt collaborative practices and informal reflection as part of their routine, even if these practices are not explicitly framed within an LO context.
    o   Despite these informal adaptations, directors point out that not all educators reach a comprehensive understanding of LO principles due to the absence of theoretical reinforcement and structured professional development. This limitation affects

their ability to apply these principles cohesively and holistically, diminishing the overall impact on school culture.

- o Another critical factor impacting the LO environment in SCS is the employment structure. Many staff members are part-time or contract-based employees, whose temporary and often delayed pay arrangements undermine their intrinsic motivation and engagement with the school. Directors emphasize that hourly or contract-based staff face challenges in committing to LO practices, as their employment conditions frequently lead to a transactional view of their role. This pattern has led to a fragmented workforce, wherein part-time teachers view their duties narrowly as teaching obligations without the additional commitment to school-wide learning initiatives.

- o Moreover, this employment model has introduced significant challenges to creating a unified, stable educational team. The directors highlight that high staff turnover and non-permanent roles have created a dynamic where developing a consistent LO culture is challenging. In many cases, educators are rotated frequently, with limited time to build rapport or collaborate effectively. Directors argue that without a stable core of committed educators, it is challenging to cultivate the sustained professional community that an LO requires.

2. School-Level Impact on LO Development:
    - o Directors perceive the overall culture within SCS to be highly influenced by traditional educational structures, characterized by bureaucratic and formal processes rather than by a professional learning community ethos. This bureaucratic structure constrains the potential for creating a true LO environment, which ideally should be dynamic and adaptive to meet the evolving needs of both students and staff.

    - o While directors note that some educators naturally adapt to the unique demands of SCS, they also observe that a full integration into LO practices generally occurs only toward the end of the academic year. The slow progression toward adopting LO culture highlights the limitations of current conditions in fully embedding LO principles at SCS. Directors suggest that a more supportive framework and consistent practices throughout the year would help educators engage more readily with LO concepts.

3. Challenges in Integrating Part-Time Staff:
    - o Another significant barrier to LO adoption at SCS involves the reliance on part-time or hourly instructors, whose schedules and limited school involvement reduce their opportunities for engagement in collaborative or reflective practices. According to directors, the inability to rely on a cohesive teaching team limits the potential for establishing shared goals and practices that are central to the LO model.

    - o Directors noted that these staff members often lack the time or incentive to contribute beyond their teaching hours, leading to a compartmentalized approach to education. Without incentives for collaboration or extended school engagement, these teachers are less likely to participate in school-wide learning initiatives, further impeding the development of a robust LO culture.

External Environment

1. State's Role in Shaping SCS as LOs:
   - The directors attribute many challenges within SCS to a lack of State support and vision. They collectively observe that SCS often exist outside the core educational priorities of the Ministry of Education, which results in underfunding, delayed staffing, and inconsistent training opportunities. Directors describe the State's approach as largely bureaucratic and transactional, with an emphasis on fulfilling administrative requirements rather than fostering an LO-centered vision for SCS.
   - A key factor hindering LO development are the delays in funding and operational support that create a stressful environment for staff, hampering their ability to focus on LO practices.
   - The directors stress that since the financial and logistical support from the Ministry is crucial, the lack of responsiveness and the bureaucratic nature of the oversight effectively undercuts the schools' ability to operate as LOs. Moreover, the directors noted that the original intent of SCS has been diluted over time, shifting from a proactive vision of transformative learning to a mere mechanism for fulfilling EU project funding.
2. Impact of Local Authorities and Other Institutions:
   - Directors report mixed levels of support from local government entities, with some authorities showing limited interest in collaborating with SCS. They express that this lack of synergy with local stakeholders further isolates SCS, depriving them of potentially beneficial partnerships that could support the LO model.
   - For SCS located within correctional facilities, additional challenges arise due to constraints imposed by the prison system. Directors observe that the rigid operational protocols within these facilities often conflict with the LO model, which requires flexibility, collaboration, and engagement with external educators and partners.

Future Prospects and Recommendations for Improvement

1. Proposed Enhancements within SCS:
   - Directors advocate for a comprehensive reevaluation of SCS operations, emphasizing that the Ministry should prioritize consistent, early staffing and establish a structured professional development program to provide educators with a deeper understanding of LO principles. They argue that a localized approach to staff selection would better align hiring with the school's LO-oriented goals, ensuring that new educators are a good fit for the culture.
   - Directors further recommend that the government increase support for SCS through systematic and ongoing training that includes interactions with educational experts and academic advisors, which could foster a stronger LO culture across SCS.
2. Potential for SCS to Model LO Practices for Broader Education:
   - With sufficient support, directors believe SCS could serve as exemplars of LO principles within the broader educational landscape. They suggest that enhancing intrinsic motivation among educators, as opposed to relying on external motivators, would significantly strengthen the organizational culture. Directors propose that the Ministry should facilitate more extensive interaction between the administrative leadership and school staff, as improved communication and alignment would support a collective commitment to LO practices.

o Finally, directors see the potential for SCS to function as a training ground for LO principles that could eventually influence traditional educational systems. They argue that restoring SCS to their initial innovative vision would allow these schools to not only benefit their immediate students but also serve as a progressive model for mainstream education in Greece.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings highlight a strong agreement among directors, educators, and trainees regarding the current functioning of Second Chance Schools (SCS) as Learning Organizations (LOs). The directors acknowledge the consistency between their views and the results from both quantitative and qualitative studies with educators and learners (presented in: Oikonomou, 2023).

The study's findings bring to light critical barriers that prevent Second Chance Schools in Greece from fully realizing the Learning Organization model. Through the interviews with SCS directors, four primary categories of obstacles were identified.

Barriers to the Learning Organization Model in SCS

1. Staff Attitudes and Preparedness

Directors underscored that the attitudes and readiness of teaching staff toward the LO model are compromised by systemic issues tied to staffing policies. Many SCS instructors work on temporary contracts, resulting in a significant portion of educators who view their work merely as "teaching hours" rather than a longer-term commitment to the institution's goals. This turnover of temporary educators, often paid modestly and hired late in the academic cycle, limits their motivation and investment in organizational goals (Papakonstantinou & Anastasiou, 2013). Consequently, these conditions prevent the formation of a stable, cohesive learning culture essential for a learning organization. The challenges in staff commitment underscore the issue of external versus internal motivation, as theorized by Hoy & Miskel (2013), wherein the teaching staff, motivated externally by financial and experiential gains, struggle to connect internally with the values and mission of SCS.

From a motivational perspective, Herzberg's two-factor theory (Herzberg, 1966) provides a relevant framework. The absence of "hygienes"—such as fair pay and job security—combined with minimal "motivators" (like recognition) results in dissatisfaction. These circumstances prevent a deeper connection between the staff and the institution's mission. According to research findings (Kythreotis & Pasiardis, 2015), engagement is directly related to perceived benefits; thus, educators in SCS, given their minimal tenure and low pay, have little incentive to contribute beyond their contractual hours, undermining the collective learning culture necessary for the LO model to thrive.

2. Institutional Culture and Bureaucratic Structure

This staffing instability has a compounding effect on the culture within SCS, reinforcing a bureaucratic, transactional ethos rather than a collaborative, professional learning environment. Directors observed that this culture, centered around task completion and procedural adherence, restricts the space for the adaptability and openness required of a learning organization. Instead of fostering an environment where staff continuously learn and contribute beyond prescribed duties, the current culture within SCS is rigid and bureaucratic. This rigidity stands in stark contrast to the fundamental tenets of the LO model, where innovation, shared vision, and organizational learning are paramount. This finding aligns with similar observations in Greek educational research, where

bureaucratic structures are often cited as significant barriers to organizational innovation (Papakonstantinou & Anastasiou, 2013).

3. Lack of Professional Development on the LO Model

A critical barrier to the adoption of the LO model is the absence of formalized knowledge and training on this concept among SCS educators. Few educators, aside from those with specialized backgrounds in educational administration, are familiar with the theoretical foundations and practices of the LO model. While the curriculum implicitly encourages some principles of LO, most educators acquire an understanding of the model as "tacit knowledge" (Polanyi, 1966) rather than through structured training or formal education. This tacit, experiential understanding does not substitute for comprehensive training, as it lacks the depth and clarity provided by formal professional development. The absence of dedicated LO-focused training is particularly concerning, as educational research consistently emphasizes professional development as a cornerstone for implementing sustainable organizational change (Kools & Stoll, 2016).

Furthermore, while the curriculum of SCS embodies aspects of the LO model, there is an evident need for explicit LO training as part of the educators' initial and ongoing professional development. Research on Human Resource Management in Education (Papakonstantinou & Anastasiou, 2013) highlights the importance of professional growth and motivation in sustaining a learning organization. For SCS to develop into effective learning organizations, educators need systematic, quality training that aligns with the institution's goals, particularly on the principles and practices of LO.

4. Systemic Challenges at the State Level

At a macro-level, systemic challenges stemming from state administration, such as inconsistent funding and administrative inefficiencies pose substantial obstacles. Directors frequently cited delays in financial support, affecting everything from operational costs to staff salaries, thereby creating an environment of instability and discontent. These state-level issues are exacerbated by a lack of communication and understanding from the Ministry's leadership, which fails to address the unique needs of SCS (Kokkos, 2021). This disconnect between the state and SCS management reflects a broader issue within Greek public administration, where inadequate evaluation and support from the central government diminish the potential for SCS to adopt and sustain an LO approach.

This systemic barrier highlights a disconnect between the state and local SCS administration, a gap that is symptomatic of the broader issue within Greek educational governance. Without the state's support in both resources and operational autonomy, SCS struggle to implement the LO model effectively.

5.1. Comparative Analysis with International Findings

The systemic and structural barriers identified in Greek SCS align with findings from international research on the challenges faced by educational institutions in adopting the LO model. A recent Welsh study (OECD, 2018a; Kools, 2020) demonstrated that a stable funding base, investment in professional capital, and administrative autonomy are crucial for schools aspiring to function as learning organizations. In a comparative study, Mulford & Silins (2010) emphasize the limitations imposed on LOs by centralized, hierarchical structures, and restrictive policy frameworks, findings that mirror the situation in Greece. The consistent appearance of these issues across international settings underscores the importance of structural support and flexibility for successful LO implementation.

Further, research by Voulalas & Sharpe (2005) on Australian school principals committed to transforming their institutions into LOs found that traditional hierarchies, time constraints, and insufficient support from staff and parents were major impediments. This study supports the notion that the LO model cannot succeed in isolation but requires active and sustained participation from all stakeholders, including the state. Similarly, SCS directors in Greece experience restricted flexibility and encounter challenges in gaining active support from state bodies and community stakeholders.

5.2. Recommendations for Overcoming Barriers
Given these challenges, SCS directors propose a set of strategies to improve the adoption of the LO model:
1. Internal Reforms within SCS: Directors identified the need to activate all stakeholders to foster a professional learning community within SCS, engaging both educators and learners. Increasing intra-school communication and institutional knowledge-sharing were also noted as key actions for developing a shared culture of learning.
2. Enhanced State Support and Funding: Directors propose a substantial improvement in state-level support, including consistent funding and enhanced operational autonomy. They argue that the Ministry of Education should prioritize the LO model, providing explicit directives and resources to enable SCS to function as adaptive learning environments (Papakonstantinou & Anastasiou, 2013).
3. Systemic Revisions in HR and Professional Development: Effective HR practices tailored to SCS, such as permanent contracts for educators and targeted LO training, would improve commitment and continuity among staff. Furthermore, the state should consider integrating LO principles into the broader professional development framework for all educators working within SCS, establishing a foundation of knowledge and commitment to this model (Kools & Stoll, 2016).

5.3. Broader Implications and Isomorphism with the Greek Formal Education System
A recurring theme in the directors' responses is the resemblance of SCS's bureaucratic structures to those of the formal education system, a phenomenon that can be understood through the lens of institutional isomorphism (Scott, 2014). In the Greek context, this isomorphism manifests as centralization, insufficient local autonomy, and reliance on temporary staff—issues also noted in the OECD's evaluation of Greek formal education (OECD, 2018b). Directors highlight that this alignment with formal education reflects the state's preference for conventional educational models, limiting the transformative potential of SCS as learning organizations.

In conclusion, while SCS exhibit significant potential to operate as learning organizations, realizing this model requires overcoming both institutional and systemic barriers. Implementing an LO model in SCS demands a comprehensive strategy encompassing state support, enhanced funding, professional development, and cultural shifts toward collaboration and innovation. By fostering a supportive, reflective learning environment, SCS can better meet the diverse educational needs of adult learners, ultimately contributing to the development of a more inclusive and adaptive educational system in Greece.

6. CONCLUSIONS
In examining the Second Chance Schools (SCS) of Greece as potential learning organizations, this study underscores significant structural and operational challenges that limit the effective

implementation of the learning organization model. Although the institutional framework of SCS promotes ideals aligned with transformative learning, the findings indicate that the theoretical foundations are not fully realized in practice. This disconnect is evident in the frequent staffing turnover, limited professional development, and restricted funding that hinder the schools' capacity to create a cohesive learning environment.

Our research has highlighted that while headmasters and educators theoretically support the principles of learning organizations, practical barriers prevent their full engagement with these concepts. Many educators in SCS work on temporary contracts and therefore lack incentives for long-term commitment, affecting their motivation and capacity for collaboration. This finding aligns with Herzberg's motivation theory (1966), which suggests that the absence of both hygienic factors (such as fair compensation and job security) and motivators (such as recognition and a sense of accomplishment) contributes to job dissatisfaction. Consequently, without stable staff, SCS struggle to foster the continuity needed for organizational learning and the implementation of collaborative practices.

Additionally, the centralized nature of educational governance in Greece constrains SCS by limiting the autonomy of headmasters and educators. This bureaucratic oversight impedes schools from adapting to the specific needs of their adult learners. The findings echo the work of Argyris and Schön (1974; 1996), who observed that organizational learning requires flexibility and responsiveness—qualities often stifled by top-down governance structures. In this context, even committed leaders face significant challenges in cultivating an environment conducive to learning. The study also reveals that while informal collaboration exists among educators, it often lacks the structure necessary for sustained professional development. The absence of consistent and high-quality training tailored to the needs of adult educators remains a critical barrier. This limitation is exacerbated by insufficient financial resources, which prevent investments in professional development, instructional materials, and technological infrastructure essential for fostering an adaptable, learning-centered environment.

Despite these challenges, the study identifies potential pathways for enhancing the role of SCS as learning organizations. Addressing staffing instability through more secure employment contracts, increasing financial support for professional development, and granting greater autonomy to school leaders would significantly improve the operational capabilities of SCS. These adjustments would not only strengthen the alignment between the theoretical LO model and its practical application but also promote a more responsive and inclusive educational environment for marginalized adult learners.

In conclusion, while the vision of SCS as learning organizations is ambitious and theoretically well-grounded, realizing this vision requires systemic changes that extend beyond individual schools. Embracing the LO model at a policy level, coupled with practical reforms in staffing, funding, and governance, would enable SCS to fulfill their transformative mission more effectively. This study calls for ongoing research and dialogue among policymakers, educators, and administrators to address these challenges and support the evolution of SCS into robust learning organizations, capable of meeting the diverse needs of their learners.

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