

# *Theoretical Framework For The Evaluation And Recognition Of “Learning Units” At The District Level In Thuy Nguyen City, Hai Phong, Vietnam*

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**Abstract—** This paper presents the theoretical framework for evaluating and recognizing “Learning Units” at the district level in Thuy Nguyen City, Hai Phong, Vietnam. The study clarifies key concepts related to “Learning Units,” the evaluation criteria based on current educational policies, and the factors influencing the recognition process. Based on an analysis of the lifelong learning model and the evaluation criteria applied in Vietnam, the paper proposes improvements to enhance the quality and feasibility of the evaluation process. The findings are significant in promoting the development of learning units, contributing to the construction of a sustainable learning society at the local level.

**Keywords—** Learning Unit, Evaluation, Recognition, Lifelong education, Thuy Nguyen, Hai Phong.

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the context of globalization and the Fourth Industrial Revolution, lifelong learning is considered a critical strategy for enhancing the quality of human resources and promoting sustainable development (UNESCO, 2015). According to the OECD (2019), countries with well-developed lifelong learning systems often achieve higher levels of economic growth and social progress. In Vietnam, the policy of building a “Learning Society” has been institutionalized through government decisions, most notably Decision No. 1373/QĐ-TTg dated July 30, 2021, which approved the Project on “Building a Learning Society for the 2021–2030 period.” One of the key components of this project is the establishment and development of “Learning Units” at various levels, from grassroots to district and provincial levels (Ministry of Education and Training, 2021).

The evaluation and recognition of “Learning Units” at the district level play a crucial role in ensuring quality and fostering the growth of lifelong learning initiatives at the local level. According to educational management theory, the development of objective evaluation criteria and the application of effective assessment methods contribute significantly to the successful implementation of educational policies (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). An appropriate evaluation system not only helps determine the extent to which the goals of a “Learning Unit” are achieved, but also serves as a motivational tool for local authorities and organizations to continue investing in community education development (Field, 2018).

Particularly in Thuy Nguyen City, Hai Phong—a locality experiencing rapid urbanization and serving as a key economic hub in the Northeast region—the need to enhance educational quality and establish a modern learning environment has become increasingly

urgent. Thuy Nguyen is undergoing economic restructuring and industrial modernization while affirming education as a cornerstone of sustainable development. In this context, the evaluation and recognition of “Learning Units” at the district level serve not only as tools to assess the capacity and quality of educational institutions and public administrative units but also as essential indicators for measuring the effectiveness of educational policies. Moreover, this process provides motivation for internal reform and improvement in public governance quality.

However, practical implementation has revealed several limitations in the state management of this activity. The current evaluation criteria often lack objectivity, transparency, and contextual relevance, particularly in relation to regional characteristics and the practical demands of the renovation period. Specifically, the assessment process is frequently influenced by administrative and experiential factors, resulting in discrepancies in the recognition of “Learning Units” across different localities. Additionally, the procedural workflow remains overly bureaucratic, with insufficient coordination among governing bodies, which undermines the efficiency of oversight activities and impedes the strategic development of educational quality.

## II. CONCEPT, EVALUATION CRITERIA, AND RECOGNITION OF “LEARNING UNITS”

This study employs the methods of document analysis and theoretical synthesis, combined with an in-depth examination of the factors influencing the effectiveness of the evaluation system. Through this approach, a rigorous and comprehensive theoretical framework is developed to accurately

### A. Definition of a “Learning Unit”

A “Learning Unit” (Learning Organization) is a concept developed by Peter Senge (1990) in his seminal work *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*. According to Senge, a learning organization is one in which people continually expand their capacity to learn and adapt to a changing environment by fostering systems thinking, building a shared vision, and encouraging creativity (Senge, 1990).

Watkins and Marsick (1996) further expanded this concept, emphasizing that a learning organization is one that “creates, acquires, and transfers knowledge, and modifies its behavior to reflect new knowledge and insights” (Watkins & Marsick, 1996, p. 4).

The core components of a learning organization include:

- Systems Thinking – Viewing the organization as an interconnected whole.
- Personal Mastery – Encouraging continuous personal development among individuals.
- Mental Models – Promoting open-minded thinking and challenging entrenched assumptions.
- Shared Vision – Creating a unified goal for the entire organization.
- Team Learning – Facilitating collaboration and knowledge exchange among individuals and groups.

In Vietnam, the concept of a “Learning Unit” is often associated with the movement toward building a “Learning Society,” as advocated by the Party and the State. According to Decision No. 89/QĐ-TTg dated January 9, 2013, issued by the Prime Minister regarding the development of a learning society during the 2012–2020 period, a learning unit is defined as an organization (such as a school, agency, enterprise, or administrative body) that creates conditions for all its members to engage in lifelong learning.

According to the Vietnam Association for Promoting Education (2022), Learning Units (LUs) in Vietnam are generally evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Having concrete plans and activities that promote learning among staff, employees, students, and learners.
- Providing access to learning resources such as books, documents, and information technology.
- Encouraging lifelong learning and the development of individual competencies.
- Applying knowledge in practice to enhance work efficiency and contribute to society.

In contrast to Senge's (1990) model, the Vietnamese approach places greater emphasis on community learning and lifelong learning within the context of socio-economic development. Specifically, the Learning Unit model in Vietnam is implemented across schools, public institutions, enterprises, and local communities to improve labor productivity, working skills, and social knowledge.

The concept of the "Learning Unit" has evolved significantly—from Peter Senge's (1990) original model to the Vietnamese context. While international approaches tend to emphasize innovation and organizational creativity, the Vietnamese interpretation closely aligns with lifelong education and human resource development guided by state policies. This reflects the adaptability of the Learning Unit model to the unique economic, cultural, and social characteristics of each country

### *B. Evaluation Criteria for "Learning Units"*

The concept of the "Learning Unit," as emphasized by Peter Senge (1990), describes a learning organization as a place where individuals continually learn and innovate to adapt to change. To determine the developmental level of a learning unit, numerous scholars have proposed evaluation frameworks, notably those by Watkins & Marsick (1996), Garvin et al. (2008), and the applied model developed by the Vietnam Association for Promoting Education (2022). Below are the key evaluation criteria based on prominent research contributions.

#### Evaluation Criteria According to Watkins & Marsick (1996)

Watkins and Marsick (1996) introduced the Dimensions of the Learning Organization Questionnaire (DLOQ), which includes seven core dimensions:

- Continuous Learning – Encouraging ongoing learning at the individual level.
- Dialogue and Team Learning – Promoting group dialogue and knowledge sharing.
- Embedded Systems – Establishing systems for capturing and sharing learning.
- Empowerment and Participation – Fostering autonomy and engagement.
- System Connection – Linking internal learning to external environments.
- Leadership Support for Learning – Ensuring leaders actively support learning efforts.
- Knowledge Utilization – Applying acquired knowledge to real-world practice.

#### Evaluation Criteria According to Garvin, Edmondson, & Gino (2008)

Garvin et al. (2008) developed a learning organization assessment model centered on three key dimensions:

- Supportive Learning Environment – Creating a psychologically safe space for learning and experimentation.
- Concrete Learning Processes and Practices – Implementing structured processes such as experimentation, analysis, and knowledge transfer.
- Leadership That Reinforces Learning – Leaders model and reinforce behaviors that promote learning.

#### Evaluation Criteria for Learning Units in Vietnam

In the Vietnamese context, the Vietnam Association for Promoting Education (2022) proposed evaluation criteria that align with local socio-economic conditions, including:

- Lifelong Learning and Human Resource Development – Encouraging continuous education and skill enhancement.
- Application of Technology and Innovation – Integrating ICT and fostering innovation.
- Learning Culture and Creativity Encouragement – Promoting a culture of learning and creative thinking.

- Linkages with the Educational System and Community – Strengthening connections between organizations, educational institutions, and local communities.

#### Evaluation Criteria for District-Level “Learning Units”

The evaluation and recognition criteria for district-level “Learning Units” in Vietnam are specifically regulated in Circular No. 24/2023/TT-BGDĐT issued by the Ministry of Education and Training. This circular outlines the standards for assessing and recognizing district-level “Learning Units” at two levels: Level 1 and Level 2.

#### Evaluation Criteria for Level 1 District-Level Learning Units

According to Article 6 of Circular No. 24/2023/TT-BGDĐT, the evaluation criteria for recognizing a Level 1 district-level Learning Unit include three primary criteria:

1. Conditions for building a Learning Unit,
2. Learning outcomes of the Unit’s members,
3. Impact of building a Learning Unit.

Each criterion is further detailed through five specific indicators.

For Level 2 recognition, these indicators are set at higher standards to reflect more advanced performance and outcomes.

To realize this objective, close coordination among Party committees, local authorities, the education sector, and mass organizations is essential for effectively implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the building of Learning Units. Furthermore, integrating lifelong learning into local socio-economic development programs—aligned with the practical needs of the community—is a key strategy to enhance the model’s effectiveness and sustainability.

In the context of digital transformation, the application of information technology in managing, evaluating, and promoting lifelong learning should be emphasized. This will help establish a flexible, diverse, and accessible learning ecosystem for all individuals.

The experience in Thuy Nguyen City demonstrates strong potential for establishing district-level Learning Units, provided there is sound strategic orientation and adequate investment in resources, policies, and implementation mechanisms.

### III. CONCLUSION

The development and recognition of district-level “Learning Units” are critical components in advancing the learning society in Vietnam. This effort contributes to achieving national goals of improving public education, training human resources, and fostering talent—essential for sustainable development amid digital transformation and global integration.

Grounded in theoretical perspectives on learning societies and lifelong learning, along with relevant legal documents and evaluation frameworks, this paper has clarified the foundational elements for constructing, assessing, and recognizing district-level Learning Units.

In Thuy Nguyen City, Hai Phong, implementing this model is not only a practical necessity but also a strategic step toward promoting universal education, leveraging community potential, and driving socio-economic growth. However, to ensure the effectiveness of the evaluation and recognition process, it is crucial to further refine the theoretical framework and tailor evaluation criteria to local contexts, while also strengthening communication and capacity-building for personnel involved in implementation.

The research findings presented in this paper serve as a basis for proposing concrete solutions to support the successful establishment of Learning Units in Thuy Nguyen in particular and across the country in general.

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