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Corporate training beyond formal provision: conditions for meaningful learning and people development

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Declaration on the Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tools

I, **Elena Lazzaro**, student ID number **899692**, enrolled at Ca' Foscari University of Venice in the Master's Degree programme in **International Management**, author of the Master's thesis entitled **"*Corporate training beyond formal provision: conditions for meaningful learning and people development*"**, supervised by **Laura Cortellazzo**, aware of the penalties provided for by Article 76 of Presidential Decree no. 445 of 28 December 2000, and of the forfeiture of benefits provided for by Article 75 of the same Decree in the event of false or misleading declarations, under my own personal responsibility pursuant to Articles 46 and 47 of Presidential Decree no. 445 of 28 December 2000,

DECLARE

that I made use of generative artificial intelligence technologies to support some phases of the research, organization and revision of my Master's thesis.

The tool used was **ChatGPT, developed by OpenAI, model GPT-5.5 Thinking**. The tool was used as a support for the revision, reworking and organization of the thesis, without replacing my autonomous work of research, critical selection of sources, analysis of empirical materials and scientific responsibility as the author.

In particular, the tool was used for the following purposes:

- support in the linguistic and stylistic revision of sections of the text, with the aim of improving clarity, coherence, fluency and formal accuracy;
- support in checking the logical coherence between chapters;
- support in the reformulation of some textual passages, which were subsequently verified, modified and adapted by the author;
- support in the synthesis and reorganization of some empirical materials collected, in particular notes and interview transcripts, as well as the analysis of internal documents and secondary materials provided by the organizations examined;
- support in the formal revision of the thesis, including spelling checks and the identification of possible typos.

The use of AI did not involve the autonomous production of empirical data, nor the generation of unverified results. The interviews, company materials and sources used in the thesis were collected, selected, interpreted and verified by the author.

Every part of the text revised with the support of the tool was reread, modified and reworked by the author, who assumes full responsibility for the final content of the thesis.

I FURTHER DECLARE

that all material produced with the support of AI was carefully verified, reviewed and reworked by the author, who assumes full responsibility for the quality, accuracy and scientific integrity of the work.

Introduction

Corporate training has become one of the most visible ways through which organizations respond to change. In a context characterized by technological acceleration, skills gaps, shifting employee expectations and continuous transformation of work, companies increasingly invest in learning and development as a strategic priority. Training is no longer presented only as a technical HR activity aimed at updating employees' skills. It is also described as a way to support adaptation, strengthen engagement, retain talent and prepare people for evolving organizational demands.

However, the growing relevance of corporate training also raises a critical question. The fact that training is delivered, communicated or included in HR strategies does not automatically mean that it produces meaningful learning or genuine people development. Organizations may increase the number of courses, platforms, certifications or learning opportunities available to employees, while still failing to create the conditions that allow learning to be understood, applied and sustained in everyday work. In this sense, corporate training occupies an ambiguous position: it can be a real investment in people, but it can also become a symbolic or performative practice, useful to communicate attention to development without necessarily changing the organizational conditions in which people work and learn.

This ambiguity is particularly relevant when corporate training is connected to the social dimension of sustainability. Social sustainability concerns the way organizations affect people, including their development, participation, well-being, working conditions and possibility to contribute meaningfully to organizational life. From this perspective, training may become socially meaningful when it supports employees' capabilities, gives them access to development opportunities, creates spaces for learning and participation, and is embedded in organizational practices that make development possible over time. At the same time, training may remain rhetorical when it is treated mainly as a visible initiative, a formal requirement or a communication tool disconnected from work processes, leadership behaviors and opportunities for application.

The aim of this thesis is therefore to examine corporate training not only as a strategic tool, but as an organizational practice whose value depends on the conditions through which it is designed, supported and integrated into work. The central research question

guiding the thesis is: **under what conditions can corporate training move beyond formal provision, becoming a meaningful lever for people development and contributing to social sustainability?** This question does not assume that training is automatically positive, nor that every training initiative produces social value. Rather, it starts from the idea that the meaningfulness of training depends on the relationship between learning design, organizational context, cultural coherence and evidence of application.

To address this question, the thesis develops a theoretical and empirical analysis. The theoretical part examines the strategic relevance of corporate training, the limits of delivery-based approaches, the learning organization perspective, and the tension between training as care and training as rhetoric. The empirical part focuses on a qualitative case study centered on 2BHappy, a training and consulting company operating in the field of Positive Organizations, people development and organizational change. The case is analyzed through semi-structured interviews with Veruscka Gennari, CEO of 2BHappy and IIPO, and Saverio Cuoghi, CSO of 2BHappy. Their contributions are used to explore both the cultural-organizational and the methodological dimensions of meaningful training. The analysis is enriched by complementary organizational perspectives from Uomo & Ambiente and Servizi CGN, which help broaden the empirical reflection on how training, people development and social sustainability can be translated into organizational practices.

The empirical material is not used to provide causal evidence of training impact. Rather, it is treated as exploratory qualitative material that helps identify how practitioners and organizations interpret the conditions that make training more meaningful. The thesis therefore does not aim to prove that a specific training model automatically produces people development or social sustainability. Its objective is more analytical: to understand which organizational, cultural and didactic conditions make this contribution more plausible, and which risks may reduce training to a formal or symbolic practice.

The thesis develops its argument through a progressive structure in which some central concepts, such as continuity, coherence, application and organizational support, are revisited from different perspectives. This choice reflects the nature of the topic itself: meaningful learning is not produced through isolated exposure to content, but through repeated connection, contextualization and consolidation. This recurrence therefore

serves as a way to show how the same conditions become relevant at the theoretical, critical and empirical levels of the analysis.

The thesis is structured into four chapters:

Chapter 1 introduces the growing strategic relevance of corporate training and discusses how training has shifted from a peripheral HR activity to a central organizational priority. It also examines different delivery approaches, showing that no format is intrinsically effective and that the value of training depends on the coherence between learning objectives, learners' needs and organizational conditions.

Chapter 2 develops the learning organization perspective as a framework for understanding training beyond isolated provision. It argues that corporate learning becomes meaningful when it is embedded in organizational life through mechanisms such as psychological safety, reflection, knowledge sharing, transfer climate, leadership support and opportunities for application. The chapter also connects learning organizations to people development and social sustainability, while critically recognizing that the language of learning can remain symbolic if it is not supported by actual practices and structures.

Chapter 3 deepens the critical tension at the center of the thesis by examining corporate training between care and rhetoric. It analyzes how training can become superficial, symbolic or performative when it remains disconnected from practice, and it discusses the risks of training overload, extra-work learning and the individualization of learning responsibility. The chapter concludes by developing an analytical framework based on four dimensions: organizational integration, cultural coherence, didactic design and evidence of learning.

Chapter 4 presents the empirical analysis. It examines the 2BHappy case and the complementary organizational perspectives of Uomo & Ambiente and Servizi CGN. The chapter first analyzes the cultural and organizational contribution of Veruscka Gennari's interview, then the methodological contribution of Saverio Cuoghi through the concept of Didattica Aumentata. It then considers the additional perspectives of Uomo & Ambiente and Servizi CGN, before developing a cross-cutting empirical analysis. The findings suggest that corporate training can become a meaningful lever for people development

and social sustainability when it is designed as a process, centered on learners, supported by organizational coherence and connected to concrete traces of application and learning.

Overall, the thesis argues that the social value of corporate training does not depend only on the intention to train people, nor on the quantity of learning opportunities offered by the organization. It depends on whether training is made credible, usable and sustainable within everyday organizational life. Training becomes closer to care when it creates real conditions for learning, participation and development. It becomes rhetorical when it remains mainly a declared value, a formal activity or a visible initiative disconnected from the conditions that make learning possible.

Chapter 1

Why Corporate Training Matters Today: Strategic Relevance, Learning Design, and People Development

1.1 The growing strategic relevance of corporate training

In recent years, corporate training has progressively shifted from being a peripheral human resource activity to a central organizational priority. This shift is not accidental, nor merely the result of evolving managerial trends. Rather, it reflects a deeper structural change in the environment in which organizations operate, characterized by increasing volatility, rapid technological advancement and continuous redefinition of required skills.

The World Economic Forum's *Future of Jobs Report 2025* documents the scale of the disruption: across 55 economies and 22 industry sectors, 63% of employers identify skills gaps in the labour market as the primary barrier to business transformation in the period 2025–2030, while 39% of workers' core competencies are expected to change significantly by the same date (World Economic Forum, 2025). These figures describe an environment in which the competencies organizations required are being systematically outpaced by those their workforces possess, a structural mismatch that no amount of selective hiring can fully resolve. In this context, investment in learning and development stops to be a discretionary enhancement and becomes, for many organizations, a precondition for operational continuity.

The economic weight of this shift is also significant. The global corporate training market was valued at approximately $361.5 billion in 2023 and is projected to exceed $800 billion by 2035, with a compound annual growth rate of around 7% (Allied Market Research, 2024). Although market research data should be treated as contextual evidence rather than as a theoretical foundation, the scale and projected growth of the sector suggest that training and development have become a relevant area of organizational investment. This trend indicates that organizations are not simply increasing expenditure on training, but are increasingly positioning learning and development as part of broader strategies for workforce adaptation and human capital development. The ATD 2024 State of the Industry Report, drawing on data from 498 organizations across sectors, similarly found that two-thirds reported Talent Development represented at senior leadership, while

average per-employee training expenditure reached $1,283 in 2023, up from $1,220 the previous year (ATD, 2024).

This does not mean that training is strategic in the same way in every organization. In a narrower sense, training supports the implementation of strategy: it helps employees acquire the knowledge and skills required to execute existing organizational objectives, respond to technological change and maintain operational effectiveness. However, in a stronger sense, training can also become part of strategy itself when it contributes to building the human capital resources through which an organization adapts, innovates and differentiates itself from competitors. The distinction is important because it prevents corporate training from being treated merely as an operational support function. When learning and development shape the capabilities on which future organizational action depends, they participate directly in the construction of strategic advantage. This stronger interpretation is consistent with the Resource-Based View of the firm. The argument developed by McFarland and Ployhart (2017) is that training and development practices should be understood primarily as mechanisms for constructing human capital resources, namely the collective knowledge, skills and capabilities that differentiate one organization from another. This framing has a counterintuitive implication worth to be considered: training does not generate competitive advantage because it directly improves firm performance, but rather because it shapes the nature of human capital resources that can be leveraged to differentiate the firm (McFarland & Ployhart, 2017, p. 553). This distinction matters. It shifts the evaluation of training from a narrow input-output logic, where training is justified by its measurable productivity returns, to a more structural one, in which training is understood as constitutive of the organizational capabilities that make sustained advantage possible. Human capital resources, the authors demonstrate, exhibit the four properties identified by the VRIN framework (Barney, 1991) as strategic: they are valuable, rare, inimitable and non-substitutable. The last of these properties is particularly relevant here. The imitability of human capital is constrained by the path-dependent, causally ambiguous nature of how it develops within specific organizational contexts — which means that what an organization builds through sustained investment in its people is, by definition, difficult for competitors to replicate.

The empirical literature broadly supports this theoretical framing, though it also complicates it. Aguinis and Kraiger (2009), in a review synthesizing over 600 scholarly contributions, demonstrate that training and development produce measurable benefits across three distinct and interdependent levels: individual and team (including enhanced task performance, self-efficacy and adaptive capacity), organizational (productivity, reduced voluntary turnover and improved quality) and societal (contribution to national workforce quality and economic growth). A meta-analysis cited in their review — based on 1,152 effect sizes drawn from 165 studies — identified a positive effect of training on performance outcomes of $d = 0.62$, a figure that represents a practically significant effect in organizational research (Arthur et al., 2003, as cited in Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009). The cross-level structure of these effects matters for how training investment is evaluated: the impact of a well-designed program does not remain contained at the individual level, but cascades through team functioning and eventually into organizational performance. This has implications not only for how training is justified, but for how it must be designed, a point that will be developed in the following chapters.

A parallel development, less visible in the strategy literature but increasingly documented in practitioner research, concerns what organizations and employees actually expect training to do. The WEF (2025) data on this is telling that when employers were asked about the anticipated outcomes of upskilling investment, productivity (77%) and competitiveness (70%) appeared alongside talent retention (65%), a figure that places training within a logic that extends beyond operational performance. The LinkedIn *Workplace Learning Report 2025* sharpens this picture considerably. The 88% of organizations surveyed express concern about employee retention and offering learning opportunities was identified as the primary retention strategy, ahead of compensation adjustments or flexible working arrangements (LinkedIn, 2025). These data are also consistent with academic research on employee development. Martini et al. (2023), for example, show that perceived investment in employee development is negatively related to turnover intention and that this relationship is largely mediated by affective commitment and perceived external employability. In other words, when employees perceive that the organization is genuinely investing in their development, training is not experienced only as a mechanism for skill acquisition, but also as a signal of organizational support and long-term concern for their growth. This helps explain why learning

opportunities may contribute not only to performance, but also to retention, commitment and the quality of the employment relationship.

This interpretation is also coherent with the employee-side evidence reported by LinkedIn (2025), according to which 84% of employees surveyed agreed that learning adds meaning to their work and the proportion who perceive it as a tool for adapting to change grew from 49% in 2022 to 68% in 2025. While this figure does not in itself establish a causal relationship, it suggests that employees may attribute subjective and relational value to workplace learning, especially when it is perceived as part of a broader commitment to their development rather than as a purely instrumental requirement. The gap between this expectation and what organizations actually deliver is, as will become clear, one of the central tensions this thesis examines.

These empirical and theoretical insights converge on a shared conclusion: corporate training has evolved into a core component of organizational strategy. It is no longer limited to supporting existing processes, but actively contributes to shaping an organization's ability to adapt, compete, and sustain performance over time. And yet this growing strategic relevance introduces an important tension. The same sources that document the expansion of training investment also reveal persistent implementation gaps — declining formal learning hours despite rising expenditure (ATD, 2024), falling rates of managerial support for employee development, and a widening distance between what organizations declare about learning and what employees actually experience (LinkedIn, 2025). In many cases, the strategic rhetoric surrounding training is not matched by consistent or coherent practice. This gap between declared importance and actual integration is not a secondary concern; it is the central problem this thesis sets out to examine. It opens the space for a deeper investigation into the conditions under which corporate training produces substantive value for people and the conditions under which it remains, instead, a symbolic or superficial organizational practice.

1.2 From Competitive Tool to People Investment: Reframing the Strategic Value of Training

Strategic investment in training is not the same as investment in people. In this thesis, investment in people is understood as the extent to which an organization supports employees' development by creating opportunities, conditions and resources that allow them to grow, strengthen their capabilities and participate more effectively in

organizational life. Corporate training is examined as one of the main practices through which investment in people can be expressed, especially when is designed to expand employees' capabilities, motivation and ability to apply learning meaningfully within their work context. The previous section showed that organizations increasingly treat training as a strategic priority, especially in response to skills gaps, technological change and the need to remain competitive in volatile environments. However, the fact that training is strategically relevant does not automatically mean that it is designed as a genuine investment in people. An organization may increase its training budget, introduce new learning platforms or multiply the number of courses available to employees while still approaching learning mainly as a way to close performance gaps, standardize behaviors or respond to short-term business needs. In this case, training remains a useful organizational tool but its human and developmental value may remain limited.

This distinction is consistent with training and development literature, which shows that the value of training cannot be reduced to the mere delivery of content or to the measurement of participation. Aguinis and Kraiger (2009), for example, distinguish training, understood as a systematic approach to improving individual, team and organizational effectiveness, from development, which concerns the acquisition of knowledge and skills for personal growth and future roles. Similarly, Salas et al. (2012) argue that training effectiveness depends on a broader process that includes needs analysis, learner readiness, instructional design, practice, feedback and post-training transfer conditions. From this perspective, a distinction can be analyzed between a training-centered approach and a people-centered approach. The difference lies in where attention is placed: a training-centered approach tends to focus on what is delivered: content, hours, platforms, participation rates, completion rates and measurable skill acquisition. These elements are not irrelevant, but they do not exhaust the meaning of learning. A people-centered approach asks a different question: what does training enable employees to understand, apply, develop and become capable of doing over time? In this perspective, the learner is not treated as a passive recipient of information but as the actual place where learning becomes valuable. Training creates strategic value only when it changes people's capabilities, confidence, motivation and ability to act within a specific organizational context.

This view is consistent with the Resource-Based View perspective discussed in the previous section. McFarland and Ployhart (2017) argue that training and development practices are strategically relevant because they shape the quality of human capital resources and, through them, contribute to competitive advantage. Their argument is important because it moves the discussion away from a simple input-output logic. Training does not create value simply because it is delivered or because it can be connected to performance indicators. It creates value when it contributes to the development of human capital resources, meaning the knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics that people bring into organizational action. In this sense, training is not strategic in itself. It becomes strategic when it develops the people-based resources on which organizational adaptation, innovation and differentiation depend.

This also means that human capital resources cannot be treated as abstract assets separated from the individuals who embody them. They are embedded in people, in their experiences, motivations, relationships and learning histories. McFarland and Ployhart (2017) emphasize that human capital resources are difficult to imitate because they are built through path-dependent, causally ambiguous and socially complex processes. This point is particularly relevant for corporate learning. What makes training valuable is not only the transmission of codified knowledge, but the way in which people internalize, combine, apply and transform that knowledge in their work environment. A standardized training intervention may transfer information, but it does not automatically produce the adaptive, tacit and context-specific capabilities that make human capital strategically distinctive.

Aguinis and Kraiger's (2009) review further supports this broader understanding of training and development. They define training as a systematic approach to improving individual, team and organizational effectiveness, while development refers to the acquisition of knowledge and skills for personal growth and future roles. This distinction is useful because it prevents corporate learning from being reduced to short-term skill updating. Their review adopts a multidisciplinary, multilevel and global perspective and shows that training and development can generate benefits across three interconnected levels.

At the individual level, these benefits include not only task performance, but also psychological and behavioral resources such as self-efficacy, motivation, empowerment

and adaptive expertise. These outcomes matter because they influence how employees engage with their role, respond to change and develop confidence in their capacity to act. At the organizational level, training may contribute to productivity, effectiveness, satisfaction, reputation and social capital. At the societal level, it can support workforce quality and broader human capital development.

This multilevel evidence shows that the value of training is broader than the immediate acquisition of technical competence. If training can influence self-efficacy, motivation, empowerment, innovation, and adaptive expertise, then the learner cannot be treated as a neutral container to be filled with content. Learning is an active process. Employees interpret new knowledge, relate it to their previous experience, assess whether it is meaningful, and decide whether and how to use it in their work. For this reason, a learning initiative that ignores employees' motivation, perceived relevance, work context and opportunity to apply what they have learned may be formally well designed but strategically weak.

Aguinis and Kraiger (2009) make this point especially clear when discussing the conditions that maximize training benefits. The effectiveness of training depends not only on content and delivery, but also on needs assessment, pretraining states, training design, evaluation and transfer. In particular, individual and situational factors before training begins influence the way people engage with learning. Job involvement, organizational commitment, perceived support and recognition, self-efficacy, motivation to learn, anxiety and organizational climate can all affect training outcomes. This evidence challenges the assumption that learning can be evaluated only by looking at what the organization provides. The same program may produce different effects depending on whether employees feel ready, supported, motivated and able to apply what they learn.

The issue, therefore, is not whether training is useful. The literature clearly shows that it can be. The more important question is under what conditions training becomes meaningful and developmental for people. This is where the distinction between delivery and development becomes essential. A delivery-based logic assumes that exposing employees to content is enough to generate learning. A people-investment logic starts from a different assumption: learning becomes valuable when employees are placed in the conditions to engage with it, connect it to their work, practice it and use it to expand their capacity for action. From this perspective, the design of training cannot be limited to

choosing a format, a platform or a set of contents. It must include an understanding of learners' needs, constraints, motivations, expectations, and work realities.

The relationship between learning and well-being further reinforces the distinction between training provision and investment in people. If training is understood only as a mechanism for updating skills or improving performance, the way employees experience the learning process may appear secondary. However, when training is presented as part of a broader commitment to people development, the conditions under which learning takes place become central. Time availability, workload, managerial support and opportunities to apply what has been learned do not only influence training transfer; they also shape whether learning is experienced as sustainable, meaningful and supportive, or instead as an additional source of pressure. In this sense, well-being is not treated as the objective of training, but as a critical lens for assessing the coherence between the rhetoric of investing in people and the actual experience of workplace learning.

This perspective is supported by Watson et al. (2018), who examine workplace learning interventions by considering not only their effects on skills or performance, but also their implications for employee well-being. Their systematic review synthesizes 41 intervention studies and finds that no study reported a negative effect on well-being, while 27 studies reported positive effects and 14 reported neutral effects. However, the most relevant contribution of the review for the present thesis is not simply the positive direction of these findings, but the design and evaluation gap it reveals. Despite the widespread assumption that learning produces positive psychological and emotional outcomes, Watson et al. (2018) show that relatively few workplace learning interventions explicitly evaluate well-being. This suggests that well-being is often treated as an indirect or secondary outcome, rather than as a dimension to be intentionally considered when designing and assessing workplace learning.

This limited attention is especially relevant when training is presented as part of an investment in people. In this case, its quality cannot be assessed only by looking at the skills it develops or the performance outcomes it produces. It also requires attention to whether the learning experience is supported by organizational conditions that make development possible in practice. Watson et al. (2018) show that learning interventions may pursue different purposes, including the development of personal resources,

professional capabilities, leadership skills or organizational effectiveness, and that these purposes have different implications for well-being. They also stress that the relationship between learning and well-being is shaped by both individual and organizational factors. Therefore, a training program may formally aim to develop people, but if it is inserted into a work environment characterized by excessive workload, lack of time, weak managerial support or limited opportunity to apply learning, its developmental value may be reduced.

The relational dimension of training is also relevant. Employees do not experience development opportunities only as technical interventions. They may also interpret them as signals of how the organization sees them and whether their growth is taken seriously. Martini et al. (2023) examine this issue through the concept of perceived investment in employee development, defined as employees' perception of the organization's commitment to enriching their skills, knowledge, experience and abilities. Based on data from 337 employees working in two large Italian companies, their study finds that perceived investment in employee development is negatively related to turnover intention and that this relationship is almost fully mediated by affective commitment and perceived external employability. More specifically, perceived investment in employee development increases affective commitment, which in turn reduces employees' intention to leave the organization.

This finding is important because it shows that employee development is not only a matter of capability building. It also affects the psychological relationship between employees and the organization. Drawing on social exchange theory, Martini et al. (2023) argue that when employees perceive that their employer is concerned with their development needs, they tend to reciprocate with stronger emotional commitment and loyalty. In this sense, training becomes a relational signal. It communicates whether the organization is merely asking employees to update their skills, or whether it is also willing to support their growth over time. This reinforces the distinction between training provision and people investment. What matters is not only whether development opportunities exist, but whether employees perceive them as part of a genuine organizational commitment to their development.

For this reason, investment in training and investment in people cannot be treated as equivalent. Training becomes a people investment only when the organization pays

attention to the learner as a whole person: not only to what the employee needs to know for the current job, but also to how they experience learning, what enables or blocks their participation, how learning connects to their professional identity and whether the organizational context allows new capabilities to be used. This does not make training less strategic. On the contrary, it strengthens its strategic value. If human capital resources are built through people, then attention to people is not a soft addition to strategy. It is one of the conditions that makes strategy efficient.

The implication is that corporate training should not be evaluated only in terms of provision, participation or short-term performance effects. These indicators matter, but they are insufficient. A more substantive evaluation should also ask whether training has increased employees' ability to learn, adapt, participate and act with greater confidence in their work context. It should ask whether the design of learning has considered motivation, support, time, transfer and well-being. It should also ask whether the organization has created the conditions for learning to become embedded in everyday work, rather than remaining an isolated intervention. Without these conditions, training risks becoming a formal practice that signals strategic concern without producing meaningful development.

For this reason, the strategic relevance of training must be reframed. The question is not only how much organizations invest in learning, or how many programs they provide. The more important question is whether these investments are designed around the people whose development they claim to support. Training creates value when it changes what people are able to know, do, interpret, apply and become within a specific organizational context.

1.3 How Organizations Train: A Critical Overview of Dominant Delivery Approaches

If training is increasingly treated as a strategic investment, it becomes necessary to examine how this investment is actually translated into learning experiences. The mode of delivery is not a neutral detail. It influences what employees are asked to do during training, how actively they engage with the content, whether learning remains abstract or becomes connected to work, and whether the initiative is experienced as a meaningful development opportunity or simply as another organizational requirement to complete.

In this sense, the way training is delivered is part of what training becomes, and for this reason, delivery methods should not be evaluated in abstract terms, as if one format were inherently more effective than another. Their value depends on the learning goals pursued, the type of knowledge or capability to be developed, the characteristics of learners and the organizational constraints within which training takes place. A format that is appropriate for transmitting standardized information may be insufficient for developing judgment, relational skills or cultural change; conversely, highly interactive methods may be valuable for engagement and practice, but may require time, facilitation and resources that not all organizational contexts can easily provide.

Current industry data suggest that corporate training is no longer organized around a single dominant model. The 2025 *Training Industry Report* describes a diversified landscape in which online or computer-based technologies account for 34% of training hours, instructor-led classroom training for 28%, virtual classrooms and webcasting for 24%, and blended learning for 22%. Mobile and social learning remain more marginal, each representing 6% of training hours, while AI-based training is still limited but growing, increasing from 0.8% to 2% of training hours (Training Magazine, 2025). These figures point to a training environment that is increasingly hybrid, digitalized and modular. However, this diversification should not be confused with improvement in itself. Having more formats available does not automatically mean that organizations are designing better learning.

Traditional classroom training remains relevant within this landscape, but its value depends on the type of learners and learning goals involved. It is particularly relevant for employees and managers who need to develop skills that require interaction, interpretation and feedback rather than simple exposure to information. This includes, for example, managers involved in leadership development, supervisors who need to strengthen communication and people-management skills, employees working in teams where collaboration and interpersonal dynamics are central, and professionals facing organizational or cultural change. In these cases, the value of classroom training lies less in physical presence as such than in the possibilities it can create: interaction with a trainer, immediate clarification, collective discussion, peer exchange and space for reflection. Training Magazine (2025) confirms this pattern, showing that organizations expecting to increase in-person training are especially likely to do so in management and

supervisory training, interpersonal skills training and executive development. This suggests that organizations still associate presence with learning situations in which dialogue and relational depth matter.

At the same time, classroom training can easily reproduce a passive model of learning when it is reduced to one-way instruction. Physical presence does not guarantee participation, nor does it ensure that employees will be able to transfer what they hear into practice. Its effectiveness depends on whether learners are invited to process, discuss, apply and contextualize the content, and on whether the organizational context gives them opportunities to use what they have learned after the session. In this perspective, classroom learning is neither obsolete nor automatically effective. Its value depends on how it is designed and supported.

Online and computer-based training respond to a different set of organizational needs. Their appeal is clear: they make it possible to reach large and geographically dispersed populations, standardize content, reduce logistical costs and offer learning on demand. These advantages are especially relevant for compliance training, onboarding, recurring technical updates and knowledge that can be codified into stable modules. Training Magazine (2025) reports that mandatory and compliance training is the area most commonly delivered online, with 92% of organizations conducting at least part of it online and 45% conducting it entirely online. Online formats are also widely used for IT systems training, desktop application training, diversity, equity and inclusion training, customer service, onboarding and management training (Training Magazine, 2025). This indicates that online learning is now embedded across many organizational domains, not only in narrowly technical areas.

The weakness of online training emerges when access is treated as equivalent to learning. A module can be available, trackable and completed without necessarily producing meaningful development. This is especially relevant in corporate contexts, where completion rates, platform usage and course catalogues can easily become indicators of activity rather than evidence of learning. Although not focused on corporate training specifically, Schmid et al. (2023) offer a useful contribution to this point through their meta-analysis of online learning, blended learning, flipped classroom and classroom instruction in teacher professional development. Their findings show that online, blended

and flipped approaches can produce positive outcomes, but they also indicate that blended and flipped formats tend to perform better than fully online learning. The relevance of this study for the present thesis is therefore not that it directly describes corporate training practices, but that it reinforces a broader principle of learning design: technology improves learning only when it supports a coherent pedagogical structure, rather than when it is adopted as an innovation in itself.

This distinction is important for organizations. Digital formats may increase access, flexibility and scale, but they do not automatically create engagement, reflection or behavioral change. When training goals are limited to information transmission, self-paced online modules may be appropriate and efficient. When organizations aim to develop collaboration, critical thinking, leadership, inclusion, ethical awareness or adaptive capability, the delivery design becomes more demanding. In these cases, online learning needs to be connected to interaction, feedback, application and opportunities for transfer. Otherwise, it risks becoming a technically efficient but developmentally thin form of training.

Blended and flipped formats attempt to respond to this limitation by combining the scalability of digital learning with the depth of synchronous or face-to-face interaction. In blended learning, online and in-person components are integrated within the same learning path. In flipped learning, employees usually engage with content before the live session, while synchronous time is used for discussion, problem solving, practice or application. These models are particularly interesting for organizations because they avoid treating digital and classroom learning as alternatives. Instead, they distribute different learning functions across different moments: information can be introduced online, while interaction can be reserved for activities that require interpretation, feedback and contextualization.

The potential of blended and flipped formats, however, does not lie in the mix itself, but in the quality of the integration. If the online component is disconnected from the live session, blended learning becomes little more than a logistical compromise. If, instead, the two components are organized around clear learning objectives, the format can support a more active learning process. Schmid et al. (2023), despite their educational-sector focus, are useful precisely on this point: their analysis suggests that the value of blended

and flipped learning is linked less to technology as a medium and more to the pedagogical arrangement that combines preparation, interaction and application. For corporate training, this implies that the most valuable approaches are not necessarily the most technologically advanced, but those that create better conditions for employees to understand, practice and use what they learn.

A more directly workplace-based perspective is provided by Raeisinafchi et al. (2025), who compare five training delivery methods in a field experiment with construction workers: pre-recorded video, lecture, interactive lecture, flipped lecture and interactive lecture with hands-on activity. The study is sector-specific and focused on safety training, so its findings should not be generalized uncritically to all forms of corporate learning. Nevertheless, it is useful because it examines real workers in real training conditions and compares delivery methods while keeping content constant. The results show that engagement increased as the training became more learner-centered, particularly in interactive and hands-on formats. This supports the idea that delivery affects not only exposure to content, but also the quality of participation.

The value of interactive and hands-on training therefore lies in its capacity to increase participation, practice and engagement, but this does not mean that it is automatically superior in every situation. Raeisinafchi et al. (2025) show that more learner-centered methods did not produce better outcomes on every measure: while interactive and hands-on formats were stronger in terms of engagement, improvements in hazard recognition followed a more complex pattern, and some less interactive formats performed well on specific short-term learning outcomes. This matters because it challenges the assumption that one delivery method can be considered superior in all circumstances. Interactive and hands-on methods require time, facilitation, materials and organizational space for practice, and they may be difficult to scale across large or dispersed workforces. Moreover, high engagement should not be confused with learning effectiveness. A training activity can be involving and memorable, but still fail to produce stable knowledge, transfer or behavioral change if it is not connected to clear objectives, feedback and opportunities to apply learning after the session. For this reason, hands-on methods are particularly valuable when practice and situated application are central to the learning goal, but they also require stronger design and organizational support than more standardized formats.

Microlearning represents another important development in contemporary corporate training. Monib et al. (2025) define it as an instructional approach that delivers targeted, action-oriented and bite-sized content to achieve specific objectives within a short period, usually a few seconds or minutes. Its diffusion is understandable. Contemporary work is marked by time pressure, fragmented attention, continuous information flows and the need for fast access to knowledge. In this context, microlearning promises flexibility, accessibility and just-in-time support. It can reduce cognitive overload, help employees engage with learning without leaving the workflow for long periods and provide focused resources when they are needed.

The review by Monib et al. (2025) suggests that microlearning can support cognitive, behavioral and affective outcomes, including knowledge acquisition, retention, engagement, motivation, satisfaction and self-efficacy. This makes it relevant not only as a practical delivery solution, but also as a possible component of broader learning strategies. However, microlearning should not be considered simply as "short training". Its effectiveness depends on specific design conditions: clear objectives, bite-sized but meaningful content, appropriate timing, interactivity, personalization and alignment with learner characteristics and context. Without these conditions, microlearning risks becoming a fragmented accumulation of small content units. It may be easy to consume, but weak in supporting deeper learning, reflection or behavioral change.

The main risk of microlearning is that brevity is mistaken for effectiveness. Short learning units can make training more accessible, but they may also fragment knowledge if they are not connected to a broader learning path. This is particularly relevant when organizations use microlearning mainly to reduce time away from work or to increase the frequency of training interactions. In such cases, learning may become easier to consume but less capable of supporting reflection, dialogue or behavioral change. Complex issues such as inclusion, leadership, well-being, ethics or organizational culture cannot be fully developed through isolated micro-units unless these are embedded in a broader learning architecture. Microlearning can therefore support reinforcement, recall and continuity, but it should not be treated as a substitute for deeper developmental processes.

Across these approaches, the effectiveness of a format depends on the objective of the training, the type of knowledge or skill being developed, the learners involved and the

practical constraints of the context. A method can be efficient for transmitting standardized information and still be weak for developing judgment, reflection or behavioral change. Another can generate high engagement, but require more time, facilitation and organizational resources. The relevant question is therefore not which method is best in general, but which method is coherent with the learning purpose and with the conditions that allow learning to be applied.

The comparison of these delivery approaches suggests that no training format is intrinsically superior. Each method can support learning under certain conditions, but each also carries specific limitations when it is adopted mainly for reasons of efficiency, scalability or convenience.

Table 1.1 summarizes the main strengths, appropriate uses and potential risks of the dominant approaches discussed in this section.

Table 1.1: Strengths, appropriate uses and potential risks of dominant corporate training delivery approaches

Delivery approach	**Main strengths**	**Most appropriate for**	**Potential risks**
Classroom training	Interaction, discussion, immediate clarification, peer exchange, collective reflection	Leadership, interpersonal skills, communication, cultural and behavioral learning	May become passive and lecture-based if not designed around participation, practice and feedback
Online / computer-based training	Scalability, flexibility, standardization, cost efficiency, access for dispersed employees	Compliance, onboarding, technical updates, codified knowledge, recurring training needs	Completion may be mistaken for learning; limited interaction, reflection and transfer if poorly designed
Blended / flipped learning	Combines flexibility with interaction; allows content acquisition before live application	Programs requiring both knowledge transmission and discussion, problem-solving or practice	Weak integration between online and live components can turn the format into a logistical mix rather than a coherent learning path
Interactive / hands-on training	High engagement, practice, feedback,	Safety training, behavioral skills,	Requires more time, facilitation and

	application to concrete tasks	operational learning, experiential learning	resources; may not always outperform simpler formats on short-term knowledge outcomes
Microlearning	Short, accessible, focused, useful for just-in-time learning and reinforcement	Reinforcement, reminders, procedural knowledge, workflow support, continuous learning nudges	Can fragment knowledge and reduce depth if used as a substitute for reflection, dialogue or broader development paths

Source: Author's elaboration based on the literature discussed in the section.

This comparison reinforces the central argument of the section: delivery choices matter, but their value depends on their coherence with the learning objective, the type of knowledge or capability to be developed, the characteristics of learners and the organizational conditions that support transfer into work practice.

Taken together, the dominant delivery approaches used today show both progress and ambiguity. Organizations have more tools than in the past to make learning flexible, accessible and scalable. They can combine classroom training, online modules, virtual sessions, blended pathways, flipped models and microlearning resources. This expansion creates real opportunities. It allows training to reach more people, adapt to different contexts and become more continuous. At the same time, it also makes it easier for organizations to multiply learning activities without necessarily deepening the learning experience. A larger number of courses, platforms or formats does not automatically indicate a stronger investment in people.

The critical question, therefore, is not which delivery method is best in general. No format is intrinsically developmental. A passive classroom session can be as weak as a poorly designed e-learning module. A microlearning path can support continuous development, but it can also fragment knowledge. A blended program can improve learning, but only if its components are meaningfully connected. The value of delivery depends on the relationship between format, objective, learner and work context. Training design should therefore start not from the available technology, but from the kind of learning the organization wants to produce.

This connects directly with the broader argument of the chapter. If corporate training is understood as an investment in people, delivery choices cannot be guided only by cost, speed, reach or ease of tracking. These criteria matter, but they are incomplete. A people-centered approach also asks whether the chosen format gives employees time to engage, opportunities to practice, space for feedback and conditions to transfer learning into their everyday work. The same content can have very different effects depending on how it is delivered. For this reason, delivery is one of the points where the distinction between formal training provision and genuine people development becomes visible.

The contemporary training landscape is therefore not simply more innovative than in the past. It is more complex. Digital tools, blended formats and microlearning offer important possibilities, but they also require more careful design. The risk is that organizations confuse the modernization of training channels with the improvement of learning itself. Taken together, the evidence discussed in this section suggests that delivery formats should not be treated as sources of value in themselves. Their contribution depends on their coherence with the learning objective, their fit with the learner's context, and their connection to organizational conditions that allow learning to be applied.

1.4 The Limits of Delivery-Based Thinking: Towards a Learning Organization Perspective

The discussion developed so far suggests that the question of training design cannot be reduced to the choice of a delivery format. Classroom training, e-learning, blended learning and microlearning are not neutral containers. They shape how employees access, interpret and apply learning. However, focusing too much on delivery methods risks narrowing the meaning of corporate training. In many organizations, learning is still managed through indicators that are easy to track: number of courses delivered, participation rates, completion rates, hours of training and platform usage. These measures are useful from an administrative point of view, but they can also create a false sense of effectiveness. They show that training has been provided. They do not necessarily show that learning has taken place.

If corporate training is understood as a strategic investment in people, then it cannot be evaluated only as an activity that the organization offers. It has to be considered in terms of what it allows people to understand, practice, transfer and develop over time. A

delivery-based logic tends to start from the opposite assumption. It treats learning mainly as something that can be packaged, distributed and completed. The learner appears mostly as the recipient of content, while the organization focuses on making that content available in a scalable and measurable way. This is not wrong in itself. Organizations need structure, platforms and formats to make training accessible. The problem begins when delivery becomes a substitute for learning.

The limit is therefore not simply technical. It is conceptual. Delivery is easier to organize than learning because it produces visible evidence. A course can be launched, a module can be completed, a certificate can be issued. Learning is less immediate. It depends on whether employees find the content relevant, whether they have time to reflect on it, whether managers support its application and whether the work environment allows new knowledge to become part of everyday practice. This is why an organization may invest heavily in training and still fail to create meaningful development. It may increase the quantity of learning opportunities without changing the conditions that make learning useful.

Salas, Tannenbaum, Kraiger and Smith-Jentsch's (2012) support this critique in a review of the science of training and development in organizations. The authors argue that training should not be understood as a one-time event, but as a systematic process whose effectiveness depends on what happens before, during and after the training activity. Before training, organizations need to conduct a proper needs analysis, prepare the learning climate, clarify expectations and ensure that employees perceive the relevance of the program. During training, learning is supported by appropriate instructional principles, including information, demonstration, practice and diagnostic feedback. After training, effectiveness depends on transfer conditions, such as supervisory support, opportunities to apply new skills, reinforcement mechanisms and evaluation. This perspective reinforces the limits of delivery-based thinking: a training initiative may be formally delivered and completed, but its developmental value depends on the broader organizational system that enables learning to be prepared, enacted and transferred into work practice.

This problem becomes particularly clear when training is fragmented into isolated interventions or treated as a sequence of disconnected learning objects. The

contemporary training landscape offers organizations many more options than in the past. Digital platforms, short modules, blended formats and microlearning resources can make learning more flexible and accessible. This is a real advantage, especially for employees who work under time pressure or in dispersed teams. At the same time, these formats can also reinforce a narrow delivery logic if they are used mainly to increase speed, reach and efficiency. More content does not automatically mean better learning. A larger number of modules does not necessarily mean deeper development.

Beste's study (2023) on knowledge transfer in a project-based organization is useful precisely because it shows both sides of this issue. On one hand, microlearning can support knowledge sharing by providing short, action-oriented learning units that are easier to distribute across teams. In the case analyzed by Beste, microlearning helped create a common knowledge foundation on cost-efficiency and made knowledge transfer less dependent on informal or arbitrary exchanges. On the other hand, the study also stresses that the short duration of microlearning limits its use for deep learning. It works well when it introduces focused knowledge or reinforces relevant practices, but it cannot replace reflection, dialogue and broader organizational follow-up. This is an important point for corporate training more generally. A delivery format can support learning, but it cannot carry the whole learning process by itself.

The same study also helps clarify why delivery is not enough at the organizational level. In project-based organizations, valuable knowledge is constantly produced through experience. People learn by solving problems, managing constraints, dealing with clients, adapting to unexpected situations and reflecting, at least informally, on what worked and what did not. Yet this knowledge often remains trapped where it was created. Beste explains that, in project-based organizations, a lack of communication between projects can limit learning to the individual or to the single project team. Even when lessons learned in one project could be useful for others, time pressure, lack of routines and the intense nature of project work can prevent knowledge from circulating. In this sense, the problem is not the absence of learning. The problem is that learning does not automatically travel.

This point is directly relevant to the limits of delivery-based thinking. Training may expose many employees to the same content, but exposure alone does not guarantee that

knowledge will be interpreted, shared or used collectively. An employee may complete a course and still remain alone in the task of translating that content into practice. A team may learn from a project and still fail to transfer that experience to other teams. An organization may accumulate reports, databases and lessons learned documents without building the routines that make people actually use them. Beste captures this tension clearly when discussing project-based workplaces: organizational learning is not a natural outcome of projects. Knowledge has to be deliberately diffused, shared and connected across boundaries.

This is where the distinction between individual learning and organizational learning becomes essential. Corporate training often starts from the individual employee: what skills they lack, what course they should attend and what knowledge they should acquire. This level matters, but it is not enough. Crossan, Lane and White argue that organizational learning is a multilevel process involving individuals, groups and the organization. Their framework identifies four processes: intuiting, interpreting, integrating and institutionalizing. Intuiting begins at the individual level, where people recognize patterns and possibilities from experience. Interpreting allows insights to be expressed and communicated. Integrating develops shared understanding through dialogue and coordinated action. Institutionalizing embeds learning into routines, procedures, systems and structures.

This framework is useful because it makes visible what delivery-based thinking tends to hide. Delivering training mainly addresses the availability of knowledge. It says less about the social process through which knowledge becomes shared, practiced and embedded. Making content explicit does not automatically mean that people understand it in the same way. Crossan et al. stress that even when individuals are able to articulate their cognitive maps, shared understanding is not guaranteed. Language is imprecise, people interpret information through their existing assumptions, and the real test of shared understanding is coherent action. This means that learning cannot remain only cognitive. It must move into practice.

From this perspective, a training program can be formally successful and still remain organizationally weak. It may deliver useful information, but fail to create shared meaning. It may produce individual awareness, but not coordinated action. It may develop

knowledge, but not routines. This is one of the central limits of treating training as a delivery problem. The organization can control the provision of content more easily than it can control the transformation of that content into collective capability. Yet it is precisely this transformation that gives training its strategic and developmental value.

Crossan et al. also add another important element: organizational learning involves a tension between exploration and exploitation. Organizations need to assimilate new learning, but they also rely on what they have already learned. In their model, feed-forward processes move new insights from individuals and groups toward the organization, while feedback processes bring institutionalized learning back from the organization to groups and individuals. This dynamic is essential, but it can also become problematic. Existing routines, systems and procedures may help the organization use what it already knows, but they may also limit the possibility of questioning that knowledge.

This tension helps explain why delivery-based training can become conservative, even when it uses innovative formats. If training is designed mainly to transmit existing procedures, standardize behavior or increase compliance with established ways of working, it may reinforce what the organization already does. This may be necessary in some cases. Not every training initiative has to be transformative. However, if corporate learning is expected to support adaptation, innovation and people development, then it cannot only reproduce existing routines. It must also create space to question them. Otherwise, training becomes a mechanism of alignment rather than a source of learning.

This problem can be explained without assuming that existing routines are always negative. Organizations need routines because they make action more stable, coordinated and efficient. However, routines can also become barriers when they prevent new learning from moving through the organization. Crossan et al. (1999) describe this tension as the relationship between feedback and feed-forward learning. Feedback allows the organization to use what it has already learned, while feed-forward allows new insights developed by individuals and groups to become institutionalized. The difficulty is that institutionalized learning can also impede the assimilation of new learning, especially when existing systems, procedures and assumptions continue to direct people's attention toward established ways of working. In this sense, delivery-based

training can become conservative even when it appears efficient: it may help employees perform better within the current system, without creating the conditions to question or renew that system.

The learning organization perspective therefore offers a way to move beyond the limits of delivery-based thinking. It does not reject training formats, platforms or structured programs. Rather, it changes the question. The issue is no longer only how training can be delivered efficiently, but how learning can be supported, shared and embedded in organizational life. Beste, drawing on Garvin, Edmondson and Gino, describes a learning organization as one in which employees are able to create, acquire and transfer knowledge. This requires a supportive learning environment, concrete learning processes and leadership that reinforces learning. These elements are important because they shift attention from the training event to the organizational conditions around it.

A supportive learning environment gives people space to ask questions, discuss mistakes and reflect on practice. Concrete learning processes make knowledge transfer less dependent on chance. Leadership matters because employees are unlikely to treat learning as important if managers treat it as secondary to "real work". In project-based or high-pressure environments, this is especially relevant. If employees are expected to learn but are not given time, support or legitimate opportunities to apply what they learn, training remains fragile. It depends on individual motivation rather than on organizational design.

This does not mean that delivery has no value. On the contrary, delivery choices matter precisely because they shape access to learning. A well-designed digital module can make knowledge available when people need it. A blended program can combine flexibility with interaction. A microlearning path can reinforce key ideas over time. A classroom session can create space for discussion and collective sense-making. The problem is not the format. The problem is treating the format as if it were the learning. Delivery becomes meaningful only when it is connected to reflection, application, feedback and organizational routines.

For this reason, moving beyond delivery-based thinking requires a different set of managerial questions. Instead of asking only what content should be delivered,

organizations should ask how employees will make sense of it, how they will use it, who will support them, how teams will share what they learn and how the organization will change as a result. These questions are more demanding because they cannot be answered only by purchasing a platform or designing a course catalogue. They require attention to culture, leadership, work organization and the everyday conditions under which people learn.

The argument developed in this chapter shows that the growing strategic relevance of corporate training cannot be understood only in terms of higher investment, broader access to learning opportunities or more diversified delivery methods. These elements matter, but they do not guarantee that training becomes a genuine investment in people. Training creates substantive value when it is connected to employees' development, supported by coherent design choices and embedded in organizational conditions that allow learning to be interpreted, practiced, shared and transferred into everyday work. This is why the limits of delivery-based thinking are particularly important. Courses, platforms and formats can make learning available, but they do not automatically transform individual knowledge into collective capability or organizational change.

The learning organization perspective helps address this limitation by shifting attention from isolated training initiatives to the broader system in which learning takes place. From this perspective, the central issue is no longer simply whether organizations deliver training, but whether they create the cultural, managerial and structural conditions through which learning can become continuous and meaningful. This transition is essential for the development of the thesis: once corporate training is understood not as a set of activities to be provided, but as a practice whose value depends on the organizational conditions that sustain it, it becomes possible to examine when training produces real development and when it remains mainly formal, symbolic or superficial.

Chapter 2

Learning Organizations as a Framework for Sustainable People Development

2.1 Defining the learning organization

The previous chapter showed that corporate training cannot be reduced to the choice of a delivery format. Courses, platforms and learning methods are important, but they do not explain by themselves whether training becomes a genuine investment in people. An organization may provide many learning opportunities and still remain weak at learning if employees are not placed in the conditions to question assumptions, share knowledge, apply new ideas or transform established ways of working. This distinction is central to the argument of the thesis: training can be delivered as an HR activity, but learning becomes valuable only when it is absorbed, used and supported within the organizational context.

The concept of the learning organization is relevant here because it shifts the focus from training as an activity to learning as an organizational capability. Rather than asking only whether employees receive training, this perspective examines whether the organization creates the conditions through which knowledge can be generated, shared, interpreted and translated into practice. This interpretation is consistent with Garvin's (1993) definition of the learning organization as an organization skilled at creating, acquiring and transferring knowledge, and at modifying its behavior to reflect new knowledge and insights. It is also coherent with Yang, Watkins and Marsick's (2004) view of the learning organization as a multidimensional construct in which learning is integrated with work and operates across individual, team and organizational levels. In this sense, the learning organization provides the conceptual bridge between corporate training and organizational learning: training may initiate learning, but the organization determines whether that learning circulates, becomes collective and influences how work is actually done.

The expression learning organization is commonly associated with Peter Senge's work, which contributed to popularizing the idea that organizations can develop collective capacities for continuous learning. In *The Fifth Discipline*, Senge (1990) describes the learning organization through five interrelated disciplines: systems thinking, personal

mastery, mental models, shared vision and team learning. These dimensions make the concept more concrete. Systems thinking invites organizations to move beyond linear cause-effect reasoning and to understand interdependencies. Personal mastery concerns the continuous development of individual capabilities. Mental models refer to the assumptions through which people interpret reality. Shared vision connects learning to a common direction, while team learning emphasizes dialogue, collective reflection and the capacity to learn together. The relevance of Senge's model lies not only in these disciplines taken separately, but in their integration into a broader way of understanding organizations and organizing.

A broader literature shows that the concept has developed through different traditions and interpretations. The meaning of the term, in fact, is not straightforward. Örtenblad (2018) notes that the learning organization is a concept that has been used in several different ways and that it is difficult to define precisely: in some cases, it refers to the organization of learning activities, in others, it is closer to the idea of organizational learning, meaning that the organization itself is able to learn over time. If the concept is used too broadly, almost every organization could be described as a learning organization, simply because some form of learning happens in every workplace.

In this thesis, a learning organization is not simply understood as an organization where employees learn, nor as a company that offers many training opportunities. It is interpreted as an organization that creates the cultural, managerial and structural conditions for learning to continue beyond the single training activity, to be shared across people and teams, and to become applicable in everyday work. This makes the concept useful for the present analysis because it helps explain how corporate training can move from isolated provision to a broader process of people development, knowledge circulation and organizational change.

For this reason, individual learning at work is not enough. For instance, a learning organization cannot be automatically defined as such simply because, as it happens in many organizations, employees learn informally, often through experience, mistakes, relationships and problem solving. Örtenblad (2018) argues that some organizational aspect must be connected to learning. The organization may facilitate learning, act as a collective learning unit, or be structured in such a way that its functioning depending on continuous learning. This point is important because it prevents the concept from being

reduced to the sum of individual development experiences and it underlines that learning organization is not simply an organization where people learn, it's an organization that makes learning organizationally relevant.

This distinction is particularly useful for corporate training where training provision refers to the existence of courses, programs, tools or platforms. A learning organization refers instead to the conditions that allow knowledge to be created, shared, interpreted and translated into action. The difference is not marginal. An organization can invest in training and still fail to learn if knowledge remains isolated in individuals or disconnected from everyday work.

Garvin's (1993) definition is particularly useful because it makes the concept operational: a learning organization is an organization skilled at creating, acquiring and transferring knowledge, and at modifying its behavior to reflect new knowledge and insights. The last part of this definition is especially important. Learning is not only the acquisition of knowledge. It implies a change in behavior, routines or decisions. An organization may collect information, encourage discussion or provide training, but if these activities do not influence how work is actually done, their learning value remains limited. The learning organization becomes visible when knowledge changes practice.

Garvin, Edmondson and Gino (2008) develop this idea by identifying three building blocks of a learning organization: a supportive environment, concrete learning processes and practices, and leadership that reinforces learning, useful elements because they make the concept less abstract. The first building block concerns the climate in which learning takes place. First of all it requires psychological safety, employees need to feel able to ask questions, express disagreement, admit mistakes and offer minority viewpoints without fear of being punished or marginalized. Learning also requires openness to new ideas and different perspectives, willingness to explore them and time for reflection, to achieve analytical and creative outcomes. These are not soft or secondary elements, without them, employees may formally participate in training while avoiding the behaviors through which learning actually develops.

The second building block concerns concrete learning processes and practices. Garvin et al. (2008) stress that learning organizations do not emerge spontaneously, they require practices for generating, collecting, interpreting and disseminating information. These

may include experimentation, after-action reviews, knowledge-sharing forums, systematic problem solving, external intelligence gathering and training activities which helps clarify the role of corporate training within a learning organization. Training is not irrelevant, but it is only one part of a wider system. Its value increases when it is connected to processes that allow employees to discuss, adapt, apply and transfer what they have learned.

The third building block is leadership that reinforces learning. Leaders influence learning not only by approving training budgets or communicating the importance of development, but through ordinary managerial behavior. When managers ask questions, listen carefully, invite alternative viewpoints and provide time for reflection, they signal that learning is part of work. When they treat learning as secondary to immediate productivity, employees may perceive training as an additional obligation rather than as a real opportunity for development. In this sense, leadership does not simply support learning from outside, it shapes whether learning is seen as legitimate inside daily organizational practice.

A further contribution is offered by Yang, Watkins and Marsick (2004), treating the learning organization as a multidimensional construct. Their work is useful because it responds to a recurring weakness in the literature: the concept is often attractive, but difficult to measure. Drawing on Watkins and Marsick's framework, they describe the learning organization as one that learns continuously and transforms itself, with learning integrated with work rather than separated from it. Their model identifies seven dimensions: continuous learning, inquiry and dialogue, team learning, empowerment, embedded systems for capturing and sharing learning, system connection and strategic leadership for learning. These dimensions show that a learning organization operates at different levels at the same time.

This multilevel view is particularly relevant for people development. Learning cannot be located only in the individual employee. Individuals may acquire new skills, but those skills may remain underused if teams do not discuss them, if managers do not support their application, or if the organization lacks systems for capturing and sharing knowledge. At the same time, organizational structures alone are not sufficient if employees do not have opportunities to learn, reflect and participate. A learning organization therefore depends on the interaction between people and structure and

requires both individual and collective development, and both cultural and procedural support.

This point also helps clarify why the learning organization is not simply a more advanced name for corporate training. Training often starts from a specific gap: employees need to know something, do something, or update a competence. The learning organization starts from a broader assumption: organizations need to build the capacity to learn continuously from experience, from people, from mistakes and from the external environment. Training may support this process, but it cannot substitute it. A company can train employees without becoming a learning organization, but the opposite is also true: an organization that learns well will usually treat training as part of a wider architecture of knowledge, feedback and change.

The concept should therefore be used carefully. Örtenblad (2018) warns that the label learning organization can easily become symbolic. Organizations may use it to communicate a positive image while making only limited changes in practice. This risk is relevant in corporate contexts where learning, development and people-centered language are increasingly used in managerial discourse. Declaring that learning matters is not the same as organizing work around learning. A learning organization requires coherence between language, practices and structures.

The concept should not be so broad that every organization qualifies simply because people learn something while working. At the same time, it should not be so idealized that it becomes unreachable. A balanced definition is therefore needed: a learning organization can be understood as an organization that intentionally creates conditions for learning at individual, team and organizational levels; supports the circulation and application of knowledge; and uses learning to adapt, improve and transform its practices over time. This definition brings the discussion back to corporate training: the strategic value of training does not depend only on the amount of content delivered, but on whether training is connected with reflection, knowledge sharing, leadership support, experimentation and everyday work.

2.2 Beyond episodic training: learning as a continuous organizational process

The definition developed in the previous section makes it possible to clarify what changes when corporate training is interpreted through the lens of the learning organization. The point is not to reject formal training, nor to suggest that courses, platforms and structured programs have become irrelevant. Formal training remains important, especially when employees need to acquire specific knowledge, update technical skills or develop a shared language around new organizational priorities. The problem emerges when training is treated as a self-contained intervention, separated from the everyday conditions in which learning should be used.

Traditional corporate training often follows an episodic logic where a need is identified, a course is designed, a content is delivered, a participation is recorded, and the initiative is considered completed. This logic can be useful from an administrative point of view, because it makes training visible, measurable and easier to manage, but it can also create a narrow understanding of learning. When the focus is mainly on the delivery of content, the central question becomes whether employees have attended, completed or passed a training activity. Less attention is given to what happens afterwards: whether people have actually changed how they work, whether teams have discussed and adapted the new knowledge, and whether the organization has created the conditions for that learning to be applied.

This is one of the main limits of a content-driven approach. It tends to assume that learning can be produced by exposing employees to information. Yet workplace learning does not depend only on access to content. Noe, Clarke and Klein (2014) argue that organizations have traditionally relied on formal training and development programs, but they also underline that contemporary work conditions make this model insufficient on its own. Time pressure, workload, budget constraints and dispersed workforces often make formal programs difficult to attend and difficult to use effectively. More importantly, continuous learning outside formal training may be especially relevant for the development of human capital resources, because learning also occurs through informal learning, deliberate practice, incidental learning, workplace learning and self-development.

This broader view does not make formal training less important; it changes its role. A learning organization does not replace formal training with informal learning, but connects different forms of learning into a broader process. Choi and Jacobs (2011) make this point clearly by showing that workplace learning includes both formal and informal learning. Formal learning refers to planned experiences designed to prepare individuals to acquire specific knowledge and skills, often separated from daily work. Informal learning, instead, emerges as individuals make sense of their everyday work experiences. The authors stress that recent research does not suggest that formal learning is useless; rather, formal and informal learning need to be integrated to maximize employee development. Formal learning can also stimulate informal learning, because structured programs may provide concepts, tools and methods that employees later use to interpret problems, reflect on experience and learn more effectively in the workplace.

This point is important because it avoids a simplistic reading of the learning organization. Rather, it helps to understand it is an organization that connects different forms of learning and makes them part of a broader process. Manuti et al. (2015) argue that workplace learning should be understood as more than simple training with a narrow focus on surface-level skills. It has the potential to connect individual development with organizational development through sustained learning processes, not only through isolated learning outcomes.

This perspective is particularly useful for understanding why the learning organization represents a shift from episodic training to continuous learning. Yang, Watkins and Marsick (2004), drawing on Watkins and Marsick's framework, describe the learning organization as one that learns continuously and transforms itself, with learning integrated with and running parallel to work. Their model also shows that learning operates at multiple levels: individual, team and organizational. Continuous learning, inquiry and dialogue, team learning, embedded systems and strategic leadership are not separate initiatives, but interrelated dimensions of a broader learning capability.

Here the distinction between training as a project and learning as a process becomes central. In a project-based logic, training has a beginning and an end. It is planned, delivered, evaluated and closed. This does not make it useless, but it limits its impact if the organization assumes that learning ends when the training activity ends. In a learning organization perspective, training acquires value when it becomes part of a continuous

process through which knowledge is created, shared, tested, applied and revised over time. The shift is therefore not from formal training to informal learning, but from isolated training events to an organizational system that keeps learning alive after the course, the workshop or the platform module has ended. This distinction is also consistent with the systemic view associated with Senge. As Harris (1990) explains in his review of *The Fifth Discipline*, systems thinking moves attention away from linear cause-effect reasoning and toward interrelationships, patterns of change and delayed consequences. Applied to corporate training, this means that learning cannot be interpreted only as the immediate output of a course, it depends on the interaction between training design, managerial support, team dialogue, opportunities for application and routines that either sustain or block new behaviors.

The literature on training transfer supports the same argument. Training has limited value if what is learned does not move into workplace behavior. Burke and Hutchins (2007) define training transfer as the use of trained knowledge and skills back on the job, and they underline that transfer requires learned behavior to be generalized to the job context and maintained over time. Their review also shows that transfer is affected by learner characteristics, intervention design and work environment factors. This is important because it confirms that training effectiveness cannot be explained only by the quality of the course or the content. It also depends on the organizational conditions surrounding the learner.

The work environment is especially important because it can either support or inhibit the use of what has been learned. Burke and Hutchins (2007) argue that learning and training interventions should be connected to organizational goals and strategies. They also emphasize the importance of transfer climate, meaning the situations and consequences that either inhibit or facilitate the use of what has been learned in training back on the job. A positive transfer climate includes cues that encourage employees to use new skills, support from supervisors and peers, opportunities to perform, and consequences that reinforce the correct use of learning. Without these conditions, a training program may be formally completed but practically weak.

This makes the limits of episodic training even clearer. If employees attend a course but return to a workplace where managers do not encourage application, peers do not discuss the new knowledge, workloads leave no time to experiment, and existing routines remain

unchanged, the problem is not necessarily the quality of the course, but that the course remains disconnected from the system in which learning should become practice. Burke and Hutchins (2007) show that positive transfer is limited when trainees are not given opportunities to use new learning in their work setting and the lack of opportunity to apply training is identified by many studies as one of the main obstacles to transfer.

From this perspective, the benefits of a learning organization do not lie in offering more training activities, but in creating stronger connections between training and work. A learning organization treats formal programs, informal learning, knowledge sharing, feedback, experimentation and leadership support as parts of the same system and this is what allows learning to become more continuous and more collective. It also reduces the risk that training becomes a symbolic activity, useful for showing that the organization "invests in people" but weakly connected to how people actually work.

The shift from episodic training to continuous learning is therefore also a shift in responsibility. In a delivery-based model, responsibility for learning is often placed mainly on the training function and on the individual employee: HR designs the course, and the employee attends it. In a learning organization, responsibility is more distributed. HR and learning functions remain important because they design learning opportunities and connect them to organizational needs, but they cannot ensure learning transfer alone. Managers influence whether employees have time, encouragement and opportunities to apply what they have learned. Teams shape whether new knowledge is discussed, adapted and shared. Organizational systems determine whether learning is captured, reinforced and connected to routines, decisions and work processes. Employees also play an active role, but their agency depends on the extent to which the organization creates conditions that make learning possible and legitimate. In this sense, continuous learning is not the result of individual motivation alone, but of an organizational system that supports application, sharing and continuity.

This is why the idea of training as a process, rather than as a project, is so important. A project can be completed without necessarily changing the organization. A process, instead, implies continuity, feedback and adjustment. When training is understood as a process, the focus moves from the event itself to what the event activates: new conversations, new practices, new routines, new forms of collaboration and new ways of

interpreting work. This does not eliminate the need for design, content or formal learning methods, it places them inside a broader organizational logic.

The learning organization perspective therefore helps reframe the value of corporate training. Training is valuable not because it is delivered, but because it becomes usable. It contributes to people development when it is connected to everyday work, supported by the work environment and integrated with informal and collective forms of learning. Without this connection, training risks remaining episodic and content-driven. With it, training can become part of a continuous organizational process through which people learn, knowledge circulates and the organization develops its capacity to adapt and improve.

The next section builds on this point by examining how learning becomes embedded in organizational life. If learning is not only an event but a process, it is necessary to understand the mechanisms that make this process concrete: feedback, reflection, knowledge sharing, managerial support, opportunities to apply learning and systems that allow knowledge to move beyond the individual participant.

2.3 Embedding learning into organizational life: mechanisms and conditions

Having clarified this shift, the next step is to examine how learning becomes embedded in organizational life. However, this does not happen automatically, the literature discussed so far suggests that learning becomes organizationally meaningful only when two dimensions are present. The first is awareness, understood here as the recognition that learning is not a secondary HR activity, but a process connected to people development, knowledge circulation and organizational adaptation. The second is continuity: learning has to be sustained beyond the single course, workshop or training project through routines, spaces, systems and managerial behaviors. In this section, these two dimensions are used as an analytical starting point for examining the mechanisms that allow learning to move from individual experience to organizational practice.

Awareness is relevant at different levels. First, it concerns leaders and managers. If those who make decisions about people, time, budgets and priorities do not recognize the strategic value of learning, training is likely to remain marginal or episodic. It may be offered but not protected or encouraged but not integrated into work, resulting in being

formally valued but practically sacrificed to immediate productivity. In a learning organization perspective, leadership awareness means understanding that learning is not only a cost or a benefit for employees, but a condition for adaptation, knowledge circulation and organizational development.

This point is consistent with Yang, Watkins and Marsick's model, where strategic leadership is one of the dimensions of the learning organization. Leaders are not relevant only because they authorize training initiatives but mostly because they connect learning to organizational direction and create the conditions through which learning can support change. In this sense, leadership awareness is the starting point for making learning legitimate inside the organization.

Awareness also concerns employees because learning becomes an organizational process only if people recognize the relevance of their own development and understand their active role in it. If on one hand training cannot be reduced to attendance, nor, on the other, can learning be reduced to the passive reception of content. Employees need to see learning as something that can be used, questioned, adapted and brought back into daily work. This is particularly important for informal and workplace learning, because many learning opportunities are embedded in ordinary activities and may remain invisible if individuals do not recognize them as such.

Yet awareness alone is not sufficient. Once the value of learning is recognized, the organization needs continuity. Learning has to be sustained over time through routines, spaces, systems and managerial behaviors. This is where the difference between training as a project and learning as a process becomes concrete. A project can end when the course is delivered. A process continues through application, feedback, reflection, knowledge sharing and adjustment. Without continuity, even well-designed training remains exposed to dispersion: people may understand the content, but fail to use it, share it or transform it into practice.

The mechanisms discussed in this section should therefore be read as ways to transform awareness into continuity. Psychological safety makes it possible to speak openly, ask for help and discuss errors. Reflection routines, such as debriefs and after-action reviews, help transform experience into learning. Knowledge-sharing systems allow learning to circulate beyond the individual. Transfer climate and opportunities to perform make

learning usable in daily work. Leadership and managerial support connect these mechanisms and make them stable over time. Together, these elements explain how learning can become part of the ordinary functioning of a learning organization.

The first mechanism through which awareness can be translated into continuity is indeed psychological safety. Learning can become organizational only if people are able to express doubts, ask questions, admit mistakes and test new ideas without excessive fear of negative consequences. Edmondson (1999) defines team psychological safety as a shared belief that the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking. Her study shows that psychological safety is associated with learning behavior in work teams, and that learning behavior mediates the relationship between psychological safety and team performance. This is important because it links a relational condition to concrete learning processes, rather than treating climate as a vague cultural variable.

Psychological safety matters because the behaviors through which teams learn are often socially risky. Edmondson defines learning behavior as the activities through which team members obtain and process data that allow the team to adapt and improve. These activities include seeking feedback, sharing information, asking for help, talking about errors and experimenting. These are not abstract values, but observable behaviors. A team that does not ask for help, does not discuss mistakes and does not test assumptions may still contain competent individuals, but it is unlikely to learn collectively.

Many training programs require employees to behave differently after the course: to give feedback, collaborate, speak up, experiment or challenge established routines. Yet these behaviors do not depend only on what employees have learned during training but also on whether the organizational context makes them possible. If a person is trained to give feedback but works in a team where disagreement is punished, the training remains fragile, same as if a person learns a new method but cannot ask questions or discuss problems openly, the learning is unlikely to become practice. Psychological safety is therefore one of the conditions that allows individual learning to become collective and usable.

Experience alone does not automatically generate learning. Employees and teams may go through projects, mistakes, customer interactions or organizational changes without extracting clear lessons from them, this introduces a second important mechanism, which

is structured reflection. For learning to become embedded, experience needs to be reviewed and translated into future action. This is the role of debriefs and after-action reviews. Tannenbaum and Cerasoli (2013) describe debriefs as practices used in training and work environments to learn from experience by systematizing reflection, discussion and goal setting. For corporate training, debriefs are especially useful after the formal activity has ended, because they help employees and teams connect what they have learned to their work and identify concrete ways to apply it. In this way, debriefs support the transition from training attendance to learning transfer, preventing the course from remaining an isolated event.

Debriefs are concrete because they give learning a structure. They are not generic conversations about "what went well" or "what went wrong". Tannenbaum and Cerasoli identify four essential elements: active self-learning, developmental rather than administrative intent, focus on specific events, and the use of multiple information sources: this means that a debrief should actively involve participants, avoid a punitive logic, focus on a real episode and include more than one perspective. Reflection becomes, in this way, a repeatable organizational routine rather than an occasional individual reaction.

The value of this mechanism is also supported empirically. In their meta-analysis of 46 samples, Tannenbaum and Cerasoli find that debriefs improve effectiveness by approximately 20–25% compared with control conditions. They also note that debriefs can be relatively quick and low-cost interventions for improving individual and team performance and this is useful for the learning organization perspective because it shows that learning from experience can be intentionally organized and does not have to remain spontaneous or informal.

A third mechanism is knowledge sharing. Learning becomes organizational only when it moves beyond the individual who first acquired it. If knowledge remains in the mind of one employee, in one team or in one project, the organization may lose it when people change role, when a project ends or when teams are reorganized. Noe, Clarke and Klein (2014) broaden the understanding of workplace learning by including not only formal training, but also continuous learning, informal learning, self-development and knowledge sharing. This is important because it shifts the focus from individual acquisition to the circulation of knowledge across the organization.

Knowledge sharing can happen through different channels: mentoring, peer learning, team meetings, communities of practice, internal platforms, shared documents, project reviews or informal conversations. The form can vary, but the function is the same: making learning accessible, discussable and reusable beyond the original learner or situation.

Yang, Watkins and Marsick (2004) help make this point more directly connected to the learning organization. Their model includes “embedded systems” as one of the dimensions of the learning organization, which are systems that allow learning to be captured and shared. This dimension is important because it prevents learning from remaining purely individual or temporary. When learning is embedded in systems, it can become part of organizational memory: procedures, databases, routines, common language, shared practices and recurring spaces for exchange.

However, embedded systems should not be reduced to digital tools. A platform does not create a learning organization by itself. People need time to contribute, trust to share openly, incentives to make knowledge available and routines that connect the system to daily work, otherwise, knowledge-sharing systems risk becoming empty archives. For this reason, the practical issue is not only whether the organization has tools for sharing knowledge, but whether those tools are used, updated and connected to decisions, projects and work practices.

A fourth condition to work on continuity is transfer climate. This connects embedded learning directly to corporate training because, as repeatedly discussed, training has limited organizational value if what is learned does not move into work behavior. Burke and Hutchins (2007) define training transfer as the use of trained knowledge and skills back on the job, emphasizing that transfer requires the learned behavior to be generalized to the work context and maintained over time. Their review shows that transfer depends not only on the learner or the training design, but also on the work environment and this confirms that the effectiveness of training is determined partly after the course has ended.

The most practical element here is opportunity to perform: employees need real occasions to use what they have learned. A manager who attends a course on feedback needs an actual feedback conversation to conduct. A team trained in problem solving needs problems on which to apply the method. An employee trained on a new tool needs

time and tasks that require using it. Burke and Hutchins show that positive transfer is limited when trainees are not given opportunities to apply new learning in the work setting.

Transfer climate also includes the signals and consequences that encourage or discourage application. If managers ask how learning will be used, if peers discuss it, if workloads allow experimentation and if new behaviors are recognized, transfer becomes more likely. If employees return to the same routines, receive no follow-up and are evaluated only on short-term output, training may remain formally completed but practically irrelevant. In a learning organization, the course is therefore only one part of the process, the organization also needs conditions that allow learning to be practiced, adjusted and sustained.

Leadership is the mechanism that connects and stabilizes the others. Garvin, Edmondson and Gino (2008) identify leadership that reinforces learning as one of the building blocks of a learning organization. This does not mean only that leaders communicate the importance of learning or approve training budgets but that managers need to make learning legitimate through everyday behavior: asking questions, listening to different viewpoints, admitting uncertainty, giving time for reflection, encouraging experimentation and following up after training.

Edmondson's study supports this point from a team perspective. She finds that team leader coaching and context support are positively associated with psychological safety, and that psychological safety mediates the relationship between these antecedents and team learning behavior. In practical terms, managers matter because their behavior affects whether people feel able to speak, ask, experiment and learn. A manager who reacts defensively to problems may block learning even in a team full of competent people, on the contrary a manager who treats problems as information can make learning more likely.

This is where the learning organization becomes concrete. It is not only a model based on values such as openness, collaboration and continuous improvement, but also an organizational arrangement made of recurring practices and conditions. Psychological safety makes learning speakable. Debriefs make experience reviewable. Knowledge-sharing systems make learning transferable beyond the individual. Transfer climate

makes learning usable in work. Leadership makes these practices legitimate and continuous.

From the perspective of corporate training, this means that a training initiative should not be designed as an isolated moment. It should be connected to what happens before and after, for example how the learning need is identified, or how managers are involved, or how participants will apply the content but also how teams will discuss it and how the organization will capture and reuse what has been learned. This is the practical meaning of embedding learning into organizational life: learning becomes part of the organization when it is supported by routines, spaces, systems and managerial behaviors that allow knowledge to move from individual experience to collective practice.

2.4 Learning organizations, people development and social sustainability

The discussion developed so far has shown that the learning organization perspective reframes corporate training as part of a broader organizational process. Learning becomes meaningful when it is supported by conditions that allow people to develop, share knowledge, participate in dialogue and apply what they have learned in everyday work. This connection with people development is also the point at which the learning organization perspective becomes relevant for the social dimension of sustainability. If social sustainability concerns the way organizations affect people and their capacity to develop, participate and work in fair and supportive conditions, then learning cannot be treated as a purely technical or performance-oriented issue. It becomes part of how organizations sustain, or fail to sustain, their human and social resources over time.

In organizational contexts it is important to understand corporate sustainability as a multidimensional concept. The triple bottom line perspective helped frame business sustainability not only in relation to economic value, but also in relation to the environmental and social value that organizations create or destroy (Elkington, 2004). This point is important not only because it prevents sustainability from being reduced to environmental responsibility alone, but also to underline that sustainability concerns how companies affect people: employees, workers in broader value chains, communities, customers and other stakeholders. The social dimension is therefore connected to issues such as working conditions, human development, fairness, health and safety, participation and respect for people.

This wider understanding of sustainability has also influenced the way human resource management is discussed. Kramar (2014) argues that sustainable HRM moves beyond a narrow focus on financial outcomes and explicitly recognizes human and social outcomes as relevant in themselves. This does not mean that economic performance becomes irrelevant. Rather, it means that people management cannot be assessed only through its contribution to efficiency, productivity or short-term organizational results. A sustainable approach to HRM also considers how organizational practices affect employees and other stakeholders over time, including both positive and negative effects.

Within this debate, learning and development become particularly relevant. The literature on sustainable HRM helps clarify why the social dimension of sustainability is not an abstract principle, but is translated into concrete organizational practices and employment relationships. Stankevičiūtė and Savanevičienė (2018), for example, identify several characteristics of sustainable HRM, including long-term orientation, care of employees, employee participation and social dialogue, employee development, cooperation, fairness and equality. These elements show that a company contributes to social sustainability not only by declaring attention to people, but by creating conditions in which people can develop, participate, be treated fairly and work in a context that does not consume human resources without regenerating them.

The relationship between sustainability and learning has also been increasingly recognized in HRD, organizational learning and workplace learning research. Brandi et al. (2022), in their scoping review, show that sustainability and learning in organizations are connected through different perspectives, including balance, dimensional, integral and outcome perspectives. Their review is useful because it also shows that this connection should not be taken for granted: studies often approach sustainability and learning in scattered ways, which requires a more explicit explanation of how learning processes contribute to sustainable organizational practices. This is particularly important for this thesis, because corporate training can be socially meaningful only when it is connected to broader organizational learning conditions.

If training is treated only as a way to close immediate skill gaps, its social meaning remains limited, so it may still be useful for performance, but it does not necessarily say much about the organization's broader responsibility toward its people. By contrast, when learning is understood as a continuous organizational process, training becomes part of a

wider system of people development. It can support not only competence updating, but also participation, autonomy, voice and the possibility for employees to contribute more actively to organizational life.

This is why the social value of training does not depend simply on the existence of learning opportunities, but on whether these opportunities are fair, accessible, supported and connected to employees' long-term development. In this sense, learning becomes socially meaningful when it helps create a work context in which people can grow, participate and contribute without being treated only as resources to be updated according to immediate business needs.

From this perspective, the learning organization can be read as one possible organizational configuration that supports the social side of sustainability. This connection should not be understood in automatic terms: a learning organization is not sustainable simply because it uses the language of learning. Its relevance lies in the conditions it creates. The link between learning organizations and social sustainability should therefore be built not as a simple overlap between similar concepts, but as an argument about organizational conditions. A learning organization may contribute to social sustainability because it creates mechanisms through which people can access development, participate in knowledge creation, share experience, exercise voice and apply learning in everyday work. In this sense, continuous learning, inquiry and dialogue, team learning, empowerment, embedded systems and strategic leadership are not only learning dimensions. They are also social conditions that influence how employees experience development inside the organization.

Empirical research on sustainable organizational learning supports this connection. Battistella et al. (2021), through a multiple-case study of sustainability-certified companies, examine sustainability from an organizational learning perspective. Their findings show that sustainable companies use several learning-related practices, including experimentation, information-sharing systems, stakeholder engagement and concrete actions aimed at environmental and social impacts. The study is particularly relevant here because it shows that sustainability is not embedded only through formal policies or declarations, but also through learning processes that allow organizations to assimilate, share and institutionalize sustainable practices over time.

The connection becomes even more specific when the focus moves from organizational learning in general to HR training. Piwowar-Sulej and Iqbal (2025) argue that HR training should not be considered sustainable only because it develops sustainability-oriented behaviors. To be called sustainable, training also has to be internally sustainable and contribute to the common good. Their study develops and validates a sustainable HR training construct composed of six dimensions: equal training opportunities, long-term oriented training, integrated approach to training, focus on well-being, environmental-oriented training and team building. This contribution is particularly useful for this thesis because it translates the social value of training into more concrete criteria. Training contributes to social sustainability not simply when it is offered, but when access to learning is fair, when development is oriented toward the long term, when training is integrated with broader HR and organizational practices, when employee well-being is considered and when learning supports cooperation rather than only individual performance.

This reasoning is central for people development. The learning organization perspective, together with the sustainable HRM literature discussed above, helps move beyond a narrow view of employees as holders of skills to be updated according to immediate business needs. Stankevičiūtė and Savanevičienė's (2018) emphasis on long-term orientation, care of employees, participation and employee development suggests that socially sustainable people management requires more than competence renewal. The sustainable HR training perspective developed by Piwowar-Sulej and Iqbal (2025) reinforces the same point by linking training to fair access, long-term development, integration with broader organizational practices and attention to well-being. From this perspective, training acquires social relevance when it creates conditions for employees not only to acquire knowledge, but also to reflect, share experience, participate in learning processes and contribute to organizational improvement.

Garavan and McGuire (2010) support this broader reading of Human Resource Development. They argue that HRD is increasingly expected to play a role in CSR, sustainability and ethics, while also questioning an excessive focus on efficiency and short-term performance. Their argument is useful because it places development activities inside a wider social and ethical agenda. HRD can help organizations develop awareness, capabilities, culture and practices that support sustainability and, in this

sense, corporate training and development are not neutral technical tools. They can either reproduce a narrow performance logic or contribute to a more responsible way of organizing people and work.

The learning organization perspective strengthens this second possibility because it connects development with organizational conditions: continuous learning supports long-term development, inquiry and dialogue create space for participation, team learning and knowledge sharing make development collective rather than purely individual, embedded systems help prevent learning from disappearing once a course or project ends, and strategic leadership connects learning with organizational direction. Taken together, these elements can make training more coherent with the social dimension of sustainability, because they support people not only as productive resources, but as active participants in organizational learning.

This does not mean that every learning organization is socially sustainable. Learning practices can still be used to increase adaptability, intensify work or transfer responsibility for development onto individuals — all while the language of care and development remains intact. For example, an organization may promote continuous learning while giving employees little time, support or recognition to actually learn. It may encourage empowerment rhetorically while leaving decisions centralized. It may ask people to be flexible without creating fair and supportive conditions.

For this reason, the learning organization should be understood as a potential contribution to social sustainability, not as a guarantee of it. Its value depends on the coherence between discourse, practices and structures. When continuous learning, participation, knowledge sharing, leadership support and employee development are embedded in real organizational routines, the learning organization can strengthen the social pillar of corporate sustainability. When they remain only managerial language, the concept risks becoming symbolic.

2.5 The limits of the learning organization: why learning organizations are rare and hard to sustain

The learning organization remains an attractive concept because it offers a way to think about learning as something more than training provision. It suggests that organizations can become more capable of learning from experience, sharing knowledge, involving

people and adapting over time. However, its attractiveness is also part of its weakness. The concept is easy to support in principle, but much harder to translate into organizational practice. Even if few organizations would openly reject learning, development or participation, the real difficulty is not agreeing with these ideas, but building the conditions that make them possible in everyday work.

This is why the learning organization should be approached critically. Its limits do not depend only on poor implementation or lack of managerial commitment, they also depend on tensions that are built into organizational life: the tension between learning and control, between reflection and speed, between participation and hierarchy, between long-term development and short-term performance. In this sense, the problem is not simply that organizations fail to become learning organizations, the problem is that the learning organization requires forms of time, trust, openness and continuity that many organizations struggle to protect.

A first problem concerns the ambiguity of the concept. As discussed earlier, Örtenblad (2018) argues that the learning organization has been used in different ways and is difficult to define precisely. This ambiguity can be useful, because it allows the concept to be adapted to different contexts, but it also creates a risk. If the meaning of learning organization remains too broad, almost any organization can claim to be one. A company may provide training courses, use a learning platform or encourage employees to be proactive and still lack the deeper conditions that would make learning organizationally relevant. In this sense, the concept can easily become a label rather than a practice.

This risk is particularly relevant because learning, development and empowerment are rarely presented as negative. They are words with a strong positive appeal, especially in organizations that want to present themselves as people-centered and future-oriented. Contu, Grey and Örtenblad (2003) criticize this wider “learning discourse”, arguing that learning is often treated as an unquestionable good. Their point is not that learning is bad in itself, but that the language of learning can hide tensions and contradictions. Learning can be associated with inclusion, employability, empowerment and personal development, while also serving competitiveness, flexibility and adaptation to organizational demands.

This critique is useful because it prevents an idealized reading of the learning organization. If learning is always assumed to be positive, it becomes difficult to ask who defines what should be learned, for what purpose and under which conditions. In a corporate context, learning is not neutral, it may support employees' growth, but it may also be directed mainly toward organizational performance. It may open spaces for participation, but it may also ask employees to adapt continuously without questioning the structures that create pressure in the first place. For this reason, the learning organization should not be evaluated only through its language, but through the concrete practices and power relations that accompany it.

A second difficulty concerns implementation. As discussed earlier, Garvin, Edmondson and Gino (2008) identify three building blocks of a learning organization: a supportive learning environment, concrete learning processes and leadership that reinforces learning. These elements are useful because they make the model more practical, but they also show why learning organizations are hard to sustain. If psychological safety is weak, employees may avoid speaking openly. If learning processes are absent, experience may not be transformed into shared knowledge. If leadership does not reinforce learning, employees may perceive development as secondary to immediate productivity. The model depends on the interaction of several conditions, and this makes it fragile.

In practice, organizations often develop some elements but not others. They may invest in formal training but fail to create time for reflection. They may encourage knowledge sharing but maintain strong silos between departments. They may speak about empowerment while decision-making remains centralized. They may ask employees to experiment while punishing mistakes. These inconsistencies do not necessarily mean that the organization has no interest in learning, but they show that the learning organization requires alignment between culture, routines and managerial behavior. Without this alignment, learning initiatives remain partial and may lose their impact once the initial project or communication campaign ends.

The literature on training transfer reinforces this point. Burke and Hutchins (2007) show that the transfer of training depends not only on the learner and on the training design, but also on the work environment. This is relevant because it moves the discussion from intention to application. An organization can design a good training program, but if employees do not have opportunities to use what they have learned, if supervisors do not

support application, or if the work context pushes them back into old routines, learning remains weak. The problem is therefore not only whether training is delivered, but whether the organization allows it to become practice.

A third tension concerns the relationship between learning and short-term performance pressures. Learning requires time, reflection and experimentation, while organizations often reward speed, efficiency and immediate results. This tension is central to the debate on sustainable HRD and sustainable HRM. Garavan and McGuire (2010) argue that HRD has the potential to contribute to CSR, sustainability and ethics, but they also recognize the skepticism toward HRD when it becomes too closely aligned with short-term business performance. The same tension applies to the learning organization where learning is presented as strategic, but in everyday work it may be subordinated to urgent deadlines, productivity targets and cost control.

This creates a practical contradiction. Organizations may ask employees to learn continuously, but not provide enough time, support or space to do so. They may promote reflection, but measure people mainly on output. They may communicate the importance of development, but treat training as the first thing to cut when workload increases. In this context, learning becomes something employees are expected to manage on top of their work, rather than something structurally integrated into how work is designed. The learning organization then remains an ideal that conflicts with the operational logic of the organization.

A fourth risk is the individualization of responsibility. The language of continuous learning can easily shift responsibility from the organization to the individual. Employees are encouraged to be flexible, proactive, employable and constantly ready to update themselves, and these expectations are not necessarily wrong. In changing environments, individual agency matters but the problem emerges when continuous learning becomes a personal obligation detached from organizational support. If employees are told to “own their development” but are not given time, feedback, opportunities or psychological safety, the learning discourse becomes unbalanced.

Contu et al. (2003) are useful here because they show that learning discourse can create a strong equivalence between employability, empowerment, competitiveness and personal development. This equivalence is problematic when it hides the fact that not all

employees have the same access to learning opportunities, the same autonomy, or the same protection from work pressure. A learning organization should not simply demand that people adapt, it should create conditions that make learning possible and sustainable. Otherwise, the rhetoric of empowerment may become a softer way of placing responsibility on individuals while leaving organizational structures unchanged.

The central question, then, is how to distinguish declared learning from embedded learning. Among the available definitions, Garvin's (1993) formulation is the most useful here, not because it is the most comprehensive, but because it insists on a concrete concept: learning has value only when it modifies organizational behavior. It insists that a learning organization is not only skilled at creating, acquiring and transferring knowledge, but also at modifying its behavior to reflect new knowledge and insights. If knowledge does not change routines, decisions, relationships or ways of working, learning remains incomplete. A company may collect information, organize workshops, create learning platforms and communicate a learning culture, but the real test is whether these activities influence organizational behavior.

The gap between ideal and reality should therefore be understood as a gap between learning as discourse and learning as practice. Learning as discourse appears in values, policies, platforms, leadership messages and employer branding. Learning as practice appears in time allocated to reflection, openness to feedback, real opportunities to apply training, shared routines for knowledge transfer, and managerial behaviors that make learning legitimate. The two dimensions are not necessarily opposed, but they are not the same and the problem starts when the first replaces the second.

The difficulty of sustaining a learning organization in practice is not an argument against the concept — it is precisely what makes it analytically valuable. An ideal that is easy to claim but hard to build is a better diagnostic tool than one that everyone can tick off. If the learning organization is treated as an ideal label, it risks becoming vague and rhetorical. If it is treated as a demanding organizational model, it becomes a way to examine the coherence between training, people development and everyday work. The question is not whether an organization says that learning matters, but whether it builds the conditions through which learning can actually shape practice.

This tension is therefore not a secondary issue, but one of the main reasons why the learning organization must be approached critically. Its value does not lie in the label itself, nor in the simple presence of training initiatives, platforms or development programs. It lies in the extent to which learning becomes supported, shared, applied and sustained inside everyday work.

This chapter has shown that the learning organization perspective helps move corporate training beyond an episodic and content-driven logic. It reframes learning as an organizational process connected to routines, leadership, participation, knowledge sharing and people development. At the same time, this perspective also reveals a tension. The same language that presents learning as continuous, empowering and socially valuable can remain symbolic if it is not supported by real organizational conditions.

The distinction between declared learning and embedded learning is therefore central. A company may communicate attention to people and development, but the substance of this commitment depends on what happens after training is delivered: whether people have time to reflect, opportunities to apply what they have learned, spaces to share knowledge, and leaders who make learning legitimate in daily work. In this sense, the learning organization is not only a model to describe desirable organizational learning. It is also a critical lens for assessing whether corporate training contributes to genuine people development or remains a positive narrative with limited organizational effects.

Chapter 3

Corporate Training Between Care and Rhetoric: Conditions for Meaningful Learning

3.1 From learning organization to corporate reality: the ambiguous role of training

The previous chapter presented the learning organization as an ideal model in which learning is embedded in culture, routines and everyday work. In that perspective, learning is not limited to formal training provision, but becomes part of the way the organization interprets experience, circulates knowledge and changes its practices over time. This chapter moves from that ideal model to corporate reality so the question is no longer only what a learning organization should look like, but how training is currently positioned inside contemporary organizations.

In contemporary organizations, training has become one of the most visible responses to transformation. It appears in workforce strategies, HR priorities, talent development policies and discussions on the future of work and companies increasingly describe their ability to adapt through the language of skills, upskilling, reskilling and continuous learning. Companies use training to address specific competence gaps, but also to represent their capacity to adapt, remain attractive and support their workforce. Its centrality is visible in the expansion of upskilling initiatives and in the growing connection between learning, career development, internal mobility and employee retention.

The Future of Jobs Report 2025 (World Economic Forum, 2025) offers a clear indication of this shift: based on the perspective of more than 1,000 global employers, representing over 14 million workers across 22 industry clusters and 55 economies, the report shows that skills gaps are perceived as a central obstacle to business transformation. Globally, 63% of employers identify skills gaps in the labor market as a major barrier to transformation, while 85% state that they plan to prioritize upskilling their workforce. The same report estimates that, if the global workforce were made up of 100 people, 59 would need training by 2030: 29 could be upskilled in their current role, 19 could be upskilled and redeployed elsewhere in the organization, while 11 would be unlikely to receive the training needed. In the Italian profile, the picture is similar: 59% of

organizations identify skills gaps as a barrier to transformation, close to the global average of 63% (World Economic Forum, 2025).

The centrality of training is also visible in the outcomes that employers expect from training investments. These expectations are not limited to productivity or competitiveness, but also include retention, talent mobility, attraction and reputation.

Table 3.1 - Expected outcomes from investing in training, 2025–2030

Expected outcome	**Share of employers**
Enhancing productivity	77%
Improving competitiveness	70%
Improving talent retention	65%
Transitioning employees to new jobs or evolving roles	52%
Increasing talent mobility across roles	48%
Attracting new or diverse talent	46%
Enhancing reputation and branding	38%
Increasing talent mobility across geographies	19%

Source: Author's elaboration based on World Economic Forum, Future of Jobs Report 2025.

These figures show how training has entered the ordinary vocabulary of business transformation. Upskilling is presented as one of the main ways through which organizations imagine their ability to respond to uncertainty and no longer as an occasional HR initiative. This does not mean that all organizations are equally capable of building effective learning systems, but that, when companies talk about the future of work, they almost inevitably talk about skills, reskilling, adaptability and learning.

A similar pattern emerges from the *LinkedIn Workplace Learning Report 2025*, which offers a useful indication of how the HR and learning and development field currently frames training. The report states that 49% of learning and talent development professionals agree that their executives are concerned that employees do not have the right skills to execute business strategy. It also connects learning to career development,

arguing that career progress is employees' main motivation to learn (LinkedIn Learning, 2025). This type of evidence is useful because it captures the language and priorities of the contemporary L&D field. Learning is not described only as skill acquisition, it is linked to career growth, internal mobility, retention and the capacity to keep people engaged in changing organizations.

The same report shows that this attention is widespread but unevenly developed. Only 36% of organizations are classified as "career development champions", meaning organizations with robust career development programs that are said to produce business results. Another 31% have career development programs with limited adoption, while 33% have no initiatives or are only getting started (LinkedIn Learning, 2025). This distinction matters. It suggests that learning and career development have become highly valued organizational themes, but that maturity varies considerably. In other words, many organizations recognize the importance of learning, but fewer seem to have built strong systems around it.

The same report documents that 91% of L&D professionals agree that continuous learning is more important than ever for career success, while 88% of organizations are concerned about employee retention and identify learning opportunities as the first retention strategy (LinkedIn Learning, 2025). These numbers show that learning has become one of the main ways through which organizations talk about their relationship with employees. Offering learning opportunities is increasingly presented as a sign that the organization supports people, wants them to grow and intends to keep them inside the company.

The centrality of learning is also visible beyond corporate programs strictly understood. The *OECD Trends in Adult Learning 2025* report shows that, on average across OECD countries, two in five adults participate each year in formal or non-formal job-related adult learning. Formal learning plays a more limited role, with 8% of adults participating in formal education, while 37% participate in non-formal job-related learning (OECD, 2025). This is interesting because corporate learning does not happen only through formal courses or structured internal academies, but much of work-related learning takes place through shorter, more flexible and often workplace-based formats, including courses, webinars, workshops and other organized activities.

The OECD also highlights the role of informal learning. More than nine out of ten employed adults across OECD countries report that they learn new things at work at least occasionally; 22% say this happens every day, 23% at least once a week and another 23% at least once a month (OECD, 2025). These figures suggest that learning has become a pervasive dimension of working life. It is not limited to scheduled training sessions, it also takes place through doing the job, interacting with colleagues, adapting to new tools, solving problems and keeping up with changes in products, services or processes.

Taken together, these data show that training and work-related learning occupy a central position in contemporary organizations and they are central in workforce transformation strategies, in HR and talent development discourse, and in the everyday experience of work. This is the point from which the critical discussion should start. Not from the idea that training is irrelevant or marginal, because the evidence points in the opposite direction and training is highly visible. It is expected, measured, communicated and increasingly connected to how organizations present themselves as adaptive, responsible and future-oriented.

This centrality, however, also creates an ambiguity. When a practice becomes highly visible and positively valued, it does not only perform a technical or developmental function. It can also acquire a symbolic and legitimating function. In this sense, training may support employees' development, but it may also contribute to how the organization presents itself as adaptive, responsible and attentive to people. This does not necessarily mean that the two dimensions are opposed. As neo-institutional theory suggests, organizational practices may respond both to technical needs and to expectations of legitimacy (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). The relevant issue is therefore not to distinguish between "real" and "fake" training in absolute terms, but to understand whether the symbolic value of training is supported by concrete conditions for learning, application and development.

This does not mean that communication and substance are always opposed. Organizations need to communicate their commitment to learning, especially if they want employees to recognize development opportunities and participate in them. The problem emerges when the visible commitment to training is not matched by time, managerial attention, opportunities for transfer and coherence with everyday work. A company may present itself as learning-oriented because it offers many courses, promotes upskilling

campaigns or uses the language of career growth. Yet these elements, taken alone, do not show whether learning is actually supported and integrated into work. The risk is not that training is “fake” by definition. The risk is that training becomes easier to display than to sustain.

This is why corporate training should be read as an ambivalent organizational practice. Its growing centrality can indicate a serious recognition of the need to support people in changing work environments. At the same time, it can also provide organizations with a positive language through which they present themselves as caring, modern and responsible. The same initiative may contain both dimensions: a leadership program, a digital academy or an upskilling platform may support real development, but it may also serve employer branding, internal communication or ESG-related narratives. The analytical issue is therefore not whether training is good or bad, but how to distinguish its substantive function from its symbolic one.

This ambiguity is particularly relevant after the discussion on the learning organization because the learning organization represents an ideal in which learning changes practices, circulates across levels and becomes embedded in organizational life. Corporate reality is, on the other side, more uncertain: training may be central without being deeply integrated, it may be visible without being transformative or it may signal attention to people without necessarily changing the conditions in which people work and learn. This tension opens the core problem of the chapter: once training becomes a central and valued organizational practice, it becomes necessary to examine when it produces meaningful development and when it remains mainly symbolic.

The following section addresses this second possibility more directly. It examines the conditions under which training, despite being presented as an investment in people, remains superficial, performative or reputational.

3.2 Symbolic, performative and superficial training: when learning remains disconnected from practice

The first difficulty in assessing corporate training is that weak training does not always appear as a lack of training. More often, it appears as a gap between the existence of a training initiative and its actual capacity to influence work practices. Attendance, completion, satisfaction scores, certificates and platform usage may all indicate that a

training activity has taken place. These indicators are useful administrative signals, but they remain weak evidence if they are not connected to transfer, application or sustained change in work practices. This distinction is consistent with the literature on training transfer, which emphasizes that training effectiveness cannot be reduced to participation or learning acquisition, but also depends on whether acquired knowledge, skills and attitudes are generalized and maintained in the work environment (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Grossman & Salas, 2011).

For this reason, this section distinguishes between different forms of weak training. Training may be superficial when it remains limited in depth, contextualization or follow-up. It may be symbolic when its value lies mainly in what it communicates about the organization, for example attention to people, change, responsibility or future-readiness. It may become performative when the existence of the training itself becomes the main proof that the organization has acted, especially in areas where there is pressure to demonstrate commitment. Finally, training may be decoupled when it is formally aligned with organizational values or policies, but weakly connected to everyday practices, incentives, managerial behavior or work conditions. These forms often overlap, but they share a common risk: training remains visible as an organizational activity without necessarily becoming observable learning, transfer or change.

A first diagnostic sign is the use of activity-based evidence as a proxy for learning. Organizations often need simple indicators to manage training at scale: number of participants, hours delivered, courses completed, satisfaction with the trainer, or the percentage of employees who obtained a certificate. These indicators are not irrelevant. A training initiative that nobody attends or completes is clearly problematic. However, they remain indicators of exposure, not of development. They show that people have been reached by a training activity, but not whether they have understood, applied or sustained what they learned.

This point can be clarified through Kirkpatrick's widely used model of training evaluation, which distinguishes between reaction, learning, behavior and results (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006). The model is useful here because it shows that training evaluation can focus on different kinds of evidence. Satisfaction, attendance or completion mainly provide information about participation and immediate reaction. They may be useful, but they do not demonstrate whether learning has been applied in the workplace or whether

it has produced broader effects over time. For this reason, relying only on activity-based indicators can make training appear successful even when its transfer into work practices remains uncertain.

This is where the distinction between training evaluation and training transfer becomes central. Hughes et al. (2020) define optimal training transfer as the appropriate demonstration of knowledge, skills and attitudes on the job, both in terms of quality and frequency, given the context and the purpose of the training program. This definition is useful because it makes the evaluation of training more concrete. It does not ask only whether people attended a program, but whether they are able to demonstrate what they learned in the work environment. The authors also note that transfer can be assessed in different ways depending on the training purpose, for example through frequency, quality, scenario-based demonstrations, on-the-job observation or surveys. This means that the problem is not measurement itself, but what is being measured.

A second diagnostic sign is the absence of transfer sustainment. A training program may produce immediate learning and still remain weak if the acquired knowledge or skills disappear once employees return to work. Hughes et al. (2020) explicitly describe training transfer as a process, not as a one-time event or a checkbox. They also cite previous estimates according to which between 52% and 92% of acquired learning may be lost within a year following training. This figure should be read carefully: it is not the direct finding of their own meta-analysis, but an estimate drawn from earlier studies and used to frame the transfer problem. Still, it is relevant because it captures the scale of the issue. The fact that training has been completed says little about whether learning will survive inside work routines.

The meta-analysis by Hughes et al. (2020) provides a more precise empirical basis for this argument. The authors examined the role of three forms of work environment support — peer, supervisor and organizational support — in training transfer and sustainment. Their search process identified 55,496 unique articles, from which 61 primary studies and 66 independent samples were included in the quantitative synthesis. The study found that all three forms of support were positively related to transfer, and that the model including these work environment support variables accounted for 32% of the variance in training transfer. Peer support accounted for the largest relative share, while supervisor and peer support showed the strongest relationships with long-term sustainment.

This finding gives a concrete criterion for identifying weak or poorly sustained training. Training is weak when it is designed as if the course itself could carry the whole learning process. If employees return to a workplace where supervisors do not encourage application, peers do not reinforce new behaviors, routines remain unchanged, and no one creates opportunities to use what has been learned, the training may remain formally successful but practically fragile. The issue is not only whether the content was clear or the trainer effective. It is whether the organization creates the conditions through which learning can continue after the training event.

Grossman and Salas (2011) support this interpretation by identifying several work environment factors that matter for transfer, including transfer climate, support, opportunity to perform and follow-up. Their review is useful because it shows that transfer does not depend only on the training event or on individual motivation. It also depends on the environment in which the person returns after training. When the work context does not provide support, opportunities to use new skills or follow-up mechanisms, learning is less likely to become part of everyday practice.

A third diagnostic sign is the lack of alignment between training content and the work environment. This is particularly visible in programs that aim to modify behavior: leadership development, communication, inclusion, ethics, wellbeing, feedback, conflict management or collaboration. These areas cannot be reduced to individual awareness. A manager can attend a course on feedback and return to a context where speed is rewarded more than reflection. Employees can complete a module on psychological safety and still work in a team where disagreement is punished. A company can train people on inclusion while selection, promotion or evaluation systems remain unchanged. In these cases, the training content may be formally coherent with declared values, but incoherent with the conditions in which employees are expected to act.

This is one of the conditions under which training can become symbolic. Symbolic training does not necessarily mean false training. It means that the training initiative carries a strong communicative function. It tells employees, candidates, stakeholders or external observers that the organization cares about development, values, responsibility or change. This communicative dimension is not automatically problematic. Organizations need to communicate what they offer, and employees need to understand that learning is valued. The problem begins when communication becomes stronger than integration. If

the language of development is highly visible but the organization does not provide time, support, accountability or opportunities for application, training becomes more a sign of commitment than a mechanism of development.

This interpretation becomes clearer through the neo-institutional perspective. Meyer and Rowan (1977) argue that formal organizational structures can be adopted not only for reasons of technical efficiency, but also because they confer legitimacy. Applied to corporate training, this means that some learning initiatives may become valuable as signs of conformity to socially accepted expectations: being future-oriented, people-centered, inclusive, ethical, sustainable or innovative. A training program may therefore be institutionally useful even when its practical effects remain limited. Meyer and Rowan's concept of decoupling is also useful for interpreting the gap between formal training provision and actual learning. They argue that formal structures can become loosely coupled or decoupled from ongoing activities. Applied to corporate training, this means that a course, platform, certification or development program may exist formally, while remaining weakly connected to everyday routines, managerial behavior or decision-making processes. The problem is therefore not only that organizations may say one thing and do another. The more subtle problem is that they may actually do something, but that action may remain insufficiently connected to the outcomes it claims to produce.

The difference between symbolic and performative training can be understood in terms of emphasis. Symbolic training mainly concerns the meaning attached to the initiative: it helps the organization communicate attention to people, change, responsibility or future-readiness. Performative training, instead, concerns the demonstration of action: the organization can point to a course, a campaign, an attendance rate, a policy or a mandatory module as evidence that something has been done. This distinction is consistent with the neo-institutional perspective discussed above, because formal practices may provide legitimacy even when their connection with everyday work remains partial or weak. This performative risk is often visible in areas where pressure to act is high: ethics, compliance, diversity, wellbeing, sustainability, leadership conduct, harassment prevention or digital transformation. In these cases, the existence of a training initiative may become the main evidence of commitment. In itself, this is not useless: some issues require formal training, clear communication and documentation.

The problem emerges when the fact that training has been delivered becomes more important than whether it has changed behavior, routines or organizational conditions.

This risk is particularly relevant in topics that require organizational change rather than only individual information. Training on wellbeing cannot compensate for work overload if workloads remain unmanaged. Training on inclusive leadership cannot compensate for promotion systems that reward only narrow performance metrics. Training on ethics cannot compensate for incentives that encourage opportunistic behavior. Training on collaboration cannot compensate for structures that maintain silos. In these cases, the course may even be well designed, but it is asked to solve a problem that belongs to the organization as a whole.

From this perspective, weak training can be recognized through a set of concrete signs. It emerges when evaluation systems privilege activity over transfer, when post-training support from peers and supervisors is limited, or when employees have few opportunities to apply what they have learned. It also becomes visible when there is a gap between the values promoted in training and the incentives embedded in everyday work, or when the existence of training is used as the main proof that the organization has addressed a complex issue. These signs do not prove that the organization is acting in bad faith. Rather, they indicate that the training initiative is not sufficiently connected to the conditions required for learning to become practice.

Table 3.2 — Diagnostic signs of weakly integrated corporate training

Diagnostic sign	**What it indicates**	**Possible evidence**	**Main risk**
Activity-based evaluation	Training is assessed mainly through delivery indicators rather than through learning transfer	Attendance, completion rates, satisfaction scores, certificates, platform usage	Training appears successful because it has been delivered, but its effect on work practices remains uncertain
Weak post-training support	Learning is not sufficiently reinforced after the formal activity	Limited supervisor follow-up, little peer discussion, no coaching or feedback after training	Employees return to previous routines and learning is not sustained over time
Limited opportunity to apply learning	Employees have few concrete occasions to	No changes in tasks, roles, projects or responsibilities after training	Knowledge remains abstract or unused

	use what they have learned		
Misalignment with work conditions	Training messages are not coherent with incentives, workloads or managerial behavior	Training promotes feedback, wellbeing, inclusion or collaboration, while daily practices reward speed, silence, overload or individual performance	Training becomes disconnected from the context in which employees are expected to act
Training as proof of action	The existence of training is used as the main evidence that the organization has addressed a complex issue	Mandatory modules, campaigns, ESG or HR reporting, employer branding communication	Training demonstrates commitment without necessarily producing behavioral or organizational change

Source: Author's elaboration based on the literature discussed in the section.

The table should not be read as a rigid classification. In practice, these signs often overlap. A mandatory compliance module can be necessary, a short intervention can be effective when it reinforces a broader pathway, and a visible training campaign can be legitimate if it is supported by managerial action and organizational follow-up. The diagnostic value lies in the combination of signs. Training becomes weak when evidence of delivery is strong, while evidence of transfer, application and coherence remains limited.

This also explains why the problem cannot be solved only by improving the training content. A superficial course can certainly be improved through better design, clearer objectives or more active methods. But symbolic, performative or decoupled training requires a broader analysis. The issue is whether the organization is willing to connect training with decisions, routines, incentives and leadership behaviors. Otherwise, training remains an isolated response to problems that are not isolated.

The distinction is relevant for the empirical part of this thesis. If corporate training is analyzed only through its presence, almost every organization can appear committed to learning. If it is analyzed through diagnostic signs, the picture becomes more demanding. This is particularly important when training is connected to people development and social sustainability, because the existence of training initiatives is not sufficient to prove that learning is actually supported, applied or sustained. The relevant questions become: what kind of evidence is used to claim success? What happens after the course? Who supports the application of learning? Are employees given time and opportunities to use what they learned? Are training messages coherent with managerial behavior and

organizational systems? These questions make it possible to move beyond the surface of training provision and examine whether learning is actually sustained in work.

These diagnostic signs show that weak training is not only a matter of poor content or ineffective delivery. It is also connected to the organizational conditions that determine whether learning can be applied, supported and sustained in everyday work. When these conditions are absent, training may become an additional burden, especially if it is added to already saturated work routines, assigned to individual responsibility or weakly integrated into the organization of work.

3.3 Training overload, extra-work learning and the individualization of learning responsibility

The previous section showed that training can remain weak when it is formally delivered but poorly connected to transfer, application and organizational coherence. A further problem concerns the way learning is located within the organization of work. Corporate training is often presented as an opportunity: a way to grow, remain employable, develop new skills and adapt to changing work environments. This interpretation is not wrong. In many cases, learning opportunities genuinely support people's development and increase their ability to participate in organizational change. The ambiguity emerges when learning is added to already saturated work routines, expected to take place outside recognized working time, or framed mainly as an individual responsibility.

The issue is therefore not continuous learning itself. In changing environments, organizations need people to update skills, interpret new problems and adapt to new tools, roles and processes. The problem emerges when the need to learn becomes a permanent demand without the time, resources and work conditions that make learning realistically possible. In this case, training may no longer be experienced as support, but as an additional pressure.

Korunka et al. (2015) are useful for clarifying this point because they distinguish between work intensification and intensified learning demands. Work intensification refers to the perception that employees have to do more in less time, while intensified learning demands refer to the increasing need to update knowledge and skills in response to continuous change. The two demands are distinct, but they are also related: employees who face intensified work often also experience their jobs as more learning-intensive.

This distinction helps avoid a simplistic reading of learning as either positive or negative. Learning demands can be stimulating when they allow people to develop, solve new problems and participate in meaningful change. At the same time, they can become burdensome when they are added to pressure, time scarcity and emotional exhaustion. In this sense, training and learning are not automatically developmental; their meaning depends on how they are organized and on the conditions in which they occur.

Training overload should therefore not be understood only as an excessive number of courses. It also concerns the relationship between learning demands and the real capacity of the work context to absorb them. A limited amount of training can become burdensome if it is added to high workload, weak support or unclear priorities, while a richer learning offer can be sustainable when time, managerial support and opportunities for application are aligned. The problem is not the quantity of training in itself, but the lack of integration between learning and the organization of work.

This does not mean that learning should be separated from work. On the contrary, workplace learning literature shows that learning is often strongest when it is connected to work activities. Ellström (2001) argues that the integration of learning and work depends on the learning potential of tasks, feedback, reflection, participation in problem-solving and access to learning resources. Skule (2004) similarly shows that traditional indicators such as training hours, participation rates or formal qualifications are insufficient for assessing the quality of learning environments at work, because informal learning depends on how work is organized and on the opportunities people have to interact, solve problems and access knowledge. Billett (2001) further clarifies that workplace learning depends both on the opportunities offered by the workplace and on individual engagement with those opportunities. These contributions support the same point: learning can be embedded in work without being simply added on top of work.

A related issue concerns extra-work learning. Digital platforms, asynchronous modules and self-directed learning formats can make training more flexible and accessible. They allow employees to learn at different times, return to materials, personalize part of the learning process and reduce the need for long interruptions from work. These features can be valuable, especially in complex organizations or for employees who need flexible access to learning. However, flexibility can also become ambiguous. If learning is not recognized as part of work, employees may be expected to complete training during

pauses, after working hours or in the margins of already demanding routines. In this case, flexibility does not necessarily increase autonomy; it may simply move the burden of organizing learning onto the individual.

Pérez-Zapata et al. (2016) help frame this ambiguity through the notion of knowledge work intensification and the autonomy paradox. Their research shows that in self-managed and boundaryless work contexts, autonomy and development opportunities can coexist with high commitment, permanent accountability and difficulties in setting boundaries. This is relevant for corporate learning because training and development may become part of the same paradox. The more employees are encouraged to be autonomous, proactive and responsible for their own growth, the more they may internalize development as a personal duty. What appears as empowerment may therefore also become a form of pressure, especially when organizational demands remain high and boundaries between work and non-work are weak.

A further tension concerns the individualization of learning responsibility, which has both advantages and risks. On the one hand, encouraging employees to take an active role in their development can make learning more relevant and personalized. Employees may be able to recognize their own learning needs, choose opportunities that fit their goals and connect development to their professional aspirations. In this sense, self-directed learning can support motivation, autonomy and employability, especially in work environments where roles and required skills change quickly. On the other hand, the same logic can become problematic when individual responsibility is detached from organizational support. If employees are expected to remain employable, adaptable and constantly updated, but do not receive time, feedback, managerial support or access to meaningful learning opportunities, development becomes an individual duty rather than a shared organizational responsibility.

Kyndt and Baert's (2013) systematic review supports this more balanced interpretation. Involvement in work-related learning is influenced by individual factors, such as motivation, attitude, self-efficacy and career orientation, but also by learning activity features and organizational factors, including managerial support, learning climate, development resources and perceived opportunities. This confirms that participation in learning cannot be reduced to personal willingness, because context matters. People are

more likely to engage in development when learning is perceived as relevant, accessible and supported by the organization.

This point is important for understanding the social sustainability of corporate training. If learning is presented as a personal responsibility, but the organizational context does not support it, development becomes uneven. People who already have more time, confidence, resources, managerial support or access to challenging tasks are more likely to benefit from learning opportunities. Others may formally have access to the same training offer, but experience it as distant, difficult to use or incompatible with their workload. In this sense, equal access to a platform or a catalogue of courses does not necessarily mean equal access to development. The conditions around learning determine whether training becomes a real opportunity or simply another requirement.

For this reason, the problem is not continuous learning itself, but the way continuous learning is organized. A company can legitimately encourage employees to develop new skills, but it also needs to decide where learning fits in the organization of work. Is time for learning protected or merely expected? Are managers involved in supporting application, or is development left to individual initiative? Are learning goals connected to real work needs, or are they added as generic expectations? Are employees given opportunities to use new skills, or are they asked to learn without any change in tasks, responsibilities or processes? These questions make the difference between learning as support and learning as overload.

Training overload can therefore take different forms. It may appear as too many mandatory modules, especially when they are short, fragmented and weakly connected to work. It may appear as long digital onboarding paths that formally provide information but leave little space for relationship-building, reflection or contextual understanding. It may appear as continuous requests to update skills without protected time to do so. It may also appear as a culture in which the “good employee” is expected to remain constantly available, adaptable, curious and self-developing, even when workloads are already high. In all these cases, training is not absent. On the contrary, it may be very visible. Yet its visibility does not automatically mean that it is sustainable.

This aspect is central to the distinction between training as care and training as rhetoric. Training can be a form of care when it recognizes people’s need to learn, adapt and grow,

and when it provides the conditions to do so in a realistic and supported way. It becomes rhetorical when it uses the language of growth while ignoring the concrete organization of work. If employees are told that learning is important but are not given time to learn, if they are asked to change without managerial support, or if they are expected to develop continuously while workloads remain unmanaged, training risks reproducing the same pressures it claims to address.

The issue is therefore not only pedagogical, but organizational. Better contents, more engaging platforms or more innovative formats are useful, but they cannot solve the problem if learning remains structurally marginal. Meaningful training requires a clearer recognition of learning as work. This means treating learning time as legitimate, connecting training to actual tasks and processes, involving managers in follow-up, creating opportunities for application, and avoiding the assumption that motivated employees will simply find the time and energy to develop by themselves. Without these conditions, even well-designed learning initiatives may become fragile.

Training overload, extra-work learning and individualized responsibility therefore show that the sustainability of corporate training cannot be assessed only by looking at the number of opportunities offered to employees. A rich training offer may still become problematic if learning is added to work without being recognized in workloads, supported by managers or connected to real opportunities for application. For this reason, meaningful learning requires more than access to courses or platforms. It requires organizational conditions that make learning possible without turning development into an additional pressure placed on individuals.

3.4 Conditions for meaningful learning: organizational, cultural and didactic dimensions

Clarifying the conditions for meaningful learning is central to the argument of this thesis. The previous sections have shown that training cannot be assessed only through its presence, visibility or declared intention. At this point, the question becomes more practical: under what conditions can corporate training support learning that is actually useful, applicable and sustainable in the work context? The answer does not depend on

one single method, format or tool. It depends on a combination of organizational, cultural and didactic conditions that shape how training is experienced, applied and sustained.

The organizational dimension concerns the way training is positioned within the organization of work. A first relevant aspect is the explicit connection between training and work. Learning is more likely to become meaningful when the training objective is linked to real tasks, problems, roles or organizational priorities. If participants cannot understand why a learning activity matters for their work, the risk is that training remains abstract, even when the content is well designed. Workplace learning literature supports this point by showing that learning is shaped by the learning potential of tasks, feedback, reflection, participation in problem-solving and access to learning resources (Ellström, 2001; Skule, 2004). In practical terms, training should not be planned as a separate activity that employees attend and then leave behind, but as something connected to the situations in which learning is expected to be used.

Another organizational aspect is protected time for learning. Meaningful learning requires that employees are not only invited to learn, but also placed in the practical conditions to do so. This includes time to participate, reflect, practice and apply what has been learned. Without this recognition, learning risks being absorbed into the margins of work or added to already saturated routines. The distinction between work intensification and intensified learning demands is useful here, because it shows that learning can become burdensome when it is added to time pressure and high workload (Korunka et al., 2015). A training initiative is therefore more credible when the organization treats learning time as part of work, rather than as an extra activity that employees must manage individually.

The organizational dimension also includes managerial support and opportunities for application. Managers influence whether training is perceived as relevant, whether employees have the possibility to participate seriously, and whether learning is used afterwards. Their role is not limited to authorizing attendance: it includes clarifying expectations, connecting training to work needs, encouraging application, giving feedback and creating opportunities to experiment with new knowledge or behaviors. Research on training transfer consistently shows that supervisor support and the work environment affect whether learning is transferred and sustained over time (Grossman & Salas, 2011; Hughes et al., 2020). Application is equally important. Training becomes meaningful when

employees can test, adapt and use what they have learned in concrete work situations, such as using a new tool, conducting a feedback conversation, applying a problem-solving method, changing a procedure or sharing knowledge with colleagues. If the work context does not offer opportunities to perform, even relevant training may remain disconnected from practice.

Finally, organizational support also depends on continuity after the formal training event. Follow-up mechanisms help participants return to what they have learned, discuss difficulties and translate contents into action. These mechanisms may include coaching, peer exchange, debriefing, action plans, team discussions, feedback sessions or later moments of review. They do not need to be complex, but they make a difference because they prevent training from ending when the formal activity ends. The literature on debriefs shows that structured reflection can improve learning from experience and support performance improvement (Tannenbaum & Cerasoli, 2013). In corporate training, follow-up helps transform participation into continuity.

The cultural dimension concerns the degree of coherence between training messages and everyday organizational practices. Training becomes fragile when the values promoted in the learning activity are contradicted by what the organization rewards, tolerates or legitimizes in daily work. This is particularly important for training that concerns behaviors, values and ways of working, such as leadership, feedback, inclusion, wellbeing, ethics, communication or collaboration. A course on feedback has limited impact if disagreement is discouraged. Wellbeing training loses credibility if workloads remain unmanaged. Inclusion training is fragile if evaluation and promotion systems reproduce the same inequalities the training claims to address. In these cases, the issue is not only whether the training content is correct, but whether the organizational culture allows that content to become credible and usable.

Cultural coherence is also linked to participation and psychological safety. Training that asks employees to reflect, speak openly, experiment or change habits requires a context in which these behaviors are legitimate. If people fear negative consequences for asking questions, admitting difficulties or challenging established routines, learning remains limited even when the training design is strong. Edmondson's (1999) work on psychological safety is relevant here because it shows that team learning behavior depends on whether people feel safe to take interpersonal risks. From this perspective,

meaningful learning requires not only access to training, but also a cultural environment in which people can actively engage with it.

The didactic dimension concerns the way training is designed and delivered. The method should be consistent with the type of learning expected. When the objective is to transmit standardized information, clarify procedures or ensure basic compliance, structured and more transmissive formats may be appropriate. However, when the objective is to develop judgment, relational competences, awareness or behavioral change, participants need opportunities to discuss cases, reflect on experience, practice, receive feedback and connect concepts to their own work context. Ellström's distinction between adaptive and developmental learning is useful here: routine problems may require adaptation to existing procedures, while more complex learning requires reflection, discretion and problem-solving (Ellström, 2001). The didactic dimension therefore matters because the form of training influences whether participants remain exposed to information or become actively involved in processing and applying it.

Active and contextualized learning methods are particularly relevant when training aims to influence behavior or culture. In these cases, learning cannot depend only on the transmission of contents. Participants need to work on concrete situations, compare perspectives, test possible actions and understand how abstract concepts translate into practice. This does not mean that every training activity must be highly experiential or complex. Different objectives require different methods. The relevant point is coherence: the design of the training should match the learning objective and the conditions in which participants are expected to use what they have learned.

These three dimensions are analytically distinct, but they are closely connected in practice. A well-designed course may remain weak if employees have no time or opportunity to apply what they have learned. Managerial support may be insufficient if training messages contradict everyday incentives. A coherent culture may not be enough if the training design is generic, passive or disconnected from real work situations. Meaningful learning therefore depends on the relationship between what is taught, how it is taught and the conditions in which people are expected to use what they have learned.

This perspective is useful for the empirical analysis developed in the next chapter. It allows corporate training to be examined beyond the simple presence of courses,

platforms or development programs. The relevant question becomes whether learning is supported by organizational, cultural and didactic conditions that make it applicable, credible and sustainable in everyday work. In this sense, the distinction between training as a meaningful practice and training as rhetoric does not depend only on the organization's declared intention, but on the degree of coherence between learning design, managerial support, work organization and the actual possibility for employees to use what they have learned.

3.5 From isolated training to organizational coherence: an analytical framework for the empirical study

The previous sections allow corporate training to be read through a more specific analytical perspective. Training cannot be assessed only by considering its presence, its declared objectives or the number of activities delivered. As shown in the previous sections, training may be formally available and still remain superficial, symbolic, performative or weakly connected to practice. At the same time, even well-intentioned learning initiatives may become problematic when they are added to saturated work routines, left to individual responsibility or disconnected from the organizational conditions that should support them.

For this reason, the empirical analysis does not approach training as a neutral or automatically positive practice. Instead, it examines the conditions under which training can become more meaningful and socially sustainable. The central issue is not whether organizations provide training, but how training is designed, supported, integrated and followed over time. This perspective allows the analysis to distinguish between training as an isolated intervention and training as part of a broader organizational process.

The framework used in the empirical study is based on four interrelated dimensions. The first three — organizational integration, cultural coherence and didactic design — synthesize the main conditions for meaningful learning discussed in this chapter and derived from the literature on training transfer, workplace learning, psychological safety and learning design. A fourth dimension, evidence of learning, is added to make explicit how the empirical analysis will consider the ways in which organizations describe, observe or assess the value of training. This dimension is necessary because the presence of training initiatives does not in itself show whether learning has been applied, sustained or translated into practice.

Table 3.3 — Analytical framework for the empirical analysis

Dimension	**What to observe in the empirical analysis**
Organizational integration	Time, workload, managerial support, follow-up, opportunities for application
Cultural coherence	Alignment between declared values, leadership behaviors and everyday practices
Didactic design	Active methods, contextualization, reflection, practice, feedback
Evidence of learning	Transfer, perceived competence development, practical outputs, continuity

Source: Author's elaboration based on the literature discussed in the section.

The four dimensions are intended to guide the reading of the empirical material without functioning as rigid evaluation criteria. Organizational integration makes it possible to observe whether training is connected to work or remains an isolated activity. Cultural coherence helps assess whether training messages are supported or contradicted by everyday practices. Didactic design focuses on the relationship between learning objectives and training methods. Evidence of learning makes it possible to examine whether training is described only through participation and delivery, or also through application, transfer and continuity.

These dimensions do not function as rigid evaluation criteria, nor do they allow a causal measurement of training impact. Rather, they provide an interpretive framework for reading the empirical material. They make it possible to observe whether training is treated mainly as an activity to be delivered, a message to be communicated, or a process to be integrated into organizational life. The framework is useful for examining the difference between training that remains isolated and training that is supported by organizational coherence.

The empirical analysis is guided by the central question: under what conditions can corporate training move beyond formal provision becoming a meaningful lever for people development and contributing to social sustainability? The answer does not depend on one single element, such as the topic of the course, the training provider or the method

adopted. It depends on the coherence between learning design, organizational conditions, cultural practices and the evidence through which learning is recognized and sustained.

Chapter 4 — Empirical Analysis: The 2BHappy Case Study and Complementary Organizational Perspectives

4.1 Introduction to the empirical analysis and methodological note

The empirical analysis developed in this chapter starts from a central tension that has guided the thesis so far: corporate training is increasingly presented as a strategic lever for people development, organizational learning and social sustainability, but its actual value depends on the conditions through which learning is designed, supported and integrated into organizational life. The relevance of training depends on whether it creates opportunities for awareness, participation, application and continuity, and on whether it is translated into behaviors, processes and organizational routines. It does not become meaningful simply because it is delivered, communicated or formally included in HR practices.

Building on this theoretical framework, this chapter introduces the empirical part of this thesis. The purpose is to examine how some of the tensions identified in the literature are recognized and addressed within concrete professional and organizational contexts. In particular, the empirical cases analyzed in this chapter are considered as contexts in which the limits of traditional corporate training have been acknowledged and translated into alternative approaches to learning design, people development and organizational change. The chapter therefore focuses on how training can be rethought as a meaningful process of awareness, participation and transformation, rather than remaining a symbolic, episodic or weakly integrated initiative.

The empirical analysis is structured as a single case study centered on 2BHappy, enriched by complementary organizational perspectives. 2BHappy is relevant to this research because its approach to training explicitly addresses several issues discussed in the theoretical chapters: the need to move beyond traditional content delivery, the importance of active involvement and continuity, and the attempt to connect learning with culture, behaviors and organizational processes. The case is therefore used as an example through which it is possible to examine how a training provider interprets the limits of conventional corporate training and attempts to design more integrated and transformative learning processes.

The main analysis draws on two qualitative semi-structured interviews conducted with Veruscka Gennari, CEO of 2BHappy and IIPO, and Saverio Cuoghi, CSO of 2BHappy. The two interviews provide complementary perspectives. Veruscka's contribution is particularly relevant for understanding the broader cultural and organizational meaning attributed to training. Her interview highlights the role of learning in supporting cultural change, the importance of awareness and continuity, and the risk that training remains ineffective when it is treated as a project rather than as an organizational process. Saverio's interview, instead, offers a more methodological and didactic perspective, especially through the concept of *Didattica Aumentata*. His contribution is particularly relevant because it presents a structured methodology that can be read as a possible response to some of the main problems discussed throughout the thesis: training reduced to content delivery, learning experiences designed as isolated events, limited learner involvement, and weak continuity between the training process and everyday organizational practice.

From a methodological point of view, all the interviews were conducted in a semi-structured form. This means that they were guided by a set of broad questions related to the research topic, but they also left space for the interviewees to develop their own reflections, examples and interpretative categories. This choice was coherent with the exploratory aim of the research. Since the objective was not to test predefined hypotheses, but to deepen the understanding of how corporate training is interpreted and practiced, the semi-structured format allowed the conversation to follow the most relevant themes emerging from the participants' experience.

The material collected was analyzed through a thematic analysis, aimed at identifying recurring themes, tensions and conditions of effectiveness. In particular, attention was given to the following dimensions: the meaning attributed to training; the distinction between training as an event and learning as a process; the role of awareness, continuity and active engagement; the relationship between learning design and organizational context; and the risk that training remains symbolic when it is not translated into behaviors and processes. This approach does not aim to quantify the frequency of themes, but to interpret their relevance in relation to the theoretical framework developed in the previous chapters.

The chapter also includes, in a later section, complementary insights from the interviews conducted with representatives from two other organizations: *Uomo & Ambiente* and *Servizi CGN*, which were identified through the 2BHappy network and are connected to its broader professional ecosystem. These organizations are not treated as independent case studies comparable to 2BHappy. Rather, they are included as additional organizational perspectives, useful to observe how some of the themes emerging from the main case are interpreted and translated in different contexts. Both organizations are connected to the Chief Happiness Officer network and to learning paths promoted within the 2BHappy ecosystem. Their contribution therefore helps broaden the empirical analysis by showing how training, people development and social sustainability can be connected not only in the design of learning approaches, but also in organizational practices, processes and everyday work.

Overall, the empirical chapter has a twofold function. First, it gives concreteness to the theoretical discussion developed in the previous chapters by showing how the limits of traditional training and the conditions for meaningful learning are interpreted by practitioners. Second, it identifies the elements that appear necessary for corporate training to become a credible lever of people development and social sustainability. In this sense, the analysis of 2BHappy and the complementary organizational perspectives are used to examine a broader issue: the difference between training that is merely declared, delivered or communicated, and training that is actually designed, supported and embedded as part of organizational life.

The empirical material is organized around three levels:

- **Main case study — 2BHappy.** This level represents the core of the empirical analysis and is used to examine how a training provider tries to move beyond episodic and content-driven training by designing learning paths that emphasize learner centrality, continuity, active engagement and connection with organizational change.
- **Secondary materials related to the main case.** Internal and documentary materials, including CHO comparison reports and examples of Didattica Aumentata learning paths and learning objects, are used to support the interpretation of the interviews. These materials help clarify how learning

processes are structured, monitored and translated into concrete training architectures.

- **Complementary organizational perspectives.** The materials related to Uomo & Ambiente and Servizi CGN are used to broaden the empirical analysis. These organizations are connected to the broader 2BHappy network and provide additional perspectives on how training, people development and social sustainability can be interpreted and translated into organizational practices, processes and everyday work.

The internal reports and documentary materials are not used as independent evidence of impact. Rather, they are treated as secondary sources that support the thematic analysis and help triangulate how learning is designed, described and monitored within the 2BHappy ecosystem.

4.2 The 2BHappy case: identity, mission and training approach

2BHappy represents the main empirical case analyzed in this chapter. It is a training and consulting company founded in 2015 by Daniela Di Ciaccio and Veruscka Gennari, and it operates in the field of Positive Organizations, people development and organizational change. Following its development and a subsequent change in its organizational structure, the company is currently led by Veruscka Gennari as CEO. In its public positioning, 2BHappy describes its purpose as supporting organizations, leaders, entrepreneurs and young professionals in integrating *equilibrio umano* and *equilibrio economico*, namely the human and economic dimensions of organizational life (2BHappy, n.d.). This integration is pursued through training, learning and consulting programs, based on a model of intervention that acts simultaneously on culture, behaviors and processes.

This positioning is particularly relevant for the purpose of this thesis because it does not frame training as a purely technical HR activity. Rather, training is placed within a broader reflection on how organizations can create conditions for people to develop, participate and contribute while also sustaining organizational results. The relationship and balance between the human and economic dimensions is treated as the core around which the organization builds its intervention model. In this sense, 2BHappy's approach is consistent with the central argument of the thesis: training becomes meaningful when it

is not limited to the transmission of contents, but becomes part of a wider process through which organizations shape culture, behaviors and everyday work practices.

This positioning is also consistent with a public interview published by *Impresa Progetto* and conducted by Sarti (2021), in which Daniela Di Ciaccio and Veruscka Gennari present 2BHappy as an agency aimed at spreading a culture of happiness and positivity within organizations. In the interview, this objective is connected to the broader idea of Positive Organizations, understood as contexts in which individual well-being, organizational climate and business outcomes are not treated as separate or opposing dimensions, but as elements that need to be aligned through coherent structures, processes, leadership styles and behaviors.

A key element of this ecosystem is the connection between 2BHappy and the Italian Institute for Positive Organizations. The Institute was created from an idea of Daniela Di Ciaccio and Veruscka Gennari, founders of 2BHappy, and presents itself as a space dedicated to collecting, distilling and disseminating knowledge, visions and experiences related to the Science of Happiness and Positive Organizations (IIPO, n.d.). Its declared aim is to build culture in a solid, factual, balanced and responsible way, through science-based contents, concrete experiences and accessible dissemination.

This connection helps clarify the broader framework in which 2BHappy operates. Its work is not limited to the delivery of training courses, but is part of a wider cultural project aimed at changing how organizations interpret people, work and well-being. This aspect is relevant for the present research because it connects directly with one of the central issues of the thesis: training can contribute to people development and social sustainability only when it is supported by organizational coherence and translated into everyday practices.

The Chief Happiness Officer certification is one of the most visible expressions of this approach. The certification is presented as a professional pathway for entrepreneurs, leaders and organizations that want to develop competencies and tools for realizing human and economic balance. According to IIPO, the program is based on the model of Positive Organizations and adopts an intervention framework that acts on culture, behaviors and processes. The certification has been delivered by 2BHappy since 2019 and, according to the updated information provided during the interview, has trained

more than 680 managers, entrepreneurs and professionals. For the purposes of this thesis, this element is relevant because the CHO certification shows how 2BHappy translates its broader purpose into a structured learning pathway addressed to organizational actors. Moreover, the certification also represents an example of how learning outcomes can be monitored, since participants are assessed before and after the pathway on a set of competencies connected to the Chief Happiness Officer profile.

The internal comparison reports made available by 2BHappy show that participants are asked to assess themselves before and after the certification pathway on eight CHO competence areas:

- C1: Organizational Epigenetics;

- C2: Evolutionary Cultural Change;

- C3: Self Energy Management;

- C4: Positive Leadership Development;

- C5: Positive Future Planning;

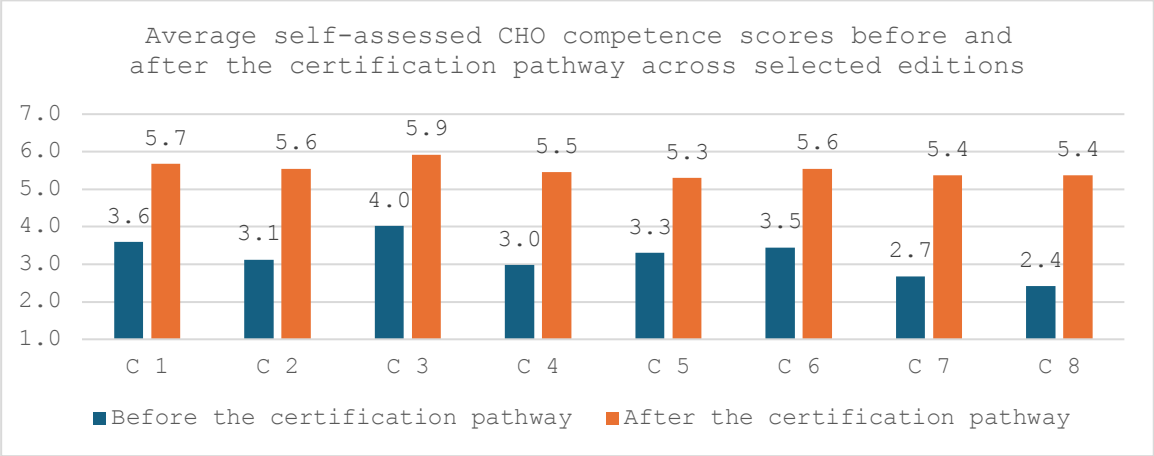
- C6: Positive Practices;

- C7: Positive Organizational Management;

- C8: Happiness as Work Strategy.

These dimensions combine individual, relational and organizational competences, reflecting the broader aim of the certification: preparing professionals who are able to work not only on personal well-being or leadership behaviors, but also on culture, processes and organizational strategy.

Figure 4.1: Average[1] self-assessed CHO competence scores before and after the certification pathway across selected editions.



Source: Internal CHO comparison group reports provided by 2BHappy.

As shown in Figure 4.1, the average self-assessed scores increase across all eight competence areas after the certification pathway. The data refer to four selected editions of the CHO certification and are based on participants' self-assessment on a 1–7 scale. The increase is particularly visible in the more organizational and strategic dimensions of the CHO profile, such as Positive Organizational Management and Happiness as Work Strategy. This is relevant for the purpose of this thesis because these competences are directly connected to the ability to translate learning into organizational processes, people management practices and strategic action.

At the same time, these data should be interpreted cautiously. Since they are based on self-assessment, they cannot be considered an objective measurement of behavioral or organizational change. However, they are still relevant because they show that the certification is not treated only as a training event to be delivered, but as a learning pathway whose outcomes are monitored through a before-and-after evaluation process. In this sense, the CHO certification provides an example of how corporate training can include mechanisms for observing perceived competence development over time.

In addition to the pre- and post-course assessment of competences, internal materials provided by 2BHappy also refer to post-certification indicators collected three months after the end of the pathway. Indicators that concern participants' professional

[1] Scores are based on participants' self-assessment on a 1–7 scale. Values represent the average scores of Editions 10 (June 2024), 11 (December 2024), 12 (June 2025) and 13 (December 2025).

trajectories and forms of activation following the certification. In particular, the materials report that 12% of participants changed job and 27% changed role, including the integration of wellbeing, people development or CHO-related responsibilities within their professional activity. The same materials also report high levels of satisfaction, with 99% satisfaction in internal surveys and a 4.3/5 Trustpilot rating.

These data do not prove a direct causal relationship between the certification and subsequent professional changes. Nevertheless, they suggest that the pathway is followed, for at least part of the participants, by forms of professional repositioning, role enrichment or application of CHO-related competences. More importantly for this thesis, they show that 2BHappy adopts monitoring practices that go beyond attendance and immediate course delivery, including perceived competence development and post-certification professional trajectories.

The empirical relevance of 2BHappy lies in the way it connects training with broader organizational transformation. Rather than presenting learning as a set of isolated courses or contents, the case frames training as a process linked to culture, behaviors, leadership and organizational practices. This makes 2BHappy a useful case through which to examine how some of the limits of traditional corporate training can be recognized and translated into a more intentional approach to learning design and people development.

The following sections deepen this case through the two interviews conducted with Veruscka Gennari and Saverio Cuoghi. Veruscka's interview is used to analyze the broader cultural and organizational meaning attributed to training, with particular attention to awareness, continuity and the relationship between learning and organizational change. Saverio's interview, instead, allows the analysis to examine the methodological dimension of the case, especially through the concept of *Didattica Aumentata*, understood as a possible response to the limits of episodic, content-driven and trainer-centered approaches to corporate training.

At the same time, 2BHappy should not be interpreted as a definitive or self-sufficient solution to the problems discussed in this thesis. The case is useful precisely because it shows both the potential and the limits of a more intentional approach to corporate training. On one hand, it provides an example of how learning can be designed as a process connected to culture, behaviors and organizational change. On the other hand, it also

shows that meaningful learning cannot be produced by methodology alone, but depends on the organizational context in which training is received, supported and applied.

4.3 Training as awareness and transformation: insights from Veruscka Gennari's interview

Before analyzing the main themes emerging from the interview, it is useful to clarify the role and professional background of Veruscka Gennari within the case. Veruscka Gennari is CEO of 2BHappy and of IIPO – Italian Institute for Positive Organizations, as well as an entrepreneur, author, keynote speaker and lecturer. Her professional trajectory has developed in close connection with companies and the world of work, with a specific focus on the relationship between organizational systems, people development and cultural transformation. This perspective is particularly relevant for the present thesis because it is directly connected to one of its central issues: the gap that can emerge between declared organizational values and the actual culture, behaviors and processes through which work is experienced.

Her background also helps explain the way she interprets training and learning. Before the development of 2BHappy, Veruscka Gennari worked for more than ten years within Six Seconds, an international network focused on emotional intelligence and neuroscience applied to individual and organizational development, where she was responsible for the Italian branch. She also has an academic background in philosophy with a pedagogical orientation. These elements are relevant because they show that her contribution is not limited to the managerial role she currently holds, but is rooted in a broader professional path connected to experiential learning, emotional intelligence, pedagogy and organizational change.

For this reason, Veruscka Gennari's interview is used in this section to explore the broader cultural and organizational meaning attributed to training within 2BHappy's approach. Her contribution is particularly relevant because it allows the analysis to move beyond the question of training delivery and to focus instead on the role that training can assume when it is connected to cultural change, people development and organizational transformation. In this perspective, training is not described as a secondary HR activity or as a technical instrument for transferring knowledge, but as a lever for transforming the relationship between cultural mindset, behaviors and organizational processes. This is consistent with 2BHappy's broader purpose: changing the way people experience work

and the way organizational systems create conditions for people to work, contribute and develop.

A first important element emerging from the interview is the idea that training becomes relevant when it acts on the cultural mindset, behaviors and processes of individuals and organizations. Veruscka explains that, for 2BHappy, training has always been central because any attempt to generate impact and change requires people to develop a new language, question old patterns and build new ways of thinking, acting and behaving. In this sense, change is not treated as an immediate outcome of information, but as a process that requires learning, consolidation and repeated practice. The shift from one behavioral pattern to another can be described as a matter of habit transformation: people do not change simply because they have been exposed to a concept, but because they are placed in the condition to practice, sediment and consolidate new ways of acting over time.

In the interview, Veruscka deepens this point by stressing that, in an organizational context, habit transformation cannot remain limited to individual awareness or behavioral intentions. If change has to happen within a company, it must also involve the processes through which work is organized, repeated and made meaningful. Processes can be understood as the "rhythms" through which an organization establishes what matters and what does not, what is recognized and what is neglected, and what kind of impact is generated on people. For this reason, working on culture and behaviors without intervening on organizational processes risks leaving the transformation incomplete.

A useful example concerns organizational well-being. A company may verbally affirm that people's well-being is important; it may also define a culture that values care, activate initiatives to help people take care of their well-being and relationships, provide tools, and work on individual and managerial behaviors. However, according to Veruscka, as long as the organization does not examine how its processes contribute to generating or undermining well-being, the intervention remains only partial. Meetings, deadlines, communication routines, decision-making processes, workloads and managerial practices can either support psychological safety, cooperation and clarity, or generate stress, fragmentation, isolation and confusion. In this sense, well-being is not only a value to be declared or a behavior to be encouraged, but something that must be embedded in the way organizational processes are designed and experienced.

This is particularly relevant because it shows that processes should not be evaluated only through traditional criteria such as efficiency and effectiveness. From the perspective described by Veruscka, reviewing a process also means asking what kind of human and relational effects it produces: whether it generates positive or negative organizational "chemistry", whether it supports cooperation or separation, whether it creates order or chaos, whether it allows people to express themselves, and whether it contributes to psychological safety. In this sense, processes become the concrete space in which the balance between the human and economic dimensions of organizational life is either supported or contradicted.

The same reasoning can be applied to another example as the culture of error. An organization may state that mistakes are considered opportunities for learning, but if, in practice, the dominant mindset is based on blame, judgment and the search for a culprit, the declared culture remains inconsistent. For the idea of error as learning to become real, the organization needs processes that help people understand what happened, identify what can be improved and transform the mistake into an opportunity for collective learning. Without such processes, the value remains only rhetorical. This example clarifies why every organizational process generates an impact on people and why, if an organization wants to create human and economic balance, its processes must embody that balance.

This point is coherent with the broader argument of this thesis. The previous chapters have argued that corporate training becomes meaningful only when learning moves beyond content exposure and becomes connected to reflection, application and organizational practice. Veruscka's interview offers an empirical illustration of this perspective, but also adds a more cultural interpretation: training is valuable because it can accelerate the transformation of individual awareness into collective change. She describes cultural change as a process that begins from an individual "spark" or tension, which is then translated into words, actions or tools, and may eventually become shared by others. When a sufficient number of people begin to use the same language, repeat certain practices or recognize the same need, change stops being purely individual and becomes cultural. In this view, training and learning can accelerate the achievement of this critical mass, allowing organizations to respond to needs that are perceived as real and urgent.

A second central theme concerns awareness. For Veruscka, the starting point of meaningful learning is not only methodological, although methodology remains important, but also anthropological: the individual must perceive themselves as a subject in evolution. Learning becomes possible when the person does not see identity as fixed, but as something that develops through experience, curiosity and openness to change. This idea is particularly relevant for corporate training because it challenges the assumption that learning can be imposed from the outside. An organization can design a training path, identify needs and provide contents, but if people do not perceive the relevance or meaning of what they are asked to learn, the training experience may remain weak.

This does not mean that the responsibility for learning should be placed only on the individual. On the contrary, Veruscka explicitly recognizes that the organizational environment can either support or inhibit people's willingness to learn. In companies, one of the main obstacles is that training needs are often defined from above: organizations identify what employees should learn, but do not always manage to explain why that learning matters for the people involved. As a result, even well-intentioned training initiatives may become ineffective if employees do not understand their meaning or if they experience them as distant from their own interests, needs or work reality. For this reason, awareness is not simply an individual disposition; it is also something that organizations need to cultivate by making the purpose of learning visible and meaningful.

This point is especially important in relation to the distinction between genuine people development and symbolic training. Veruscka's interpretation suggests that an organization invests authentically in people when it does not limit learning to what is immediately useful for a role, but creates broader conditions for curiosity, growth and continuous development. She gives the example of learning opportunities that may apparently be unrelated to the employee's current job, but that still support the person's ability to remain in a learning posture. From this perspective, a learning organization is not only an organization that offers job-related courses, but one that recognizes learning as a human and organizational capability to be continuously trained.

Veruscka further clarified this point by connecting it to the way learning organizations interpret the risk of turnover. A traditional managerial fear is that investing in people's learning may become a loss if those people later leave the company. In her view, however,

a more evolved learning organization does not interpret learning as subtractive. If people develop, acquire new interests or even leave for another professional experience, this does not necessarily mean that the investment has been wasted. A relationship based on trust may allow people to return, to remain connected or to bring back value in different ways. The important point is that the organization does not use fear of losing people as a reason to limit their development. On the contrary, it creates conditions in which learning circulates and becomes part of the organization's energy, culture and attractiveness.

The third theme emerging from the interview is continuity. Veruscka repeatedly contrasts training understood as a project with training understood as a process. This distinction is one of the strongest connections between the empirical material and the theoretical structure of the thesis. A project is something that starts and ends; a process is something that is repeated, monitored and continuously improved. According to her, a major weakness of corporate training is that it is often designed as a sequence of projects: today a company works on one topic, tomorrow on another, without monitoring, measurement, continuity or connection with business processes. In these cases, training may be appreciated in the moment, but it does not necessarily transform how people work. The problem, therefore, is not that training is useless in itself; rather, it becomes useless when it is badly designed, badly managed or weakly integrated into the organization.

This observation directly recalls the distinction between training as an event and learning as a continuous organizational process. Veruscka argues that training should be monitored, measured and integrated as a real business process. The relevance of this statement lies in the fact that it refuses to separate the human dimension from the economic and organizational one. If training is expected to contribute to well-being, sustainability and competitive advantage, it cannot remain outside the ordinary functioning of the company. It has to be connected to how work is organized, how behaviors are evaluated and how processes are designed.

In practical terms, transforming training from a project into a process means making a series of organizational choices that give learning a stable place in the company. For example, it means monitoring the learning needs of people, teams and the organization; deciding whether training should take place during working time rather than outside it; defining how much time should be protected for learning; designing academies and training paths according to coherent principles; and connecting learning to performance

management, managerial feedback and organizational improvement. In this sense, the process of training is not only the sum of courses offered by the company, but the way the organization systematically determines that learning-related things actually happen.

The example of onboarding helps clarify the difference between formal provision and meaningful learning. Veruscka refers to the case of a large organization in which a new manager was expected to complete around 280 hours of online training in the first three months. From a formal point of view, this may appear as a strong investment in training. However, from a learning perspective, it may be deeply incoherent: the first months of a new employee's experience should also be dedicated to building relationships, understanding the context and creating connection. If onboarding becomes an overload of digital modules, the organization may be able to say that training has been delivered, but this does not mean that meaningful learning has occurred. The key question, therefore, is not whether the training was completed, but whether it was useful, sustainable and coherent with the person's real learning needs.

The link between training and business processes is particularly important because it helps avoid a purely rhetorical understanding of people development. Veruscka notes that organizations often develop training initiatives, academies or internal programs, but these are not always connected to performance management systems, organizational processes or measurable impacts. When this connection is missing, training risks becoming a pleasant but weak experience: participants may appreciate the trainer or the content, but then return to work without any real transformation. In this situation, training is easily perceived as something that "does not serve any purpose", and this perception contributes to making training budgets vulnerable when organizations need to reduce costs.

This argument is especially useful for the thesis because it clarifies one of the mechanisms through which training can become symbolic. Symbolic training is not necessarily training with bad intentions. It may be well communicated, well delivered and even appreciated by participants. However, if it is not connected to organizational routines, managerial behavior, performance systems and opportunities for application, it remains unable to produce stable change. In Veruscka's view, the difference lies in whether the organization continues to use the method, the process and the mindset after the formal training

intervention has ended. If the organization invests money and energy in training but does not create conditions for the learning to be used, the initiative remains incomplete.

The transition from symbolic training to organizational learning can also be supported by specific systems and practices. Veruscka mentions performance management as one example, but she also suggests that the connection between learning and organizational life can be reinforced through mentoring, buddy systems, internal teaching opportunities, cultural initiatives and reward systems that recognize improvement. These mechanisms help make learning visible and structurally relevant. They also show that training does not become organizational simply because it is offered by HR, but because the organization creates processes through which learning is shared, applied, recognized and rewarded.

One example reported during the interview concerns a company which uses reward systems connected to improvement projects proposed by employees. Veruscka refers to the case of an organization in which compensation is not based only on the national collective agreement or on fixed contractual elements but is also supported by additional mechanisms designed to recognize people's contribution to organizational improvement. For instance, when the company reaches certain revenue objectives, part of the value generated can be redistributed. Similarly, employees who participate in special projects or propose initiatives aimed at improving organizational functioning may access additional forms of recognition.

This case provides an annual budget dedicated to improvement projects. Employees can propose projects aimed, for example, at reducing costs, lowering errors or improving specific organizational parameters. These projects are then presented, evaluated and ranked, and the available budget is distributed among the people whose projects generate recognized value for the organization. This example is important because it shows how learning, improvement and reward can be connected through a concrete organizational process.

The relevance of this mechanism does not lie only in the economic incentive itself. Rather, it lies in the message that the organization sends through the process: if people learn, identify problems, improve a process or solve an organizational issue, that contribution is seen, recognized and celebrated. In this way, continuous improvement is not only

declared as a value, but becomes part of the organizational system. The company does not simply state that learning and improvement matter; it creates a process through which they are made visible, rewarded and socially acknowledged.

Another important aspect of Veruscka's contribution is the refusal to oppose the human and economic dimensions of training. In her interpretation, training becomes more credible when it shows that a process can stand both at a human and economic - or at any other form of return that is perceived as valuable for the organization (e.g. time, recognition, autonomy, motivation, psychological safety, improved relationships or the possibility of contributing to meaningful projects) - level. This is an important point because it prevents the thesis from treating care and business value as two separate or incompatible logics. The issue is not whether training should serve people or organizational performance. Rather, the problem is whether organizations are able to design learning processes in which human development and organizational effectiveness reinforce each other. This is consistent with the broader positioning of 2BHappy around the integration of *equilibrio umano* and *equilibrio economico*.

From this perspective, Veruscka's interview helps clarify the specific contribution of the cultural and organizational dimension within the 2BHappy case. Her account suggests that training can become a genuine lever of people development and social sustainability only when it is supported by a set of organizational conditions. It requires awareness, because people need to understand the meaning of learning and perceive themselves as subjects capable of development. It requires continuity, because learning has to be sustained beyond the single course or intervention. It requires integration, because the contents, methods and behaviors developed through training need to enter organizational processes and HR routines. Finally, it requires coherence, because organizations cannot claim to value learning while treating it as marginal, episodic or disconnected from managerial and business practices.

The value of Veruscka's contribution therefore lies in showing that the problem of corporate training is not only methodological, but also cultural and organizational. A more effective didactic design is important, and this will be deepened in the next section through Saverio Cuoghi's contribution on Didattica Aumentata. However, methodology alone is not enough if the organization does not recognize training as a process connected to culture, behaviors and business routines. Veruscka's interview thus reinforces the

central argument of the thesis: training becomes meaningful when it is not merely delivered, but when it is transformed into a continuous and coherent organizational practice.

4.4 Didattica Aumentata as a methodological response to traditional training limits: insights from Saverio's interview

If Veruscka Gennari's interview helps clarify the cultural and organizational meaning of training within 2BHappy's approach, Saverio Cuoghi's contribution allows the analysis to move to the methodological and didactic level. The two perspectives are complementary. Veruscka's interview shows why training should be understood as a lever of awareness, cultural change and organizational transformation; Saverio's interview helps explain how this vision can be translated into the design of concrete learning experiences. His contribution is particularly relevant because it addresses the "how" of training: how a learning process can be designed so that it does not remain a simple delivery of contents, an isolated event or a form of organizational entertainment, but becomes a more intentional and structured process.

Before analysing the concept of Didattica Aumentata, it is useful to clarify Saverio Cuoghi's role and background. His professional profile is strongly connected to the design of learning processes, both individual and organizational. His academic background is in business and economics, with specific attention to learning processes; his university thesis focused on open and distance learning as systems for organizational learning. After an experience in a large organization as responsible for service innovation, he founded his own training and consulting agency, working both on classroom training and on the design of learning paths for organizations and business schools. In 2000, he designed for Profingest Bologna, now Bologna Business School, the first Italian distance MBA, based on a blended methodology that combined in-person and online learning. In 2019, he developed the learning system called Didattica Aumentata, later used in several profit and non-profit training pathways, including the Chief Happiness Officer certification and the Moreknown path.

This background is relevant because Saverio's approach does not oppose classroom training and digital learning, nor does it treat technology as a solution in itself. Rather, it focuses on how different tools, moments, formats and learning environments can be integrated into a coherent learning architecture. In this sense, his perspective introduces

the design dimension of the case: not only what training aims to produce, but how the learning process can be intentionally structured to support individual learning and, more broadly, organizational change.

4.4.1 The limits of traditional training: trainer centrality and weak methodology

The starting point of Saverio's reflection is a critique of traditional corporate training. According to him, for a long time the work of the trainer was considered almost artisanal or artistic. Training was often strongly dependent on the individual trainer's ability to explain, engage, entertain or manage the classroom. This does not mean that the trainer's competence is irrelevant. On the contrary, the ability to communicate, facilitate and hold the attention of participants can contribute to the effectiveness of a learning experience. However, the problem emerges when the whole process depends almost entirely on the trainer's performance, while the methodological structure of learning remains weak. In this model, the trainer becomes the centre of the scene, while the learner and the conditions through which learning actually happens risk remaining secondary.

This critique is directly connected to one of the main arguments developed in the thesis. Training that is delivered is not necessarily training that produces learning. A course may be well presented, appreciated by participants and formally completed, but still fail to generate meaningful development if it does not create the conditions for people to process, practise, receive feedback and consolidate what they learn. Saverio's critique therefore does not concern the trainer as such, but a model of training built too much around the trainer and too little around the learning process. The weakness of traditional training, in this reading, lies not only in its formats, but in the lack of a structured methodology capable of supporting the learner before, during and after the formal training moment.

Didattica Aumentata emerges precisely as a methodological response to these limits. It is not presented as an additional technique or as a simple innovation in format, but as a way to rethink how learning is designed. Saverio defines it as an educational model, a learning system and an articulated methodology of design, delivery and monitoring, aimed at making learning and change processes more effective and efficient, especially within organizations. Its objective is to create a more structured learning process by shifting

attention from the act of teaching to the conditions that allow people to learn and organizations to change.

This last point is important because, in Saverio's view, learning should not be interpreted only as an individual process. It is also a condition for organizational change. Organizations are required to respond to external rhythms, challenges, threats and transformations; without learning, they struggle to change. For this reason, Didattica Aumentata can be read not only as a methodology for improving individual learning, but also as a possible support for organizational transformation. Its relevance lies in the attempt to make learning more intentional, continuous and connected to the contexts in which people and organizations are asked to evolve.

4.4.2 From trainer centrality to learner centrality

A first key element of Didattica Aumentata is the shift from the centrality of the trainer to the centrality of the learner. Saverio uses a particularly clear image: the "celebrated" figure in training should not be the teacher, but the person who has to learn. This statement reverses a common logic in corporate training. In many traditional settings, the quality of a course is implicitly associated with the trainer's charisma, expertise or ability to manage the classroom. In the logic of Didattica Aumentata, instead, the effectiveness of training depends on whether the whole system has been designed around the learner. The central question is not only how well the trainer explains, but which conditions allow the learner to really learn.

This does not imply that the trainer loses importance. Rather, their role changes. The trainer is no longer the "star" of the classroom, nor the only source of value in the learning experience. They become a facilitator within a broader didactic structure. Saverio argues that when the structure of the learning path is strong, the trainer can focus more effectively on the people who are learning. This is possible because part of the work has already been done in the design phase: the sequence, the tools, the learning objects, the individual and collective activities, and the moments of feedback and consolidation have been intentionally organized. The trainer is therefore not asked simply to "perform" content, but to accompany a process.

This aspect deepens the distinction between content delivery and meaningful learning. If training is centred mainly on the trainer, learners may remain passive recipients of

information, even when the session is engaging. If, instead, training is designed around the learner, the focus moves toward what participants are asked to do with the content: how they interpret it, how they connect it to their experience, how they practise it, how they receive feedback and how they bring it back into work. In this perspective, the learner is not the final recipient of a message, but the active subject around whom the training process is designed.

4.4.3 Didattica Aumentata as a method, not as simple digital or blended training

A second important clarification concerns the meaning of the expression Didattica Aumentata. The term should not be understood as a synonym for online training, nor as a simple form of blended learning. Although Saverio's reflection is connected to the evolution of distance learning and to the possibilities opened by digital technologies, technology is not the core of the method. The point is not to replace the classroom with digital tools, nor to combine online and offline activities in a merely additive way. Didattica Aumentata is "augmented" because it increases the design possibilities of learning. It expands the number of variables that can be used to build a learning experience, but these variables have value only if they are intentionally connected.

This distinction avoids a common misunderstanding in corporate training: the idea that modernizing the channel automatically means improving learning. Digital platforms, videos, podcasts, online modules and blended formats can make learning more accessible, scalable and flexible, but they do not automatically make it deeper or more effective. The improvement of training does not depend on the multiplication of tools, but on the quality of the design that connects them. From this perspective, Didattica Aumentata does not coincide with the use of many tools; it concerns the intentional design of their relationship. Technology can support the process, but the method is not technological in itself. It is a logic of learning design.

The methodological core of Didattica Aumentata is based on several principles: the centrality of the learner in the design process, method-guided customization, the dynamic integration between physical and online presence, the combination of collective and individual learning, a new role for the trainer and the construction of a coherent didactic schedule. Saverio also connects the method to four pillars of learning: focalization, active involvement, feedback and consolidation. These elements are relevant because they move

the attention away from the simple delivery of contents and toward the conditions that support attention, participation, practice and learning over time.

4.4.4 The didactic schedule: from isolated episodes to learning paths

The concept of palinsesto didattico is central in this methodology. Saverio describes the learning path as a kind of didactic schedule or architecture composed of different learning objects. These can include videos, podcasts, written materials, exercises, mentoring, self-learning activities, live moments, collaborative activities and collective intelligence practices. However, the relevance of the palinsesto does not lie in the simple presence of many objects. The point is not to make training more varied or more attractive by adding different formats. The point is to design a coherent sequence in which each element has a function and contributes to what comes before and after.

The examples later provided by Saverio make this logic more concrete. In the Chief Happiness Officer certification, the learning process is structured through a combination of synchronous group moments and asynchronous individual moments. The group dimension is used mainly for relational and collaborative learning, while individual study allows participants to work on contents, exercises and learning materials with greater autonomy. In the Moreknown path, the learning architecture is organized across different phases, including warm-up, vertical learning, individual and team prototyping, and follow-up. In both cases, the learning experience is not concentrated in a single classroom moment, but distributed across different objects, times and modes of participation.

This approach responds to one of the weaknesses of episodic training. If learning is concentrated in one isolated event, the risk is that the course remains memorable but disconnected. The palinsesto didattico instead gives form to a process: it organizes learning before, during and after the collective moments, and it makes the relationship between different activities visible. The value of training does not depend only on what happens in the formal moment of delivery. It depends on how different moments are connected over time and on whether they allow participants to progressively build, test and consolidate new ways of thinking and acting. The value is not in the number of tools used, but in the synergy among learning objects.

4.4.5 Individual and collaborative learning activities

Another distinctive element of Didattica Aumentata is the distinction between attività libero-individuali and attività relazionali-collaborative. Saverio explains that this distinction represents a first level of macro-design. People do not learn completely alone, but they also do not learn only through classroom interaction. The individual dimension allows participants to engage with materials, reflect, study, prepare and work at their own pace. This can include videos, podcasts, readings, exercises, self-learning or guided self-learning activities. The relational and collaborative dimension, instead, requires people to be together, either physically or synchronously, in order to discuss, practise, compare perspectives, receive feedback and co-construct meaning.

The point is not simply to include both dimensions, but to design their balance. In the second interview, Saverio clarified that there is no fixed proportion between individual and collaborative learning. The balance cannot be defined abstractly, for example as a standard "50 and 50". It depends on the objectives of the path, the characteristics of the learners, the organizational context and the constraints of the project. In this sense, Didattica Aumentata should not be interpreted as a rigid formula, but as a method of design. The mix between different activities is dynamic and must be adapted project by project.

This distinction introduces a more nuanced understanding of learner involvement. Participation is not reduced to speaking in a classroom or taking part in a group activity. In traditional classroom-centred training, the relational dimension may exist, but it is often left to the ability of the trainer or to the spontaneous dynamics of the group. Some participants may occupy more space because they are more extroverted, while others may remain silent even when they have doubts, difficulties or relevant contributions. At the same time, the individual dimension may be weak or subordinated to the collective moment. Didattica Aumentata tries to manage both dimensions intentionally, creating spaces in which people can learn autonomously and spaces in which they can learn through relation and collaboration.

This logic is particularly visible in the use of online moments. Saverio explains that group moments should be mainly relational and collaborative, while the transfer of contents can often be moved to individual learning moments. In this way, each participant can study

with their own rhythm and the synchronous time can be used for questions, clarification, exercises and collective work. One example is the use of collective intelligence dynamics: participants first work individually, then their outputs are put together, reworked by the group and organized according to shared priorities. The diversity of perspectives becomes learning material. This is particularly relevant for organizational learning, because organizations also require people to integrate different points of view in order to work together.

4.4.6 Learning time, learning personas and the negotiation with the organization

A further central element in Saverio's contribution concerns time. Traditional corporate training often organizes learning through standard blocks, such as four-hour or eight-hour sessions. These formats are familiar and administratively convenient, but they do not necessarily correspond to the way people learn. Saverio criticizes the assumption that these blocks represent a natural unit of learning. They are often more closely connected to the organization of work, to the trainer's availability or to logistical convenience than to the real time required for attention, practice, feedback and consolidation.

In the logic of Didattica Aumentata, the relevant time is not only the time of delivery, but the time of learning. This distinction is decisive. The duration of a path should not be measured only through the hours in which a trainer is present or a session is formally delivered. It should also include the time that the learner dedicates to preparation, study, exercises, reflection, discussion, mentoring, feedback, application and consolidation. In this sense, training time becomes broader than classroom time. It includes all the moments through which the learner engages with the learning process and gradually transforms contents into understanding, competence and behavior.

The second interview added an important clarification: the negotiation of learning time with the organization is one of the first indicators of the seriousness of a training project. Before defining tools, formats or activities, it is necessary to understand how many hours of learning the organization is really willing to make available to people in a week, in two weeks or in a month. If this point is not clarified at the beginning, the risk is to design a path that is methodologically interesting but practically unsustainable. This is where the connection with organizational coherence becomes very concrete. An organization cannot claim to value learning if it does not allocate real time to it.

Saverio also introduced the concept of learning personas, in analogy with buyer personas in marketing. Designing a learning path means understanding who the learners are, which constraints they have, how much time they can realistically dedicate to learning and which rhythm is sustainable for them. In the case of 2BHappy's own pathways, for example, participants were often people who were studying while also working. This influenced the number of learning hours that could be sustained weekly, the choice between online and in-person moments, and the distribution between individual and collaborative activities. In other organizational projects, the original plan may need to be adapted if the company cannot provide weekly time and can only make learning possible every two weeks. The method therefore adapts to constraints, but without losing the principle of continuity and process.

This point has strong implications for the critique of corporate training developed in the thesis. Organizations may declare that they value learning, continuous development and people growth, but these declarations remain weak if they are not accompanied by real time allocated to learning. Saverio's distinction between delivery time and learning time makes this contradiction visible. If learning requires attention, practice, feedback and consolidation, then it cannot be compressed into residual moments or treated as something employees must fit into the margins of work. A company that claims to be learning-oriented but does not protect time for learning risks producing a gap between declared values and actual organizational conditions.

4.4.7 Training, practice and feedback

The question of time connects directly to the idea of training as allenamento, or training as practice. Saverio uses the metaphor of sport to explain a frequent problem in organizations: people are often expected to perform directly "in the match", without having had real opportunities to train. They are asked to communicate better, manage conflict, lead teams, give feedback, collaborate, innovate or change behaviors, but they are often given little protected time to practise these competencies, make mistakes, receive feedback and improve. In sport, this would be considered unreasonable. No athlete would be expected to improve only by playing official matches, without training sessions. Yet in organizations this is often what happens.

The metaphor is useful because it translates an abstract learning problem into a concrete image. Learning does not happen only because someone explains what should be done. It requires repeated practice, correction, feedback and consolidation. A competence becomes behavior when it is exercised over time and when the person has the opportunity to try, fail, adjust and try again. In this sense, training is not the match itself, but the process that allows people to play the match better. This idea is closely connected to the concept of transfer: if training is expected to influence work behavior, learners need opportunities to apply and maintain what they have learned over time.

Feedback and error management are therefore essential. If people are not allowed to make mistakes in a protected learning environment, they may struggle to develop new behaviors in real work situations. If they do not receive feedback, they may not understand whether they are applying what they learned effectively. If there is no consolidation, the learning experience may remain temporary. Didattica Aumentata addresses this issue by treating learning as a process distributed over time, rather than as a single exposure to content. The method is designed to create conditions in which focalization, active involvement, feedback and consolidation can be intentionally supported.

A further element emerging from the second interview concerns the precision of the live learning design. Saverio refers to the scaletta as an important instrument, especially in relational and collaborative activities. In short live moments, such as one-hour or ninety-minute sessions, every minute has a function. The schedule may include activities planned in great detail, sometimes even in very short time units. This precision is not intended to make the trainer rigid, but to govern the learning process. It helps identify which activities are essential, which can be adapted and where time can be recovered if part of the session takes longer than expected. Compared with traditional four- or eight-hour blocks, this kind of design requires much more attention to the rhythm and function of each activity.

4.4.8 The limits of the method: organizational conditions and leadership commitment

At this point, it is important to avoid an overly celebratory interpretation of the method. Saverio's interview is particularly useful because it does not present Didattica Aumentata as a magic solution. A well-designed methodology can make learning more effective and

efficient, but it cannot replace the organizational conditions that make learning possible. If the company does not allocate time, if leaders do not support the process, if participants cannot apply what they learn, if follow-up is absent and if learning is not treated as part of work, even a strong methodology remains fragile.

This point is essential because it prevents the case from being reduced to a methodological answer to what is, in reality, also an organizational problem. The method can support learning, but it cannot compensate entirely for a context that does not make learning legitimate, practicable or continuous. In the second interview, Saverio was explicit on this aspect: learning must be part of work, not an external addition. The commitment must come first from the leadership team, from managers, entrepreneurs or those who govern the organization, because they are the ones who open the space and allow the time for learning. Employees alone can hardly create that space if the organization does not recognize it.

A particularly clear example concerns training scheduled outside working hours, such as on Saturdays or at times that are perceived as external to work. Saverio interprets this choice as problematic not only because it can be experienced as unfair, but because it communicates that learning is not really part of work. If training is placed outside work, participants may experience it as something additional, almost as a form of entertainment or optional activity. They may then expect it to be pleasant, engaging or enjoyable, rather than understanding it as a serious part of their professional and organizational development. In this sense, the way training time is positioned already communicates how the organization understands learning.

The same logic applies to off-site training. Saverio does not reject off-site experiences in themselves; 2BHappy also uses them. The point is that they must have a clear didactic function. Leaving the workplace can be useful when the external setting supports the learning objective, for example by creating distance from routine, enabling reflection or facilitating deeper interaction. However, if the off-site is not connected to a broader path, it risks becoming an isolated object: an experience that may be memorable but remains disconnected from everyday work. The value of the setting therefore depends on whether it is didactically justified and integrated into the learning process.

The role of leadership is particularly important here. If leaders do not protect time for learning or do not encourage the application of new behaviors, participants may return to work and quickly abandon what they have learned. If learning remains disconnected from processes, routines and performance expectations, the training path may remain meaningful at the individual level but weak at the organizational level. This is consistent with the broader argument of the thesis: training becomes meaningful when it is embedded in the everyday conditions of organizational life. Methodology can create a stronger learning architecture, but the organization must sustain that architecture through time, leadership, follow-up and opportunities for application.

4.4.9 A methodological response, not a magic solution

Saverio's contribution strengthens the empirical analysis in two main ways. First, it shows that the limits of traditional corporate training can be addressed through a more intentional design of learning. Didattica Aumentata responds to trainer-centred, episodic and content-driven approaches by placing the learner at the centre, building a structured palinsesto didattico, integrating individual and collaborative activities, distinguishing learning time from delivery time, and emphasizing practice, feedback and consolidation. Second, it shows that methodology alone is not enough. A learning path can be well designed, but its value depends on whether the organization creates the conditions for learning to continue beyond the formal intervention.

For this reason, Didattica Aumentata should be interpreted as a methodological response to the limits of traditional training, not as a self-sufficient solution. Its contribution lies in making the learning process more intentional, structured and coherent, by giving practical form to conditions such as learner centrality, active involvement, continuity, feedback, consolidation and protected learning time. At the same time, the interview confirms that these conditions cannot be produced by methodology alone. They require an organization willing to treat learning as part of work, rather than as an accessory activity added around it.

4.5 Complementary organizational perspectives: Uomo & Ambiente and Servizi CGN

The empirical analysis of 2BHappy is complemented by two additional organizational perspectives: Uomo & Ambiente and Servizi CGN. These two organizations were identified

through the 2BHappy network, as relevant interlocutors connected to its broader professional ecosystem. For this reason, they are not treated as independent or fully developed case studies comparable to the main 2BHappy case. Rather, they are included as complementary perspectives, useful to broaden the empirical analysis and to observe how some of the same issues emerge in different organizational contexts.

This methodological choice is coherent with the exploratory nature of the research. The aim is not to compare the two organizations systematically or to generalize their practices, but to use them as additional empirical lenses. Uomo & Ambiente allows the analysis to connect training with ESG, compliance, sustainability and the redesign of organizational processes. Servizi CGN, on another hand, offers an example of how training can be embedded in onboarding, organizational culture, participation and everyday learning practices. Together, these two perspectives help clarify that the meaningfulness of corporate training depends not only on the content delivered, but also on the organizational conditions that allow learning to become understandable, applicable and integrated into work.

4.5.1 Uomo & Ambiente: training, ESG and the translation of social sustainability into organizational processes

Uomo & Ambiente is included in this chapter as a complementary organizational perspective because it operates in a context where training, sustainability, compliance, certifications and organizational development are closely connected. The company presents itself as a benefit corporation and B Corp providing consulting and training services, with a specific focus on responsible business practices and sustainable progress (UOMOeAMBIENTE, n.d.). Since 2004, it has developed services in areas such as sustainability and ESG, health and safety at work, corporate training, privacy and cybersecurity, strategic business consulting and incentives for companies. This positioning makes Uomo & Ambiente relevant for the purpose of this thesis, as it allows the analysis to observe how training can intersect with social sustainability, compliance requirements and organizational responsibility.

The interview was conducted with Nunzia Giunta, CEO and co-founder of Uomo & Ambiente. Her professional profile is particularly relevant for this research because, within the company, she is connected to people management, human resources and the Chief Happiness Officer perspective. For this reason, her contribution offers an

organizational point of view on how training, well-being, sustainability and internal culture can be interpreted and managed in practice.

Nunzia's interview offers a useful organizational perspective on three themes that are particularly relevant for the purpose of this thesis:

- the distinction between training as formal compliance and training as a source of value;
- the importance of personalization and accessibility in training design;
- the role of listening, participation and continuity in translating well-being into organizational practice.

The first element concerns the distinction between training as a formal requirement and training as a source of value. Uomo & Ambiente operates in a field in which training is often connected to mandatory requirements, certifications, safety obligations and ESG-related processes. This makes the case particularly useful for the thesis because it shows that the tension between formal training and meaningful learning does not concern only leadership, well-being or soft skills programs. It also emerges in contexts where training is required by regulations, standards or external expectations. According to Nunzia, training can still be perceived as a waste of time or as an accessory activity when people and organizations do not recognize its concrete usefulness. This is especially relevant when a course is activated mainly because a company needs to comply with a requirement, obtain a certification or participate in a tender. In these situations, training risks being reduced to an administrative fulfilment. However, the interview also suggests that the same type of training can become more meaningful when it is designed and communicated as an opportunity to acquire useful tools, increase awareness and improve the way people work. The crucial point is therefore not whether training is mandatory or voluntary, but whether it is experienced as a meaningful learning process or as a purely formal obligation.

The second element concerns personalization and accessibility. Nunzia refers to the example of customized onboarding training developed for a transport company that had introduced new workers from different countries. In that case, the training content was adapted to the specific organizational context and made available in different languages, also with the support of artificial intelligence. The relevance of this example does not lie

only in the use of technology, but in the underlying training principle: learning becomes more effective when it is designed around the actual conditions of the learners. If people cannot fully understand the language, examples or rules presented in a training pathway, the course may be formally delivered, but its learning value remains weak. In this sense, accessibility is not a secondary aspect of training design, but a condition for meaningful learning.

The third element concerns the difficulty of translating well-being and social sustainability into concrete organizational practices. Nunzia stresses that well-being is not a simple or universal concept, because what generates well-being for one person may not have the same meaning for another. For this reason, initiatives connected to people's well-being require patience, listening and continuity. They may also bring hidden problems to the surface, because when people are invited to speak about their needs, difficulties or expectations, organizational tensions can become more visible. This is an important point for the thesis because it shows that authentic attention to well-being cannot be reduced to a positive message or to isolated initiatives. If taken seriously, it requires the organization to face complexity, resistance and possible conflict.

This reflection is coherent with the broader argument of the thesis. Corporate training and well-being initiatives become weak when they are treated mainly as communication tools or symbolic signals. Conversely, they become more meaningful when they open spaces for participation, listening and shared responsibility. In the interview, Nunzia describes internal practices aimed at increasing involvement and communication, such as regular meetings in which people are informed about objectives, results, difficulties and future directions. These moments are not training courses in a strict sense, but they contribute to an organizational environment in which people can understand what is happening, feel involved and participate more actively. This suggests that organizational learning is not produced only through formal training activities, but also through routines of communication, participation and collective sense-making.

From principles to process redesign:

To further strengthen one of the central ideas of this thesis, the concept that credibility of training and people development depends on the ability to move from abstract principles to concrete practices, it is useful to consider the initiative *Mens sana in corporate sana*.

The initiative took place in November 2024 and was later summarized by Maria Chiara Voci and Andrea Dell'Orto in a working booklet made available through 2BHappy, which represents internal documentary material, useful to understand how the relationship between well-being, social sustainability and organizational processes was framed within an experiential seminar connected to Uomo & Ambiente and to the broader 2BHappy professional ecosystem.

The relevance of this initiative lies in the fact that Uomo & Ambiente used the Metodo PRO, a method used by 2BHappy, to work on the positive redesign of organizational processes. The method is presented as a way to rethink processes by integrating traditional criteria such as effectiveness and efficiency with dimensions connected to positive organizational functioning. In this sense, the initiative is relevant for the thesis because it shows how the discourse on well-being and social sustainability can be translated into a more operational logic: not only asking whether an organization values people, but also how its processes can be redesigned to support both human and organizational value.

During the experiential seminar, participants were invited to work on concrete organizational processes, such as the organization of a corporate event, recruitment, supplier qualification, customer acquisition and complaint management. This aspect is particularly important because it moves the discussion away from a purely rhetorical understanding of social sustainability. The focus is not simply on communicating care for people, but on examining ordinary organizational processes and asking how they could be redesigned in a more positive, participatory and sustainable way. From the perspective of this thesis, this represents a useful example of how training can become meaningful when it helps participants apply concepts to concrete organizational situations.

Social sustainability as organizational practice

A specific section of the booklet clarifies the concrete areas in which Uomo & Ambiente works in relation to social sustainability and organizational well-being. This part shows that the company does not approach social sustainability only as a general value or communication theme, but as a field of intervention that can be supported through standards, tools, practices and organizational processes.

In particular, Uomo & Ambiente connects social sustainability to recognized standards and frameworks, including UNI/PdR 125:2022 for gender equality, UNI ISO 30415:2021 for diversity and inclusion, SA8000 for social responsibility along the value chain, PAS 24000 for the integration of social responsibility into organizational decisions, and ESG reports and disclosures for measuring and communicating social impact. These references show how social sustainability can be translated into structured organizational commitments. At the same time, they also confirm one of the tensions discussed throughout the thesis: standards and certifications can remain formal if they are treated only as requirements, but they can become more meaningful when they are connected to concrete actions, internal awareness and organizational learning.

The booklet also emphasizes that cultural change cannot be imposed from above. Uomo & Ambiente presents social sustainability as a process that requires awareness, involvement and participation. For this reason, the company refers to tools such as organizational context analysis, customized paths, surveys, workshops, experiential laboratories and facilitation moments. These elements suggest that social sustainability is not reduced to the introduction of isolated initiatives, but requires processes through which people are listened to, involved and gradually accompanied in changing practices. This point is strongly coherent with the interview with Nunzia, where well-being was described as a complex and subjective issue that requires patience, listening and continuity.

A further relevant aspect concerns the role of the Chief Happiness Officer. In the booklet, the CHO is not described as someone who simply organizes pleasant initiatives or informal moments for employees. Rather, this role is associated with the development of a positive organizational culture, the understanding of people's needs, the promotion of dialogue, the prevention of psychosocial risks and the creation of work environments in which people can express their potential. This interpretation links people development to organizational culture, processes and responsibilities, rather than reducing it to individual well-being alone, as this thesis discussed.

Overall, the material frames organizational well-being as connected to the quality of work and to the broader functioning of the company. Well-being is not presented only as a benefit for employees, but as a condition that can influence engagement, collaboration, innovation, the quality of relationships and the ability of people to contribute to

organizational goals. This is considered relevant as empirical material because it shows how Uomo & Ambiente frames well-being as a strategic organizational issue, rather than as a marginal or purely recreational dimension.

Contribution to the thesis

The value of this case lies in showing how the risk of symbolic training is particularly visible in contexts connected to compliance, certifications and ESG requirements, but also how these same contexts can become opportunities for more meaningful learning when they are supported by personalization, accessibility, listening, participation and process redesign. In this sense, Uomo & Ambiente provides a complementary perspective on the conditions that allow training to move beyond formal fulfilment and become part of a broader process of organizational awareness and social sustainability.

4.5.2 Servizi CGN: training as organizational culture and everyday learning

Servizi CGN is included in this chapter as a second complementary organizational perspective. The company is based in Pordenone and operates in the field of services for professionals, particularly in the fiscal and labour consulting sector. It presents itself as the first group in the Italian business-to-business market of fiscal and labour consulting services, working with a national network of more than 25,000 professional firms. Its activities include software solutions, consulting, assistance and training services aimed at simplifying, organizing and optimizing the work of professionals (Servizi CGN, n.d.). Since 2021, Servizi CGN has been a Società Benefit, explicitly connecting its business activity with objectives of common benefit and positive impact on people, organizations and the environment.

This organizational positioning is relevant for the purpose of the thesis because CGN does not present itself only as a service provider, but also as an organization strongly oriented toward values, innovation, sustainability and people development. In its public communication, the company refers to its employees as “Collaborators” and emphasizes the importance of developing people’s potential, fostering enthusiasm and generating a positive impact on society. This makes the case particularly interesting for observing how training can be embedded not only in formal HR activities, but also in organizational culture, internal communication and everyday working practices.

The interview was conducted with Fabio Consorti, HR specialist at Servizi CGN, Chief Happiness Officer and coach. Within the company, he works in the Human Resources area, dealing with recruitment and selection, people management, employee development and training. He is also responsible for the company's e-learning platform and designs soft-skills training paths, both in digital format and in person. His professional trajectory is relevant for this research because it combines operational experience within CGN, people development responsibilities and a CHO-oriented perspective on individual potential and workplace growth.

Fabio's contribution is particularly relevant because it offers an internal perspective on how training is designed, experienced and connected to the company's values and organizational routines. While Uomo & Ambiente provides a perspective more closely connected to ESG, compliance and the redesign of organizational processes, Servizi CGN offers an example of how training can become part of the internal culture and everyday life of an organization. In Fabio's account, training is not described as an isolated HR initiative, but as a set of practices connected to onboarding, values, participation, follow-up and organizational relationships.

Fabio Consorti's interview offers a concrete organizational perspective on how training can be embedded in the everyday life of a company. His account is particularly useful because it brings back, in practical terms, four aspects already discussed throughout this thesis:

- training as cultural onboarding and organizational socialization;
- training as an experiential and laboratory-based process;
- training as continuity through follow-up and practical outputs;
- training as part of a broader learning culture.

Training as cultural onboarding and organizational socialization

A first important element emerging from the interview is the idea that training is used not only to transfer technical information, but also to help people enter and understand the organizational culture. This point is not secondary. Onboarding can be usually reduced to the transmission of procedures, rules, tools or operational instructions. However, this

approach can be reductive if it does not also help new employees understand the values, relationships and ways of working that characterize the organization. From this perspective, onboarding is not only an informative phase, but a process of organizational socialization.

Fabio's interview shows that this dimension is particularly important in Servizi CGN. New employees are introduced to the company through a structured pathway called *Made in CGN*. This pathway is not limited to technical training. It includes the presentation of the company's principles and values, the opportunity to visit different offices, and moments designed to help people understand the broader organizational context they are entering. In this way, training becomes a tool through which the company makes its culture visible and accessible to new collaborators.

The relevance of *Made in CGN* lies precisely in this broader function. The aim is not only to explain what the company does, but also to help people understand how the company works, what kind of relationships it tries to build and what values guide its internal life. Fabio explains that the pathway includes different moments over time: after the first period, new collaborators are invited to reflect on what they have understood, what they have appreciated and what may still be unclear. These reflections are then used to support further classroom and laboratory-based activities. In this sense, onboarding is not treated as a single introductory moment, but as a progressive process through which people are accompanied into the organizational culture.

This aspect shows how training can contribute to cultural coherence. If an organization declares certain values but does not create spaces in which people can understand, discuss and experience them, those values risk remaining abstract. In this case, training is used as one of the mechanisms through which values are translated into concrete situations, examples and interactions. This suggests that corporate training becomes more meaningful when it helps people connect technical knowledge with the cultural and relational context in which that knowledge will be used.

Training as an experiential and laboratory-based process

A second discussed theme concerns the way training is designed and delivered. Fabio emphasizes that, in CGN, training is conceived as highly laboratory-based and only partially didactic in the traditional sense. This is particularly relevant because training

that is reduced only to frontal lessons, online modules or passive content consumption risks being insufficient. People may receive information, but this does not necessarily mean that they have understood it, processed it or learned how to apply it in their work.

In Fabio's perspective, training should instead become a participatory experience in which people reflect, interact and work both on themselves and with the group. This approach is coherent with the broader argument of this thesis: learning requires active involvement, not only exposure to contents. Participants need opportunities to discuss, ask questions, compare experiences, recognize their own behaviors and connect the training content to concrete situations. For this reason, the didactic form of training matters. The "how" of training is not just a technical detail, but a condition that can influence the depth and usefulness of the learning process.

In Servizi CGN, this approach is translated into different training formats. Fabio refers to classroom laboratories, in-person activities, digital contents, e-learning modules, short training pills and moments of individual and group reflection. The company's e-learning platform is used to provide accessible contents, but the digital dimension is not treated as a substitute for interaction. Rather, it is integrated with other forms of training that allow people to discuss, practice and share experiences. This combination makes training more flexible, while still preserving the relational and experiential dimension of learning.

The laboratory-based approach is especially relevant for soft-skills training. Topics such as feedback, emotional intelligence, self-awareness, collaboration or communication cannot be developed only through theoretical explanation. They require situations in which people can observe themselves, listen to others, test new behaviors and receive feedback. Fabio's account therefore confirms one of the key points of the thesis: corporate training becomes more meaningful when it creates active learning conditions and does not remain limited to content delivery.

Training as continuity through follow-up and practical outputs

A third central theme concerns continuity. Fabio's interview strongly suggests that training should not end when the classroom session ends. This point is particularly important for the thesis because one of the main limits of traditional corporate training is precisely its episodic nature. A course may be appreciated in the moment, but if there is

no follow-up, no opportunity for application and no return to the contents, the learning experience risks remaining temporary.

Fabio identifies follow-up as one of the elements that can make training more effective. In his view, a training activity should leave something behind: a reflection, a document, a shared tool, a practical output or an action plan. This idea shifts the focus from training as delivery to training as process. The objective is not simply that participants attend a session, but that they are able to bring something from the training experience into their everyday work.

This logic is visible in the way CGN structures some of its training activities. After important training moments, the company tries to create opportunities to return to the contents and transform them into something more concrete. Fabio refers, for example, to follow-up moments, shared documents and practical tools that help participants remember, apply and consolidate what emerged during the training. In some cases, training produces a kind of shared "score" or reference document that can guide future behaviors, such as in the case of improving the way meetings are managed. In other cases, the training process leads to action plans or commitments that help participants connect the contents to their work reality.

This aspect is particularly valuable because it makes training more visible and usable. If learning remains only in the individual memory of participants, it can easily disappear. If, instead, it is translated into shared tools, follow-up activities and concrete outputs, it has a greater chance of becoming part of organizational practice. This does not mean that follow-up automatically guarantees long-term impact, but it does show an attempt to create continuity between the training experience and the everyday functioning of the organization.

From the perspective of this thesis, CGN's attention to follow-up supports the idea that meaningful training requires time and organizational support. A company cannot expect training to transform behaviors if it does not create opportunities to revisit, practice and consolidate what has been learned. The presence of follow-up therefore becomes a sign of a more serious investment in learning: it shows that training is not treated only as an event to be completed, but as a process that needs to be accompanied.

Training as part of a broader learning culture

A fourth theme concerns the relationship between formal training and a broader learning culture. Fabio's interview suggests that, in CGN, learning is not limited to what is strictly connected to technical tasks or immediate work requirements. The organization also tries to create spaces in which people can develop relationships, share interests, participate in cultural initiatives and experience forms of learning that go beyond formal training.

This point is relevant because it broadens the meaning of corporate learning. If training is reduced only to the acquisition of job-related knowledge, it may become too narrow to support people development and organizational culture. Fabio's perspective suggests that organizations also need spaces that strengthen trust, participation and relationships among people. These spaces may not always be training programs in a strict sense, but they contribute to creating an environment in which people are more involved, connected and open to learning.

In this sense, initiatives such as *Esploratori Culturali* and *Energia Creativa* are particularly significant. *Esploratori Culturali* involves collaborators in cultural and educational initiatives, such as books, events, meetings with external guests and collaborations with local institutions. *Energia Creativa* is more focused on recreational and relational initiatives. These projects create opportunities for participation, relationship-building, cultural exchange and shared experience. They show that learning in organizations can also be supported through informal and community-based practices.

This dimension is also connected to the issue of trust. When people are invited to participate in initiatives that go beyond their immediate tasks, the organization communicates that they are not seen only as performers of a role, but as people with interests, ideas and potential contributions. This can strengthen the relationship between individuals and the organization, making learning part of a wider ecosystem of participation. For the purposes of this thesis, this is important because it shows that training and people development do not depend only on formal courses, but also on the quality of the organizational environment in which people are invited to learn, contribute and relate to others.

At the same time, this part of the case should not be idealized. Cultural initiatives, learning platforms, follow-up activities and participatory projects do not automatically demonstrate the impact of training on performance, well-being or retention. However,

they provide a concrete example of how an organization can try to embed learning into its routines and culture. The value of the CGN perspective lies precisely in this: training is not presented as a separate HR product, but as part of a broader organizational environment in which people are introduced, accompanied, involved and supported over time.

4.5.3 Contribution to the empirical analysis

The two complementary perspectives presented in this section broaden the empirical analysis by showing how training, people development and organizational change can take different forms in different contexts. Uomo & Ambiente offers a perspective closely connected to ESG, compliance, certifications and the translation of social sustainability into organizational processes. Servizi CGN, instead, provides an internal organizational perspective on how training can be embedded in onboarding, cultural socialization, experiential learning, follow-up and everyday learning practices.

These two perspectives help clarify how some of the conditions identified in the 2BHappy case can be interpreted and translated within organizational contexts. In both cases, training appears more meaningful when it is connected to people's real conditions, participation, accessibility, continuity and organizational practices.

For this reason, the value of these materials is mainly exploratory. They do not prove that training automatically produces people development or organizational transformation. However, they help identify the organizational conditions that make such transformation more plausible. The following section brings together these insights with the 2BHappy case through a cross-cutting analysis of the main conditions for meaningful corporate training.

4.6 Cross-cutting empirical analysis: conditions for meaningful corporate training

Across the empirical material, meaningful corporate training emerges as the result of a fragile balance between learning design, people's experience and organizational conditions. Training becomes relevant when it is not limited to the delivery of contents, but creates the conditions for people to understand, participate, practice and translate learning into everyday work. Conversely, it becomes weaker when it remains an isolated

initiative, a formal requirement or a declared value that is not supported by coherent organizational practices.

The empirical material can be read through four cross-cutting conditions that help clarify when corporate training can support people development and social sustainability, rather than remaining a formal or symbolic initiative. These conditions are summarized in Table 4.1 and then discussed in the following paragraphs.

Table 4.1: Conditions under which corporate training can support people development and social sustainability

Cross-cutting condition	**Empirical meaning**	**Relevance for the research question**
Training as a process, not as an isolated event	Learning becomes meaningful when it is prepared, sustained, revisited and connected to what happens before and after the formal training moment.	It distinguishes training as a developmental process from training as a one-shot initiative.
Learner engagement, accessibility and participation	Participants need to understand the purpose of learning, access it in usable ways and be actively involved through reflection, practice and collaboration.	It shows that training cannot be socially meaningful if learners remain passive recipients of contents.
Organizational coherence and translation into practice	Training becomes credible when declared values are supported by time, leadership commitment, routines, follow-up and opportunities for application.	It clarifies the boundary between genuine people development and rhetorical uses of training.
Traces and limits of learning evidence	The materials show traces of learning, such as self-assessments, outputs, follow-up activities and process redesign, but not causal proof of organizational impact.	It allows the analysis to remain critical and exploratory, avoiding an overly celebratory interpretation of the cases.

Source: Author's elaboration based on interviews and documentary materials analyzed in Chapter 4..

A first condition concerns the shift from training as an event to training as a process. This theme appears in different forms across the empirical material. In Veruscka Gennari's contribution, the distinction is expressed through the contrast between training as a "project" and training as a continuous organizational process. In Saverio Cuoghi's reflection, it appears through the idea of a structured learning path, or *palinsesto didattico*, where learning is distributed across different moments, tools and activities. In Servizi CGN, the same logic is visible in onboarding, follow-up activities and practical outputs that try to keep learning connected to everyday work. In the materials related to Uomo &

Ambiente, the process dimension emerges in the link between training, sustainability and the redesign of organizational processes.

This convergence is relevant because it shows that meaningful training cannot be evaluated only through the existence of a course, a platform or a formal learning initiative. A training activity may be well organized and appreciated by participants, but still remain weak if it is not connected to what happens before and after the formal learning moment. From this perspective, continuity is not an additional feature of training; it is one of the conditions that makes learning more likely to influence behaviors, routines and organizational life. The empirical material therefore confirms one of the central arguments of the thesis: the problem is not only whether organizations provide training, but whether they create a process through which learning can be prepared, experienced, revisited and applied.

A second finding concerns the role of the learner. Across the interviews, meaningful training appears to require more than passive participation. People need to understand why they are learning, perceive the relevance of the experience, have access to contents in ways that are usable for them, and be actively involved in the learning process. Veruscka's contribution emphasizes awareness and the meaning attributed to learning. Saverio translates the same concern into didactic design, through learner centrality, learning personas and the balance between individual and collaborative activities. Nunzia Giunta's perspective adds the issue of accessibility and personalization, especially when training has to reach people with different languages, backgrounds or organizational conditions. Fabio Consorti's account, instead, shows how laboratory-based and experiential formats can make participation more concrete.

Taken together, these elements suggest that learner centrality should not be understood as a generic attention to people. It is a practical and organizational condition. Training becomes weaker when participants are treated as recipients of contents decided elsewhere, without sufficient attention to their context, constraints, language, motivation or actual work experience. Conversely, it becomes more meaningful when learners are placed in the conditions to interpret, discuss, practise and use what they learn. This is particularly important in corporate contexts, where learning happens within the pressures and limits of work. Employees are not students detached from organizational

life; they are people who learn while also performing roles, managing responsibilities and responding to everyday demands.

A third finding concerns the relationship between training and organizational coherence. This is probably the most important point for distinguishing genuine people development from more rhetorical uses of training. The empirical material shows that training becomes credible only when there is a sufficient alignment between what the organization declares, what it teaches and what it actually allows people to experience at work. Veruscka's reflections on well-being, error culture and organizational processes show this tension clearly: values such as care, learning or psychological safety remain weak if ordinary processes continue to generate overload, blame, confusion or isolation. Similarly, in the context of ESG and compliance, Uomo & Ambiente shows that standards and certifications can remain formal unless they are connected to listening, participation and concrete process redesign. In CGN, the attempt to connect training with onboarding, values, laboratories and follow-up shows another way in which learning can be integrated into organizational culture.

This point is also consistent with Saverio's methodological contribution. Didattica Aumentata can structure learning more intentionally, but it cannot solve by itself the organizational conditions that make learning possible. Time, managerial support, leadership commitment and opportunities for application remain essential. If learning is treated as something external to work, squeezed into residual time or unsupported by managers, even a strong methodology risks losing part of its value. For this reason, the empirical material suggests that training should not be interpreted only as an HR tool or as a didactic product. It is also a test of organizational coherence: it reveals whether the company is willing to create the conditions that its own language of development seems to promise.

A fourth finding concerns the translation of learning into practice. Across the chapter, meaningful training is associated with concrete traces: routines, follow-up, shared tools, redesigned processes, practical outputs, opportunities for feedback, and sometimes forms of recognition. These traces do not have the same nature in all contexts. In 2BHappy, they appear through learning paths, competence monitoring and post-certification trajectories. In Didattica Aumentata, they are linked to practice, feedback and consolidation. In Uomo & Ambiente, they are connected to process redesign and the

operational translation of social sustainability. In CGN, they appear through onboarding practices, learning pills, laboratories, documents, follow-up moments and broader cultural initiatives.

The presence of these traces matters because it moves the analysis beyond participation and satisfaction. A positive training experience is not irrelevant, but it is not enough to claim that learning has become organizationally meaningful. What matters is whether the learning experience produces something that can be used, remembered, discussed, adapted or embedded in work. This does not mean that every training initiative must immediately generate measurable business outcomes. Rather, it means that training should create some form of continuity between learning and action. Without this continuity, training risks remaining an isolated experience, even when it is well received.

At the same time, the empirical material must be interpreted with caution. The chapter does not provide causal evidence that the training approaches analyzed produce specific organizational outcomes. The CHO reports and post-certification indicators offer useful information about perceived competence development, satisfaction and professional activation, but they remain partial forms of evidence. They are based partly on self-assessment and cannot demonstrate, by themselves, behavioral change or organizational impact. Similarly, the examples from Uomo & Ambiente and Servizi CGN show practices, conditions and organizational attempts, but they do not prove long-term effects on well-being, performance, retention or sustainability.

This limitation is not a weakness to hide, but an important part of the analysis. The value of the empirical material lies in showing how practitioners and organizations interpret the conditions that can make training more meaningful. It offers exploratory evidence of design choices, organizational practices and learning logics that move beyond a purely formal understanding of training. However, it does not allow for definitive generalization. For this reason, the findings should be read as analytical insights into the conditions of meaningful corporate training, rather than as proof that the organizations analyzed have achieved measurable transformation.

Overall, the cross-cutting analysis clarifies the boundary between training as care and training as rhetoric. Training becomes closer to care when it creates real conditions for learning, participation and development. It becomes rhetorical when it remains mainly a

declared value, a formal requirement, a communication tool or an initiative disconnected from work. The empirical material therefore supports the central argument of the thesis: the social value of corporate training does not depend only on the intention to train people, nor on the quality of a single course. It depends on the relationship between learning design and the organizational context that makes learning possible, credible and usable over time.

Conclusion

This thesis started from a central tension: corporate training is increasingly presented as a strategic lever for people development, organizational learning and social sustainability, but its actual value cannot be assumed simply because training is provided. The research question guiding the analysis was therefore: under what conditions can corporate training move beyond formal provision becoming a meaningful lever for people development and contributing to social sustainability?

The answer that emerges from the theoretical and empirical analysis is that corporate training becomes meaningful when it is not treated as an isolated activity to be delivered, but as an organizational process to be designed, supported and sustained over time. Training can contribute to people development and social sustainability only when learning is made accessible, understandable, applicable and coherent with the everyday conditions of work. Conversely, when training remains disconnected from organizational routines, managerial behavior, protected time and opportunities for application, it risks becoming mainly symbolic: visible as an initiative, but weak as a developmental process.

The empirical analysis supports this conclusion by showing that meaningful training depends on a combination of methodological, cultural and organizational conditions. The 2BHappy case study made this point particularly visible. Veruscka Gennari's interview showed that training becomes transformative when it is connected to awareness, continuity, integration and coherence. In her perspective, learning cannot be reduced to the acquisition of contents or to the completion of a training project. It has to affect the way people interpret work, the behaviors they develop and the organizational processes in which those behaviors are embedded. Her contribution is especially relevant because it shows that the problem of corporate training is not only didactic, but also cultural and organizational. Training becomes meaningful when it helps transform declared values into practices, routines and processes that actually shape the experience of work.

Saverio Cuoghi's contribution deepened the methodological dimension of this argument. Through the concept of Didattica Aumentata, the empirical material showed that training can move beyond traditional delivery-based models when it is designed around the learner and around the whole learning process, rather than around the trainer or the single classroom event. Elements such as learner centrality, structured learning paths, the

integration of individual and collaborative activities, learning personas, protected learning time, practice, feedback and consolidation emerged as essential conditions for making learning more intentional and effective. At the same time, Saverio's interview also confirmed a key limitation: methodology alone is not sufficient. Even a strong learning design remains fragile if the organization does not allocate time, involve leaders, support application and recognize learning as part of work.

The complementary perspectives of Uomo & Ambiente and Servizi CGN reinforced and broadened these findings. Uomo & Ambiente showed that the tension between formal training and meaningful learning is particularly evident in contexts connected to ESG, compliance, certifications and social sustainability. In these contexts, training can easily become a formal fulfilment or a reputational signal. However, the empirical material also showed that it can become more meaningful when it is supported by personalization, accessibility, listening, participation and process redesign. Servizi CGN, instead, provided an internal organizational perspective on how training can be embedded in onboarding, cultural socialization, experiential learning, follow-up and everyday learning practices. Its contribution showed that training becomes more credible when it is connected to the organization's values, relationships, routines and practical outputs.

Across the empirical material, four main conditions emerged. First, training needs to be designed as a process, not as an isolated event. Learning becomes more meaningful when it is prepared, sustained, revisited and connected to what happens before and after the formal training moment. Second, training requires learner engagement, accessibility and participation. People need to understand the meaning of learning, access it in usable ways and be actively involved through reflection, practice and collaboration. Third, training depends on organizational coherence. Declared values such as care, learning, well-being or development become credible only when they are supported by time, leadership commitment, routines, follow-up and opportunities for application. Fourth, meaningful training requires traces of learning, while recognizing the limits of available evidence. Self-assessments, follow-up activities, practical outputs and process redesign can indicate that learning is being monitored or translated into action, but they cannot be confused with causal proof of long-term organizational impact.

These findings allow the thesis to contribute to the existing discussion on corporate training, learning organizations and social sustainability. Its contribution does not lie in

proposing a universal model or in demonstrating that one specific training method produces social sustainability. Rather, the thesis contributes by clarifying the boundary between training as formal provision and training as a socially meaningful organizational practice. It argues that the social value of corporate training depends less on the existence of learning opportunities and more on the conditions that make learning usable, credible and sustainable in organizational life. In this sense, the thesis connects the literature on training transfer, learning organizations and sustainable HRM by showing that people development is not produced by training alone, but by the organizational system that surrounds and sustains learning.

This contribution is also relevant for interpreting the risk of rhetoric in corporate training. Training becomes rhetorical not only when it is designed with bad intentions, but also when it remains disconnected from the conditions required for learning to become practice. A company may genuinely invest in courses, platforms or development programs and still fail to generate meaningful learning if employees do not have time to learn, if managers do not support application, if training messages are contradicted by everyday routines, or if the organization measures only participation and satisfaction without observing transfer and continuity. The distinction between care and rhetoric therefore does not depend only on what organizations say about training, but on what they make possible around training.

The thesis has some limitations. First, the empirical analysis is qualitative and exploratory. The 2BHappy case study, together with the complementary perspectives of Uomo & Ambiente and Servizi CGN, cannot be generalized to all organizations or sectors. Second, the empirical material is based mainly on interviews and internal or documentary materials, including self-assessment data and examples of training practices. These materials are useful for understanding how learning is interpreted, designed and monitored, but they do not provide causal evidence of behavioral or organizational change. Third, the analysis mainly reflects the perspective of training providers, HR professionals and organizational representatives, while it does not include a systematic collection of employees' experiences before and after training interventions. For this reason, the findings should be understood as analytical insights into the conditions of meaningful corporate training, rather than as proof of measurable impact.

Future research could address these limitations by comparing multiple organizations across sectors, by including the perspective of employees and managers involved in training paths, and by adopting longitudinal designs capable of observing how learning is transferred and sustained over time. Further studies could also examine whether the conditions identified in this thesis produce different effects depending on organizational size, sector, leadership style, workload, type of training or degree of cultural maturity. This would help deepen the relationship between corporate training, people development and social sustainability beyond the exploratory level of the present research.

Overall, the thesis shows that corporate training can become a meaningful lever for people development and social sustainability only when it is treated as part of organizational life. Training is not socially meaningful because it is offered, communicated or formally completed. It becomes socially meaningful when people are given real conditions to learn, participate, apply and develop within a coherent organizational context. For this reason, the central question for organizations should not only be whether they provide training, but whether they create the conditions that allow learning to matter. Only under these conditions can corporate training move from formal provision to genuine care for people and their development.

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