

THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSION OF THE LEARNING ORGANISATION

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This article looks at the current thinking about learning organisations, including the theories of Argyris, Pedler et al and Garratt. It looks at the limitations of these theories in the light of Bateson's notions of levels of learning. It argues that a better understanding of Bateson's level III learning is necessary, both to increase the quality and depth of double-loop learning and to bring the spiritual dimension into the organisation, so that organisations develop a sense of purpose which transcends mere survival.

Reference:

Hawkins, P. (1991) "The Spiritual Dimension of the Learning Organisation", *Management Education and Development* Vol 22, Pt3

CURRENT THINKING

in the plenitude of God's universe why have you chosen to fall asleep in this small dark prison (Rumi)

This Article will start with thinking, as it is with our thinking that we create the prisons in which we fall asleep. However, I do not want to stay within thinking but to use it as a route to the heart; for ultimately the spiritual dimension cannot be grasped by thinking with the head, but by thinking and understanding with the heart.

As Robert Bly, the American poet, entreats his audience 'first listen to this with your ears, then with your guts and then finally with your heart'

Let us start with a song together:

**Rose, Rose, Rose, Rose
Shall I ever see thee grown
Aye marry that thou wilt
When I am blown**

**Rose, Rose, Rose, Rose
Shall I ever see thee red
Aye marry, that thou wilt**

When I am dead

Let the song open our hearts, let it teach us that spirituality doesn't come from effortful self-development and that there are limits to growth. For growth, as James Hillman reminds us, is fine in spring and in our youth, but in middle age growth is over-consumption and obesity. In this article, I will try and show how, if we want to enter the spiritual domain, we must be able to face death and surrender those heroic attitudes that lead us to try and climb Maslow's pyramid with our efforts, or follow Luther in trying to work our way to heaven, not like him, in a monastery, but in self-development workshops. We will also use Bateson's theory of learning to help us to distinguish the different levels of learning and how spiritual learning is different from but connected to both skill learning and strategic learning.

DEFINITION OF A LEARNING ORGANISATION

Let us start by looking at what is a learning organisation. Much has been written in the last few years about this concept. The best definition is probably from the work of Pedler, Boydell and Burgoyne, who define the learning organisation as 'an organisation which facilitates the learning of all its members and continuously transforms itself'.

The work of Mike Pedler and colleagues has been instrumental in developing this whole field, but their definition poses more questions than it answers:

- What sort of learning does the organisation facilitate?
- Is all learning of the same type or level?
- What is the connection between individual learning and organisational transformation?
- Can an organisation transform itself?
- Transforming to what, or what purpose?

The danger is that we rush into being evangelical about learning organisations. The need for the approach is so evident that we do not stay long enough to be clear about what is meant by learning and what are the different types of learning. We need to be clear about how experience can be harvested for learning and how learning leads to development.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF LEARNING

Clearly, all learning is not of the same order, so let us begin by looking at the different types of learning.

Argyris's distinction between single-loop and double-loop learning is based on Bateson's seminal work on different levels of learning. Argyris often bemoans the fact that he rarely finds individuals or organisations practising double-loop learning, and never finds organisations that sustain such learning over time. We need to ask why not, rather than make a single-loop response by writing more books telling people and organisations that they should be into double-loop learning. We need to double-loop learn about double-loop learning!

The best place to start is back with Bateson: Bateson's paper, 'The Logical Categories of Learning and Communication', originally was written in 1964 and was given at a conference on world views in August 1968. In this paper he suggests that learning occurs only when it leads to some form of change, and that, following Russell and Whitehead, we can use the principle of logical types to distinguish levels of learning by the order of change that they bring about. He distinguishes between:

ZERO LEARNING: This he used to describe many processes that are termed 'learning' in common parlance but which are only about the receipt of information which may lead on to learning but are not learning events in themselves.

LEARNING LEVEL I: This is the area of skill learning, making choices within a simple set of alternatives. It is Argyris's single-loop learning and Garratt's Operational cycle learning.

LEARNING LEVEL II: This happens when we move the level of learning to that of choosing between sets within which Level 1 learning takes place. This is Argyris's double-loop learning and Garratt's Strategy cycle learning.

Garratt's (1987) development of the Argyris theory represents the double loop of organisational learning in a very useful and simple model, which I colloquially refer to as Garratt's egg-timer (*see Figure 1*).

I find this model particularly useful in the way it pictorially represents the stress in the middle of the organisation. The business brain in the Garratt model is not at the head of the organisation but at the heart; it is not carried by the directors but by the people who need to straddle the domains of strategy and operations. These are the people who are the life blood of the learning organisation; the people who need to be effective at educating upwards, as well as translating new vision and direction into operational reality.

Unfortunately, this critical area is absent in many organisations. In one large manufacturing company where I am consulting, the middle managers do not 'educate upwards' but merely pass operational problems up the line; the senior managers usually fail to give time to strategic thinking as they are constantly 'descending' to manage the single-loop operational cycle.

In another leading organisation, this time in computing, there is initially a very impressive picture of a great deal of learning. Much time and many resources are given to learning at all levels. Many project groups are exploring new strategic approaches to organising the business, and they are constantly engaging in future scenario scanning, attempting to keep one step ahead of the game.

In terms of Pedler, Boydell and Burgoyne definition of the learning organisation, I must conclude that here is a true learning company. However, looking a little closer, we find that there are important flaws. First, there is little harvesting of the learning of individuals back at work. Managers go on many personal and skills development courses, but their learning often stays within them and is not networked back into their teams, divisions and organisation.

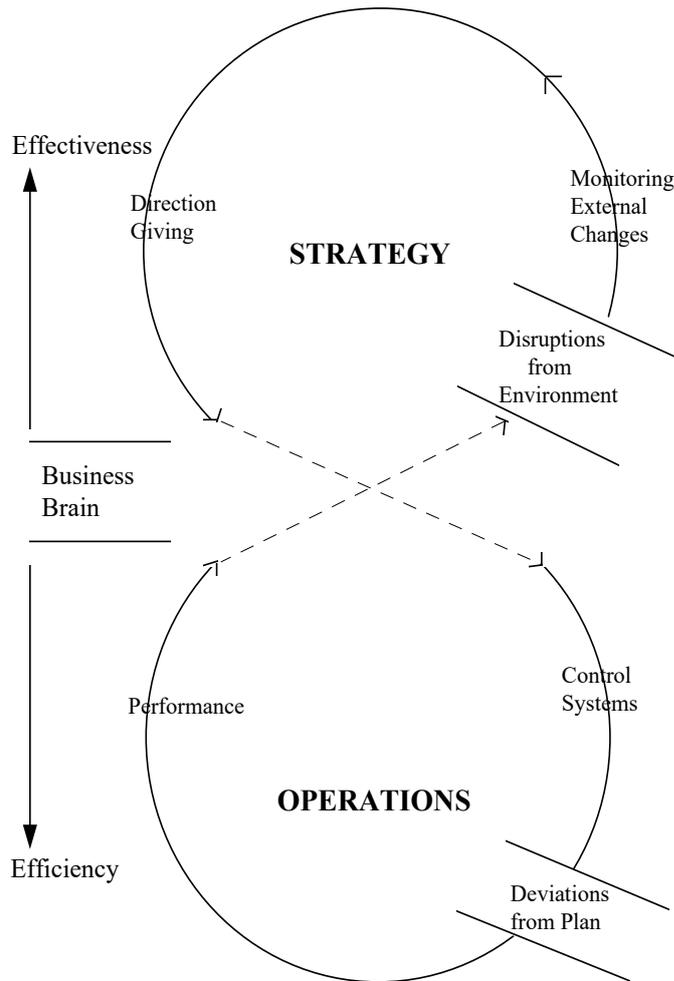


Figure 1 Garratt's 'Egg-timer'

They may achieve many new insights into the culture of the organisation when they attend a course, but these insights are not feeding back into the two separate projects, one internal, the other external, that are looking at the organisational culture.

This leads me on to the second problem. There is a myriad of strategic project groups, all of which constantly redesign aspects of the organisation, without there being either a structure for these strategy groups to dialogue and co-create the new organisation together or an over-arching vision that holds together the diversity of these endeavours.

The greatest danger lies not in the lack of integration within the operational learning or strategic learning loops, but in the lack of the 'business brain' that integrates the two cycles. Without this linkage the most likely outcome is that there will be single-loop learning within both domains.

A similar phenomenon of the strategy domain and the operational domain working effectively within themselves but in isolation from each other, was found by my colleagues Adrian McLean and Judi Marshall in their study of the Wrekin District Council (1989). Here was a local government organisation that was clearly one of the most progressive and forward looking in the country. It had a visionary chief executive, and was interested in getting close to the customer, in quality and in constant self-improvement. Yet:

A concern expressed most frequently by those in the middle of the organisation is that the Chief Executive and his team of directors form an elite that is separated from middle-level management by a sort of vacuum. The fear, in the form of speculation, is that the team may be prone to a form of 'group think'.

I have just started to explore working with a Police authority which wishes to develop itself as a learning organisation. The first step in moving forward seems to be to bring together the internal management development team and the organisational development team and to help them develop a joint understanding of their interlocking task.

So far we have questioned some of the current thinking on learning organisations in the light of Bateson's original levels of learning. Their strength is that they emphasise the important connections between personal learning and organisational transformation, without which facilitating a learning environment can become self-defeating. Now we return to Bateson's later addition which introduces the spiritual dimension and gives purpose and meaning to the lower levels of learning.

LEARNING LEVEL III. THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSION:

It was not until 1971, seven years after he originally wrote the paper, that Bateson revised his theory to include Learning Level III. This is defined by Bateson as 'Change in the process of Learning II e.g. a corrective change in the system of sets of alternatives from which choice is made'.

Learning Level III is difficult to understand, and has often been misunderstood by other writers. This is probably inevitable, for, as Bateson points out, 'Learning Level III is likely to be rare even in human beings'.

Learning Level III involves a transcendence of the ego-world, where experience is orientated to and made sense of through some rational self - 'what I call my character'. Thus it is the realm which, according to Wilber, can be talked of only in symbolic, mandalic and paradoxical language. According to Bateson, 'To the degree that a man achieves Learning III ... his self will take on a sort of irrelevance. The concept of self will no longer function as a nodal argument in the punctuation of experience'.

If, as a prerequisite to Learning II, I have developed the ability to shift the framework within which I am making choices, then a prerequisite to Learning III, must be the ability to shift the underlying premises and belief systems that form these frameworks.

Bateson's references to the transpersonal dimension of Learning III are elliptical, with references to a Zen master he once heard and the writings of the visionary mystic Blake, of whom he said: 'He knew more about what it is to be human than any other man' (in Brockman, 1977). Despite this tangential linking, the implication that Learning III involves a shift to spiritual and transpersonal realm is clearly there, for, as Bateson explains, Learning III is:

a world in which personal identity merges into all the processes of relationship in some vast ecology or aesthetics of cosmic interaction. That any of these (people) can survive seems almost miraculous, but some are perhaps saved from being swept away on oceanic feeling by their ability to focus on the minutiae of life. Every detail of the universe is seen as proposing a view of the whole.

..... certainly it must lead to a greater flexibility in the premises acquired by the process of Learning II - a freedom from their bondage ... but any freedom from bondage of habit must also denote a profound redefinition of self.

What seems to me crucial in understanding this distinction between Learning II and Learning III is that the latter occurs when the person cannot only replace one underlying framework by which he lives with another - e.g. deciding to quit being a Christian and to become a Buddhist; or to quit being an alcoholic and become an ex-alcoholic - but must also be aware that both these paradigms or world views are systems, frameworks, or spectacles through which we view the world. It is when we are able truly to let them go that we enter the domain of Learning III. The person has to let go of self-definition as an ex-Christian or as a Buddhist and embrace a sense of self which is non-definitional, in terms of either outward characteristics or frameworks of belief, for Learning III involves knowing how to fulfil the edict: 'If you meet the Buddha on the road kill him' (Kopp, 1972).

There are two ways of thinking about this Level III learning. One way is to follow the implications in Bateson that Learning Level III is a state of enlightenment, attained by only a few, such as Sufi or Zen masters, or Casternada's Don Juan. The other more useful way of viewing this level is that it provides temporary access to a higher logical level of awareness, where we have the space to become free enough of our normal perspectives and paradigm constraints to see through them rather than with them, and thus create the space to change them. By definition, it is possible to change the way one double-loop learns only if there is some temporary access to Learning Level III, for it is spiritual learning in worldly organisations, rather than Ashrams, that is the focus.

LEARNING III IN ORGANISATIONS:

Argyris has done a great deal for applying the difference between Learning I and Learning II to organisations in his single-loop and double-loop theory. This has been built on by Garratt (1987 and 1990). Argyris is constantly surprised and frustrated to find so little evidence of double-loop in organisations: yet Bateson points out that it is not possible fully to understand a level of

learning from within Learning Level II, so perhaps Argyris's limitation is to attempt to understand Learning Level II from within Learning Level II thinking.

I contend that we need some people in organisations to be concerned with and involved in Learning III before we can possibly improve Learning II functioning. An organisation needs not only its doers and operatives (Learning I); its strategists and thinkers (Learning II); but also its men and women of wisdom (Learning III), for in the words of a Sufi, 'Knowledge without wisdom is like an unlit candle'.

The other danger in sticking with double-loop learning is that, although it helps to move from efficiency thinking into effectiveness thinking, it fails to address the fundamental question: Effective for what, or to what end?

In the Garratt model represented in Figure I, the top loop of the learning process is constantly helicoptering up from the daily operational problems to see the business in its wider context and to 'looking upwards and outwards'. seeing what is happening in the external environment. It is predicated on the Revans belief, which I share, that $L = EC$ (learning must be equal to or be greater than environmental change, or the organism or organisation will die) (Revens, 1982).

This Revans law of organisational evolution is a stark challenge to ensure that organisations think 'upwards and outwards'; it also contains an indication of the dangers and limits of double-loop learning. The double-loop learning organisation is intent on staying one step ahead of the game. It is pro-active, anticipating changes in the environment rather than reacting to them. Effectiveness is about success and success is about survival.

But in this model there is no place for death. The image is of constant adaptation and growth, of more and more effectiveness. It is only by facing death that we can step out of the confines of Level II learning. To stay within the confines is ultimately to become an organisation that is egocentric and paranoid, seeing the environment as the opposition, the destructive enemy that 'disrupts' one's own equilibrium.

In western culture generally we have lost the knowing of death as the teacher that returns us to life, and have made death the enemy that we try hubristically to conquer with our imperialistic medicine and to hide from by making its presence taboo among the co-called healthy.

James Hillman (1964) reminds us that life and death are inextricably linked, for each gives birth to the other. Therefore, 'any action which resists death, hurts life' and, 'Any careful consideration of life entails reflections on death, and the confrontation with reality means facing mortality. We never come fully to grips with life until we are willing to wrestle with death'.

Khrisnamurti also tells us:

You see we fear death with we cling to life. The understanding of the whole process of living is also the understanding of the significance of dying. Death is merely the extinction of continuity and we are all afraid of not being able to continue, but what continues can never be creative. Think it out for yourself. Find out for yourself what is true.

Elsewhere he says that, ‘Only in the dying, in the coming to an end to continuity, is the renewal, is that creation which is eternal’.

Staying in double-loop learning can lead to survivor mentality, always adapting to the vagaries of market opportunities, customer demand and social change. It is only when we can face the cessation of our own organisation’s continuity, look death in the eye and transcend the false duality of life and death, that we can move from customer consciousness to evolutionary consciousness.

I am not advocating that we give up strategic thinking, or that we move into a fatalistic acceptance of ultimate organisational mortality, but rather that if somewhere within an organisation there is some treble-loop learning, then there will be a higher quality of double-loop learning.

DEVELOPING A MODEL OF TREBLE-LOOP LEARNING

My first attempt at developing a model which incorporated Level III learning was to replace Argyris’s double-loop learning and Garratt’s egg-timer, depicting my simplified notion of treble-loop learning (see Figure 2). In the former, time is running out for the organisation to adapt to the new environment. In the latter, the time is running out for the whole planet. We have to shift our focus from organisational survival to planetary survival - we have to replace *helicopter thinking* with *satellite thinking*, where we can see our own organisation in the context of planetary consciousness and follow the edict of E. F. Schumacher to ‘Think globally but act locally’.

The importance of the shift to planetary consciousness at this time in history has been well highlighted by the work of futurologists such as Peter Russell (1982) and Francis Kinsman (1990), or organisations such as Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth, and of scientists such as James Lovelock, who created the notion of Gaia consciousness in science.

Without such a shift there is a danger of creating double-loop learning organisations that are more effective against short-term economic indicators, but whose very success is disastrous for the planet. Take the cigarette manufacturers who, rather than plug away with single-loop learning of trying to sell more cigarettes in the declining markets of the West, have skilfully moved their operations into the Third World and have traded off manufacturing investment in poor third-world countries for governments’ agreement to put no prohibitions on tobacco and its advertising.

This shift into the double egg-timer is important, but I now realise that it is not Level III, it is Level II learning with a much wider focus; satellite rather than helicopter perspective. There is the danger that it is still predicated on survival at all costs - and that is still caught in the heroic and hubristic task of trying to overcome death. One day, when I was involved in soap-box green evangelism, a friend quietly said to me, ‘What makes you think that it is man’s task “to save the planet?”’. Perhaps Gaia in her wisdom needs to sweat out the virus of human beings and so heal

herself'. This made me think - it shifted my perspective and challenged my human-centric paradigm. So to shift into Level III learning we must shift not only *where* we are looking but also *how* we are looking. The 'where' must shift from self to planet, but also the 'how' must shift from 'heroicism to relationship' (Hawkins 1990)

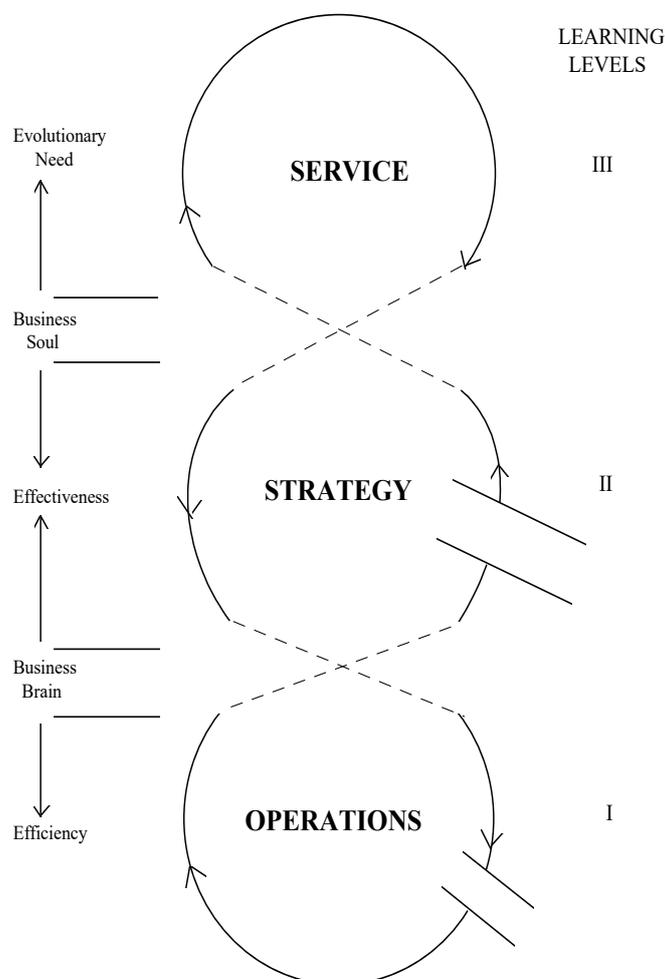


Figure 2 Treble-loop Learning

Bob Garratt suggests that as we shift from Level I to Level II thinking the question we ask changes from 'how can we be most efficient?' to 'how can we be most effective?'. If we shift from Level II to III, then the question shifts from 'what can we best achieve?' to 'how can we be best aligned to and most in service of the evolutionary need?'.

There are many guides we can turn to in this shift of levels of the personal level. I have already mentioned Blake, Hillman and Krishnamurty; some have turned to shamans (Halifax), others to the neo-Platonic gnostic tradition (Bebek), and some have turned to the mystery schools that lie semi-hidden and sometimes lost within most of the world's great religions (de Chardin, Needleman). In my own research (Hawkins, 1986) I looked not only at writers and mystics, but also spent time in spiritual communities, including Findhorn (which is represented at this Conference), in order to try and understand more about how organisations, and not just individuals, shift to Level III learning.

Bateson warns of being swept away on oceanic feelings as we enter Level III and says that those who survive are those who can return to focus on the minutiae of everyday life; those who can keep the circuit around the three loops. At Findhorn I was moved by the ability to link the divine with the everyday, in an attempt to achieve what Eileen Caddy called 'Divine Ordinarity'.

Level III thinking, as Wilber points out, cannot be described in the language of rational scientific description and definition, but requires language that is 'mandalic, symbolic and paradoxical', but which does have its own precision, discipline and rigour.

In studying high-order learning in organisations in the West, we come up against the difficulty of finding organisations that function at these higher levels. Argyris writes about the dearth of organisations that systematically practise double-loop learning (Argyris, 1982), and Torbert, in studies of the developmental stages of leaders, has found only 6% at his stage six (that of the 'Strategist') and none at his levels seven ('the magician') and eight ('the ironist'). These stages I believe correspond to the link between the two upper circles of Figure 3, level seven and level eight being someone who can reside in treble-loop learning.

Torbert does, however, tell us stories that give glimpses of how a leader in treble-loop learning would function. His stories include a life study of Pope John XXIII and some verbatim from a 'Theatre of Inquiry' group that practises shifting frames and paradigms. Both settings demonstrate what Torbert terms 'integrative awareness' and Berman calls 'reflexivity': 'Reflexivity means the ability to observe yourself in the act of adhering to a world view; an activity which, if practised enough, can lead to a reappraisal of that world view and a respect for ones that are radically different'. *We need to see through that which we see through.*

Level III cannot be contained in the upper tier of an 'egg-timer', but must be reflexive and integrative. At this stage I am not sure that a model of treble-loop learning can be drawn in two dimensions. To enter the world of Level III is to step outside the normal dimensions that contain and restrain our perspectives. To quote Blake:

To see a World in a Grain of Sand,
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand,
And Eternity in an hour.

Please note that both 'World' and 'Heaven' are written beginning with capital letters, but both are prefixed with the indefinite 'a', rather than the singular, blinkered and monotheistic 'the', for in Level III there is no fixity and all is relative.

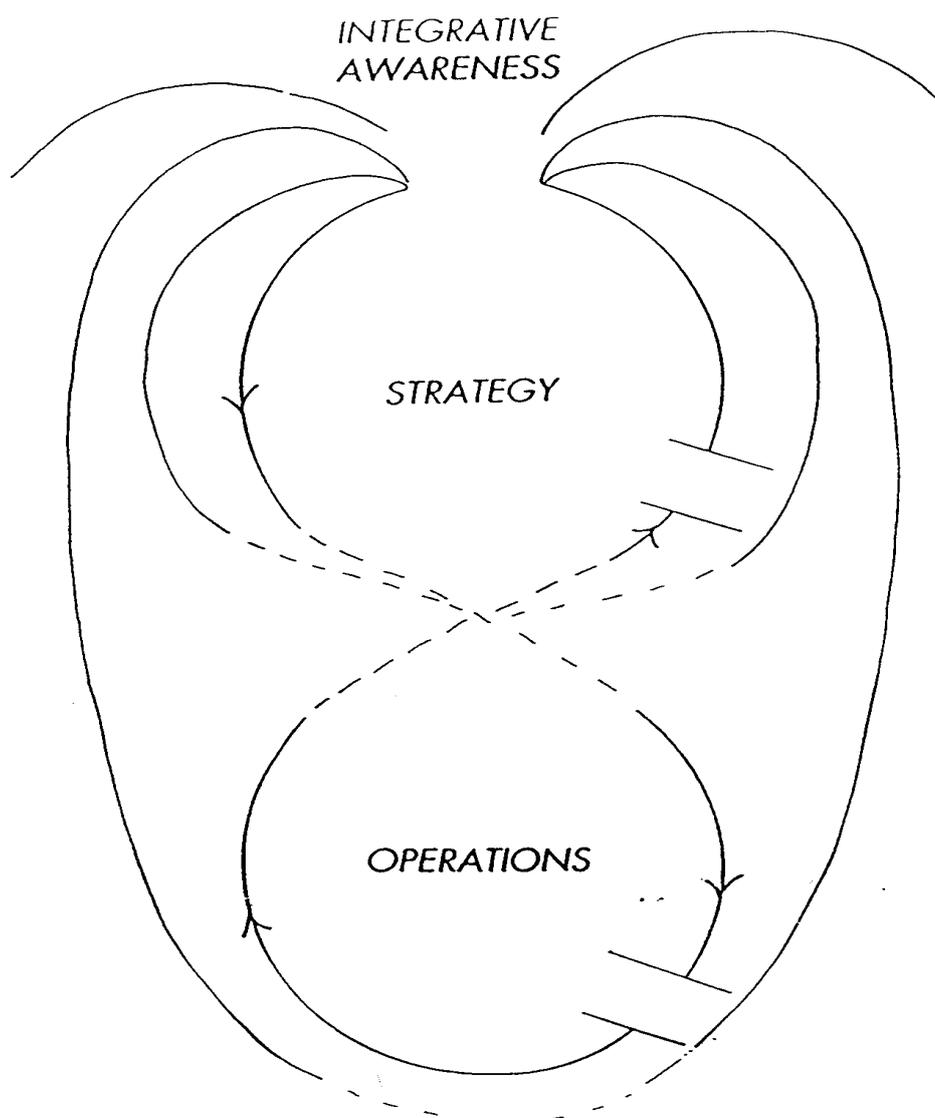


Figure 3. Developmental stages of Learning

THE RETURN TO AN EARTH

So how does this help us working with organisations?

I showed earlier how Garratt's model of double-loop learning helps highlight the different training needs of Strategist and Operatives and the crucial role of those who translate between the two realms. The treble-loop learning model suggests we also have to think about the training needs of those at the translation point between strategy and integrative awareness - the men and women of wisdom an organisation needs on its board, among its trustees and facilitating its

learning environment. For it is not necessary or desirable for a whole organisation, or a large percentage of its members, to be engaged in Level III learning. What I am arguing for is the necessity of this level of learning being available to some key members of an organisation, who can 'act like the salt in the soup', to draw out the awareness of the deeper purpose which contains and informs the strategic thinking and the operational realities.

In Bath Consultancy Group, through whom I do my consulting, one of the main areas where we have applied learning organisation approaches is that of facilitating change in organisational culture. Many of the companies we have worked with had jumped on the 'excellence bandwagon' and had tried to keep up to date by changing their culture. They had invested in new logos, published glossy mission statements and had their leaders make fervent exhortations to the workers about quality, customer care and new attitudes.

On some occasions we have been invited in when the senior management were wondering why this approach had not produced the hoped-for change in performance and instead had produced growing amounts of cynicism and suspicion among the work-force, with glossy mission statements ending up in the waste bin.

The approach we have used to help them reflect on and learn from this experience has been to show how their culture change was at the level of replacing the high-profile symbols of the culture, the cultural artefacts, rituals and ceremony, whilst leaving the low-profile symbols of everyday lived behaviour untouched. This inevitably widens the rift between the rhetoric and the reality, and creates the breeding ground for cynicism.

These two levels correspond with Zero Learning and Learning Level I, for in changing the outward face of the culture there is no real learning. Real learning only begins when the leaders of the company change not what they preach but what they do, when, in Argyris's terms, there is a change not just in the 'espoused theory', but in the 'theory in action'.

In running culture change workshops, we found that even when senior managers made real commitments to a shift in the organisational culture, and also in their own behaviour - in how they carried the culture - some of the changes were short-lived. For a while managers would be managing by walking about, rewarding positive behaviours, speaking with images and vision and not just facts; but soon the old culture would begin to reassert itself, despite good intentions.

We discovered that it was important that culture change worked at Learning Level II, where it helped those in the organisation to change their personal and collective 'mind sets'; to step outside of what they took for granted and see their organisation with fresh eyes. The cultural mind sets comprise the collective assumptions, belief systems and ways of viewing reality which are endemic in the organisation. An old Chinese proverb points out that 'the last person to know about the sea is the fish'.

This has required us to develop a new range of learning methodologies (George, Hawkins and McLean, 1988) to help those in organisations to become flying fish, to step outside their taken-for-granted ways of viewing reality and see their organisations with new eyes. By so doing they discover spectacles they were previously using.

For many organisations this level of learning is sufficient to meet the required change or transformation. Its limitation, however, is that it will tend to replace one group of mind-sets with a fresh collection that, in the fast-changing world in which we live, will soon need changing again. The phenomenon of built-in obsolescence of mind-sets may keep the organisational consultant in business but does not create sustainable development.

What is increasingly needed is to help organisational members, and particularly those in leadership positions, to learn how to double-loop learn for themselves; how to be paradigm-shifters. The space in which we can learn how to be paradigm-shifters only comes when we can transcend dualistic thinking - the survival preoccupation and the search for new Truth - that is inherent in Learning Level II, and experience the relativity and temporariness of all mind-sets. To do this is to enter Learning Level III.

The cultural equivalent of Learning Level III, I originally called 'heart sets' but this I believe gives an impression of fixity at a level where there is continuous process and flow. Instead, I have adopted Torbert's term of integrative awareness and called this level 'Integrative awareness of the heart'. Here, awareness is not by understanding with the head but is noetic knowing of the heart, and involves a shift from what Skolomiski terms the 'yoga of objectivity' to the 'yoga of participation'.

A BRIEF ORGANISATIONAL VIGNETTE

I would like to explore this shifting of levels with a brief look at a large children's charity, a religious caring organisation with large children's homes throughout the country.

The organisation is like several similar charities that were founded in the nineteenth century with religious inspiration and affiliations. Until the last 20 years its culture had remained fairly constant. Staff often joined the organisation for life, were rarely professionally trained, but often worked from a personal vocation and inner belief.

In the last 20 years the organisation has been faced with the challenge of double-loop learning, as, no matter how good were their children's homes, the economics of running large establishments, plus a radical change in thinking about child care, meant that the bottom fell out of the residential child-care market.

The organisation has had to shift its whole centre of operation, developing services such as adoption and fostering, juvenile justice, family centres, intermediate treatment centres, and many others.

New staff with new attitudes, new relationships with clients, and new partnerships with communities and local authorities, have meant that the organisational structure and culture has had to change radically.

The organisation has had to move fast on many fronts. But there is no let up, for more radical changes now loom on the horizon - new legislation on child care and a whole new approach to social work growing out of the Government's Griffiths report.

Like many other voluntary organisations that I have worked for, there are inherent dangers in becoming effective at strategically adapting to the fast-changing social and political

environment. There is the danger that the organisation regresses to an opportunistic phase of development, chasing new work opportunities in the market economy of competitive tendering that is being created by the 'thatcher revolution', even in the field of social care. This can easily lead to undercutting other fellow charities; offering subsidised services; and evaluating its work on the basis of quantitative measures of through-put, rather than quality of care.

Under this influence such charities could become entrepreneurial businesses in which children are merely the raw material. I have already noted the development of what I term the 'Yosser Hughes' style of marketing to local authorities - 'I can do that. Gi's a job'. (Hawkins 1990)

The original importance of such organisations was not only in the children they removed from the streets, but also in their example, which set a new tone of concern and care for the children who had been the factory fodder of the Industrial Revolution and the sufferers of the newly urbanised societies. Their foundation had been in service to a vocation. The early workers had harmonised themselves to their calling, and thereby sounded a new note that reverberated and resonated beyond their organisational boundaries.

For such an organisation now to enter the level of Learning III is for it to face the reality that the song has died and strategic survival through adaptation to environmental changes is not good enough. A new calling must be listened for; a new note sounded. To do this, space must be created, a silence found in the noise of the strategic rush for change. One question that might help create this space asks: 'What loss would there be to the world if the organisation died?'

To face the question 'should we still exist?' needs time to work through the bereavement cycle of denial, anger, grief, bargaining and finally acceptance (Kubler-Ross). Often there also has to be a time of chaos, loss and despair. The time between Good Friday and Easter Sunday; the time of waiting in the upper room; the time of doubt, uncertainty and unknowing. James Hillman points out that Christians cannot bear Good Friday without already having Easter Sunday present.

Death precedes birth, and the new birth comes from prayer, attunement, listening and waiting. The questions move from efficiency (Level I) and effectiveness (Level II) to asking wherein lies our service? (Level III).

As consultant to the organisation, my main task will be to use the approaches mentioned above to engage the senior managers in Level II thinking about how they shift not only the artefacts of their culture, but also their own behaviour and their own mind sets. However, if the work is to avoid being caught by survival thinking, which will constantly pull the strategic thinking towards opportunism and becoming over-adaptive, then I must keep part of my awareness in Level III. I must try and keep some detachment from the focus on the 'How' of changing and also focus on the 'Why'.

This entails being clear about the difference between ends and means. Surviving as an organisation, or even making a profit, can both be appropriate and necessary means, but they should not become ends in themselves. In the work with this children's charity, it is necessary to give time to explore not only the change in operations, the change in strategy and the change in behaviour and mind sets, but also the change in purpose and core values. To do this is to question the fundamental identity of the organisation and will inevitably create anxiety. The task of the consultant is to support the organisation to live with this anxiety long enough for a shift to take place at the deepest level of the organisation's culture.

I am not suggesting that it is either possible or desirable that an organisation is constantly examining whether or not it should exist, or that an organisation itself can be said to be truly engaged in Level III learning. I am proposing that good quality Level II learning in an organisation is facilitated when the consultant and/or some people in the organisation are open to the challenges of Learning Level III, for, as Skolimowski writes, 'let no one underestimate the power of philosophies, they are the real rulers. They are responsible for our myopias and distortions'.

My philosophy is the walls, with which I have created my prison; it is the darkness with which I have enmeshed myself. It is ultimately self-defeating to learn more from within the prison. I must give time to learn about my prison-creating process.

'In the plenitude of God's universe why have I chosen to fall asleep in this small dark prison.' To become free, I must first wake up and discover the walls that imprison me.

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