



School of Business



Building Managed Organisational Learning

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- How can individual learning become organisational learning?
- Learning is predicted of individuals so what does organisational learning mean?

What is Organisational Learning?

- Increasing or maintaining the capacity to act in the face of changing internal and external circumstances
- Action refers to what total organisation can do, not what individuals or groups within the organisation can do.

Challenges

- People in organizations act collectively, but they learn individually. That is the central tenet - and frustration - of organisational learning
- Organizations learn only through individuals who learn. Individual learning does not guarantee organisational learning. But without it no organisational learning takes place

- “Learning occurs, not when people gain new insight, but when they can produce new consequences from that insight”

- *Exploration* refers to the exploration of new possibilities and includes things captured by terms such as: search, variation, risk taking, experimentation, play, flexibility, discovery and innovation.
- *Exploitation* refers to the exploitation of old certainties and includes such things as: refinement, choice, production, efficiency, selection, implementation and execution.

3 Types of Learning

- The learning that enables us to solve routine problems.

This is called *single-loop learning*

- When single loop learning isn't working and we learn to ask different questions.

This is called *double-loop learning*

- When we learn the habit of double loop learning.

This is called *deutero learning*

Action Learning

- "There can be no learning without action and no (sober and deliberate) action without learning”.
- "Those unable to change themselves cannot change what goes on around them“
- Participants work on real organisational problems that do not appear to have clear solutions;
- Participants meet on equal terms to report to one another and to discuss their problem and progress

$$L=P+Q$$

- **L** stands for learning,
- **P** for programmed knowledge (i.e. current knowledge in use, already known, what is in books, and what prescribes solutions)
- **Q** for questioning insight.

Action Learning as Conversation

- Change takes places through conversation.
- Conversation changes how we think about what we do and leads to changing what we do.
- Conversation
 - Sit together and listen to one another as to what our experiences are,
 - how we understand and interpret them
 - how shared understanding emerges as basis for action.

Process of Action Learning

- Asking fresh questions,
- Unfreezing underlying assumptions,
- Creating new connections and mental models.
- Challenging both the usefulness of programmed knowledge (P) to the current situation and the ignorance of the participants.
- Admits to lack of knowledge and increases the scope of the search for solutions.
- Carries the potential for new insight into the current state.

Reflective Conversation

- Conversation
 - Narrow, unreflective focus
 - Take perspective of the whole and be reflective
 - Enables double-loop, deuterio learning.

Questions for Reflection (1)

- What do we do in Genio to explore and exploit learning?
- What's our experience of action learning in exploring and exploiting?
- What kind of learning emerges from our action learning?

From Individual to Group Learning

- Individual
 - Experience, insight, judgement,
 - Action: decision to bring to group
- Group
 - Individual to group judgements (conversation, questioning, denying, dodging...)
 - Group experience, insight, single-/double-loop, judgement, - integrating
 - Action: Implement, group learning

From Group to Interdepartmental Learning

- Group learning and action
- Interdepartmental group
 - group judgements
 - Interdepartmental group (conversation, questioning, denying, dodging...) experience, insight, single-/double-loop, judgement, - integrating across...
 - Action: interdepartmental group learning, implement

Organisational Learning

- Institutionalisation
 - Standard operating procedures
 - How we do things here
- How to *exploit* learning
 - Learning Mechanisms
 - Cognitive
 - Structural
 - Procedural

- *Cognitive learning mechanisms* provide language, symbols, theories, values and concepts for thinking about and understanding learning issues

- *Structural mechanisms* comprise organizational, physical and technical infrastructures, such as quality teams, continuous improvement task forces, feedback channels, databases, intranets, document sharing systems and the physical layout of the work space.

- *Procedural mechanisms* are the institutionalised procedures that promote and support learning, such as learning meetings and action learning programmes.

Is Learning Assured?

- What might the organisational learning difficulties be?
- What, in the routines of the organisation, might inhibit learning?
 - From individual to group?
 - From group to interdepartmental group?
 - From interdepartmental group to organisation?

Questions for Reflection (2)

- Who asks learning questions?
- Who manages group learning?
- Who coordinates interdepartmental group learning?
- Who minds the learning mechanisms?