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The Learning Cultures of Organisations

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
In Human Resource Management

At Massey University
Palmerston North, New Zealand

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2003

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Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa
Inception to Infinity: Massey University's commitment to learning as a life-long journey

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(a) is the original work of the candidate, except as indicated by appropriate attribution in the text and/or in the acknowledgements;

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Abstract

While there is significant interest in the area of learning organisations, research in this field has been fragmented. There is a need for an holistic model of learning organisations and a measurement system that can be used by both researchers and practitioners. This thesis applies Dilemma Theory as a means of meeting this need.

An holistic model was developed based on a definition of learning organisations as ones that consciously seek to balance capacities with demands. In seeking this balance, an organisation will undertake a learning journey in which it encounters a variety of learning dilemmas: points where it must choose between alternative approaches to learning, each of which is attractive. In making these choices, learning-related values are established in the organisation. These values are the basis for a "learning culture" which shapes the way learning is understood and approached by the organisational community.

Presenting people within an organisation with learning-related dilemmas allows learning cultures to be charted, thus providing the basis for a measurement system. Fifteen learning-related dilemmas were identified using three processes. Firstly, literature on learning organisations was reviewed to identify conflicts between metaphors used to explain the learning organisation. Secondly, a group of New Zealand consultants took part in a Delphi Technique process, in which they established criteria for identifying learning organisations and surfaced dilemmas embedded in the criteria. Finally, 'Culture Exploration Workshops' were conducted in three organisations to surface dilemmas experienced by business practitioners engaged in learning journeys.

The 15 dilemmas identified were used to chart differences between 5 organisations. The measurement system was successful in identifying differences between organisations. Results were also consistent with values that might be expected from sub-cultures represented in the sample.

The study concluded by outlining a programme of research aimed at refining the measurement system and applying it to the study of learning organisations.

Chapter 1: The Journey Begins

When I finished my Masters degree in 1985 I swore I would never write another thesis. This is it.

My Masters thesis had been on the topic of Organisational Culture, a subject in which I lost interest for a time, only to have it re-awakened when I became familiar with the 'Dilemma Theory' work of Charles Hampden-Turner. Dilemma Theory—based on an understanding of cultures as patterns of dilemma resolution within communities—seemed to me to address the very fundamentals of culture. It also gave me an added insight into another area that had begun to interest me deeply: organisational learning.

Both topics have grown out of people's desire to understand more fully the nature of organisations. It was clear to many people studying organisations that early work on scientific management that used 'the numbers' didn't tell the full story of organisational effectiveness (Kleiner, 1996). These topics are approaches that aim to liberate managers and researchers from paradigms that limit their ability to bring about the changes they want (Trice and Beyer, 1993).

Peter Senge and Arie de Geus' work on the Learning Organisation seemed to capture much of what I found fascinating about organisations. Yet it was also apparent to me that what Hampden-Turner had brought to the study of culture was missing from work on Learning Organisations. That is, while Dilemma Theory provided a way of describing the fundamentals of culture, there was still no clear way of explaining the fundamentals of what constitutes a Learning Organisation.

I became aware of this over several years. Early on in my work in this area, I was uncomfortable with the term 'learning organisation' preferring instead to talk of 'organisational learning.' Yet, people with only a vague knowledge of the area would speak of their companies as learning organisations. Writers have stressed that a characteristic of Learning Organisations is that they combine 'know how' with 'know why,' and yet I did not know why I should refer or not refer to companies as learning organisations.

Then, more recently, I was involved in a discussion with a colleague who referred to an organisation with which we were both familiar as a learning organisation. From my knowledge of the company I was shocked he would consider it a learning organisation; it seemed to me the antithesis of what I understood such organisations to be.

I pressed him for reasons why he thought it was a learning organisation. From his reading of Senge's (1990) book *The Fifth Discipline* he had reached the conclusion that a learning organisation was one that changed faster than its environment. Senge had quoted Arie de Geus as saying:

> "The ability to learn faster than your competitors may be the only sustainable competitive advantage." (Senge, 1990, pg 4)

The reasoning we were disputing appeared to be this: my colleague contended that (1) learning enables companies to change, (2) a learning organisation was one that changed faster than its competitors, (3) the company in question had in the last few years undergone virtually continuous change in a way its competitors had not matched, therefore (4) the company was a learning organisation.

My problem with this reasoning was the link between learning and change. It seemed an obvious logical error. Change can presumably be brought about in ways other than through learning. A theme running through the literature on learning organisations is that many organisations attempt to bring about change of some kind *without* learning. Indeed, many organisations are embarking on one change after another because they failed to learn from their earlier experiences.

Naturally, I wanted my colleague see the error of his ways. It struck me as we were discussing what truly constituted a learning organisation that we were formulating the kind of model of a learning organisation, based on fundamental principles of how complex systems operate, that I had been missing. It also became apparent that cultural issues were at the heart of why we need learning organisations. It seemed this would be a topic that was suitably important and challenging to allow me to renege on my "I'll-never-do-another-thesis' oath.

Another factor contributing to my interest in the area was the similarity to another piece of research with which I had been connected. People have all manner of definitions of learning organisations; British writer Alan Mumford established the rule of thumb that there are more definitions of learning organisations than there are learning organisations.

This sounded very much like the situation found by Peter Blyde (1998) in his research into leadership. It became apparent in his research that while everyone believes they know what leadership is, people struggle when asked to define the term. The literature on the subject is full of contradictory definitions and conceptualisations, and the business public reflect this confusion.

Confusion as to the nature of leadership has important implications for people working in the area: for executives seeking to build leadership capacity; for leadership development practitioners running programmes; for course participants seeking to develop their personal leadership capacities. Confusion as to the nature of leadership will limit the ability of these people to work together.

Similarly, confusion as to the nature of learning organisations limits the capacity of those working in the field to achieve what is important to them. Business practitioners are unable to assess whether they really want to become a 'learning organisation'. Consultants and academics are unable to effectively communicate with one another about what they should be doing to build 'learning organisations'. So fundamental to this thesis are the questions:

What perceptions do people in New Zealand organisations have regarding the nature of learning organisations?

How can these perceptions be synthesised?

My first awareness of a link between learning organisations and culture stemmed from a dilemma I encountered as an undergraduate student. While completing my degree I studied within two Faculties: Business and Psychology. I regularly encountered topics that were common to both Faculties, yet I was far more comfortable with the way they were handled in Business. When struggling to define the difference to classmates in Psychology it became apparent to me that Business had a 'performance orientation' that was lacking in the behavioural sciences. 'Performance' always seemed to me to be a defining theme in business.

It came as a 'culture shock,' then, when reading Robert Fritz's (1989) book *The Path of Least Resistance* I found that he wrote disparagingly of people with a performance orientation and did so in a way that was reasonable and compelling. Fritz made the point that people with a performance orientation are often unwilling to learn, because it involves moving away from what they can already perform proficiently to try something that feels awkward.

Later, when studying Organisational Culture, it became apparent that those values that define the culture of a particular community are the greatest danger to the community when taken to an extreme. This raised further questions worthy of investigation:

Is the culture of New Zealand organisational life characterised by the over-valuing of performance?

Does the value placed on performance within the New Zealand business community undermine learning?

Questions such as these seemed important enough to embark on the thesis. As the thesis progressed it became apparent that the Performance versus Learning dilemma was one of several dilemmas that are important in the synthesis of diverse views on learning organisations. Dilemma Theory itself became more important than this particular dilemma, especially because of its potential for enabling learning efforts to be measured.

Throughout the research, my exploration of issues generated new questions and research challenges. It seemed appropriate that research into learning organisations should follow an 'emergent learning process' (Darling & Parry, 1999). The purpose or focus of the research changed according to the conclusions I was reaching along the way and the needs that were becoming apparent as I explored the field.

As part of this exploration I encountered the work of authors who articulated the needs that were becoming apparent to me, and helped me to reformulate the research questions that I was aiming to answer. The work of Lahteenmaki, Toivonen & Mattila (2001) was especially useful in helping me express the need I saw, even though I became aware of their work very late in the research process. They discussed their concerns with the field of organisational learning:

- Conceptual work was needed to develop an holistic model of organisational learning, capable of synthesising a fragmented field of inquiry, and

- There is currently a critical need for organisational learning measures that can act as a basis for empirical study of the field.

Lahteenmaki et al. (2001) supported my view that the field of organisational learning was what Russell Ackoff might call ‘a mess’. It was made up of a complex array of concepts that were all inter-related—all had to do with Learning Organisations—but which appeared disjointed and confusing because the literature and practice surrounding the concepts was fragmented.

In this situation—what we might call ‘a conceptual mess’—we do not need another concept about learning organisations. Putting forward one more disconnected concept would simply add to the mess. What is needed is a ‘meta-concept’: a concept about concepts. Dilemma Theory is such a meta-concept, and has the further advantage of providing a means of charting, or measuring the thinking patterns of a community. As a meta-concept, Dilemma Theory provides a method for meeting the needs expressed by Lahteenmaki et al. (2001) and others.

In this way the research questions finally emerged in the form shown in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Research Questions

Can We:

Generate an holistic model of what a Learning Organisation is and how it develops?

Develop a measurement system that can act as a basis for empirical research into Learning Organisations?

1.1 Idiosyncrasies of the Research

Some aspects of the research may appear unusual, resulting from the idiosyncratic approach I have taken. In particular, the style of writing, use of systems thinking, and the structure of the thesis may be non-standard.

One thing that has had prevented me from doing a Ph.D. in the past was how I assumed I would need to write the thesis. I assumed that I would need to adopt a style and tone I felt was artificial. I have, over time, developed a desire to write in a clear and accessible way. This suits both the dynamics of my personality, and what I have learned in the Training and Development profession. I enjoy writing to explain: using a conversational style and story-telling so that readers understand difficult concepts. Recent work in these areas has highlighted that these have a central place in the study of the learning organisation (Brown & Isaacs, 1996) which I feel has given me licence to write how I enjoy writing.

A second idiosyncrasy has to do with where I hope the research will make a contribution. As discussed, the research aims to synthesise work that is largely fragmented. The question arises—who do I hope to benefit from this synthesis? While much of the fragmentation involves the diverse views of academics and researchers, my primary concern is not with them. I suspect that the structure of academia encourages fragmentation. If this is so, many academics will not value synthesis even if it was readily available. When, toward the end of the research, I was questioned about this matter, it became apparent to me that I have always sought to make difficult concepts accessible to people who need to use them. In this instance, I hope that an holistic model and system for measurement will reduce the confusion of practitioners—people working to create actual learning organisations—and encourage them to explore what they might otherwise avoid.

A final idiosyncrasy involves one of the central themes, or 'disciplines,' of the learning organisation: systems thinking. According to Senge (1990) systems thinking is a discipline for understanding complex problems. A 'system' is a collection of parts which interact with each other to function as a whole (Kauffman, 1980). Without understanding the interrelationships within a system, actions designed to achieve one result can bring about consequences opposite to those that were intended.

Making this shift to a systems perspective enables people to see their own role in the problems they face. Anderson and Johnson (1997) have explained how systems thinking enables people to work with greater leverage by shifting perspective from 'events' to 'structure.' Seeing only a disjointed effect and attributing the effect to a particular cause, is sometimes referred to as an 'event-focus.' With this perspective focus is naturally limited to the present and action is limited to reacting.

Over time people may discern that there is a pattern to some of the events they have witnessed. By tracking trends, organisations are able to predict what future events are likely to arise, and to adapt in advance.

Organisations become more fully proactive when they start to investigate the structure behind the patterns affecting them. 'Structure' refers to anything shaping the flow of energy (Fritz, 1989). Systems thinking is a discipline for identifying structural elements, allowing people to create the changes they want, altering the patterns that affect them rather than simply reacting to events around them. A graphic technique for representing the systemic structure of situations is the use of Causal Loop Diagrams (Richardson, 1991; Ramsey, 1999).

The nature of this thesis lends itself to the use of systems thinking and Causal Loop Diagrams (CLDs). This is so for several reasons. Firstly, systems thinking is directly related to a principal element of the study, representing one of the five disciplines Senge (1990) associates with learning organisations.

Secondly, the topic lends itself to an approach that Senge (1990) refers to as understanding the 'dynamic' complexity, as opposed to 'detail' complexity, of problems or situations. Senge makes the distinction to differentiate between two approaches to dealing with complexity. Investigators who focus on detail seek to identify as many of the variables contributing to a problem as possible, and make fine distinctions to generate a more detailed analysis of variables. A focus on dynamic complexity involves giving greater emphasis to the relationship between variables, which often involves identifying variables that represent broad categories (Richmond, 1997). For this research, uncovering the dynamics of culture provides greater fascination for the investigator and insight for the reader than does examining the fine detail. Like an impressionist painting, the detail of a particular brushstroke is less meaningful than the view from a distance.

Thirdly, the discipline of systems thinking recognises archetypal patterns of interrelationships (Kim & Lannon, 1997) that can occur in widely different complex systems. If this research establishes that there is a pattern of unconscious assumptions shared across New Zealand organisations, it is likely that we would see patterns repeated across industries and in different parts of organisations.

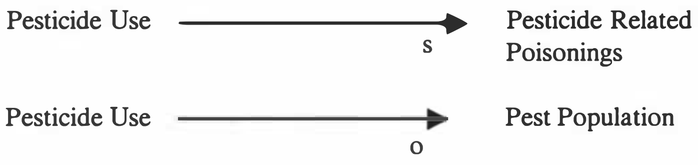
1.2 Reading Causal Loop Diagrams

There are a number of variations in labelling Causal Loop Diagrams (CLDs). The CLDs used throughout this thesis follows the diagramming conventions used in the journal *The Systems Thinker*. This section describes these conventions and how to read CLDs.

A causal link between two variables is represented by an arrow. An arrow with an 's' at its head represents a causal link where a change in one variable causes a change in the other variable in the same direction.

The first pair of variables in Figure 1.1 show such a relationship: a change in pesticide use causes the number of pesticide related poisonings to change in the same direction: more pesticide use leads to more poisonings, while less pesticide use leads to fewer poisonings.

Figure 1.1 Causal Change

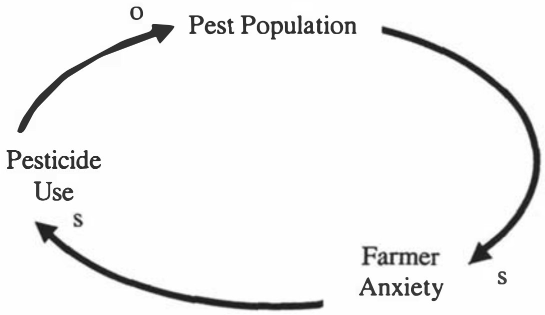


The change in one variable that causes a change in another variable in the opposite direction is represented by an arrow with an 'o' at the arrowhead. The second pair of variables in Figure 1.1 shows this kind of relationship: an increase in pesticide use causes a decrease in the pest population.

Systems thinking assumes that the complexity we see about us is governed by the interaction of two causal processes. Balancing processes are those that bring about stability or balance over time. Reinforcing processes are those that lead to change that feeds itself.

Figure 1.2 shows a balancing process. Because the causal relationships form a loop the explanation of the process can start with any variable. For this example, we will explain the CLD beginning with the 'Pest Population' variable. As the pest population grows there is a corresponding increase in the anxiety of farmers.

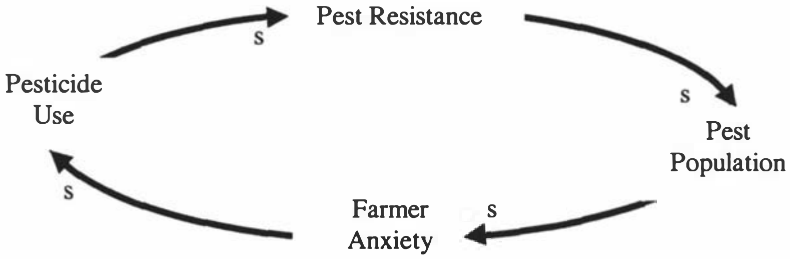
Figure 1.2 A Balancing Process



As anxiety grows, farmers are more likely to use pesticide, so pesticide use grows. Increased pesticide use decreases the size of the pest population. As this falls, farmers' anxiety falls.

Figure 1.3 shows an example of a reinforcing process. Some pests are resistant to pesticides, and are therefore some of the few pests to survive pesticide use. Because the resistant pests are the ones that remain to breed, the next generation has an increased level of resistance. So, increased use of pesticide leads to an increased level of resistance in the population. Increased resistance allows the pest population to grow. This growth leads to greater farmer anxiety and, in turn, to more pesticide use. This has the effect of further building the resistance within the pest population.

Figure 1.3 A Reinforcing Process



CLDs allow these two types of process to be shown together, as they are in Figure 1.4. Because the loops from Figures 1.2 and 1.3 contained several variables in common, these do not need to be shown twice in the composite CLD. Both loops are represented in the one diagram. Another feature shown in 1.4 is the use of a 'delay.' Delays are important elements of systemic structure, shaping the way the system operates.

Figure 1.4 A Fix That Fails

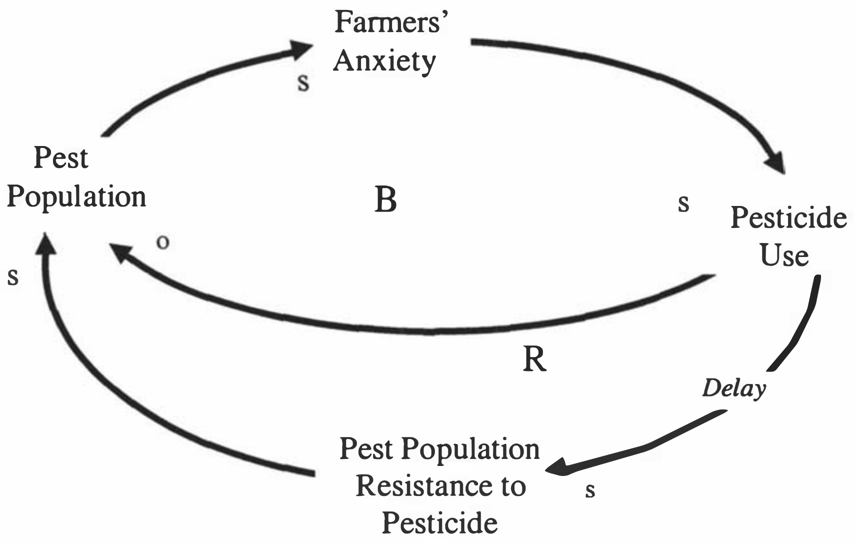


Figure 1.4 reads as follows: a rising pest population causes farmer anxiety, leading to increased pesticide use. The *immediate* effect is to reduce the pest population, making farmers feel less anxious. The increased pesticide use has a *delayed* effect of building resistance within the pest population, so that over time the pest population grows again. This structure shows how pesticide use may make the farmers' situation better before worse. As we will see throughout the thesis, systemic structures often result in situations where problems become better before worse, and worse before better. This combination of balancing and reinforcing loops is appropriately known as a "Fix that Fails"

Throughout the thesis CLDs are used to explore the systemic structure of a variety of issues related to the learning organisation and to the culture of business. Presenting the systemic structure of complex situations as CLDs makes mental models visual, and consequently allows us to more effectively examine how to act with high leverage when confronted with complexity. Leverage refers to the ability to act within a system in a way that brings the greatest effect from the least effort (Senge, 1990).

1.3 Structure of the Thesis

As discussed earlier, the research developed as an emergent process. The thesis evolved into a series of research activities designed to answer the research questions. It is structured so as to present this series of activities as a coherent and progressive account of the research as a whole. In the main, the chapters represent the order in which research activities occurred.

The research questions presented in Table 1.1 are progressive in nature. The first question involves the development of an holistic model. Doing this enables the second question to be addressed: whether an instrument useful for empirical research can be developed. The structure for the thesis involves the progression from development of a model to development of the instrument, as shown in Figure 1.5.

Figure 1.5 Structure of Research Activities

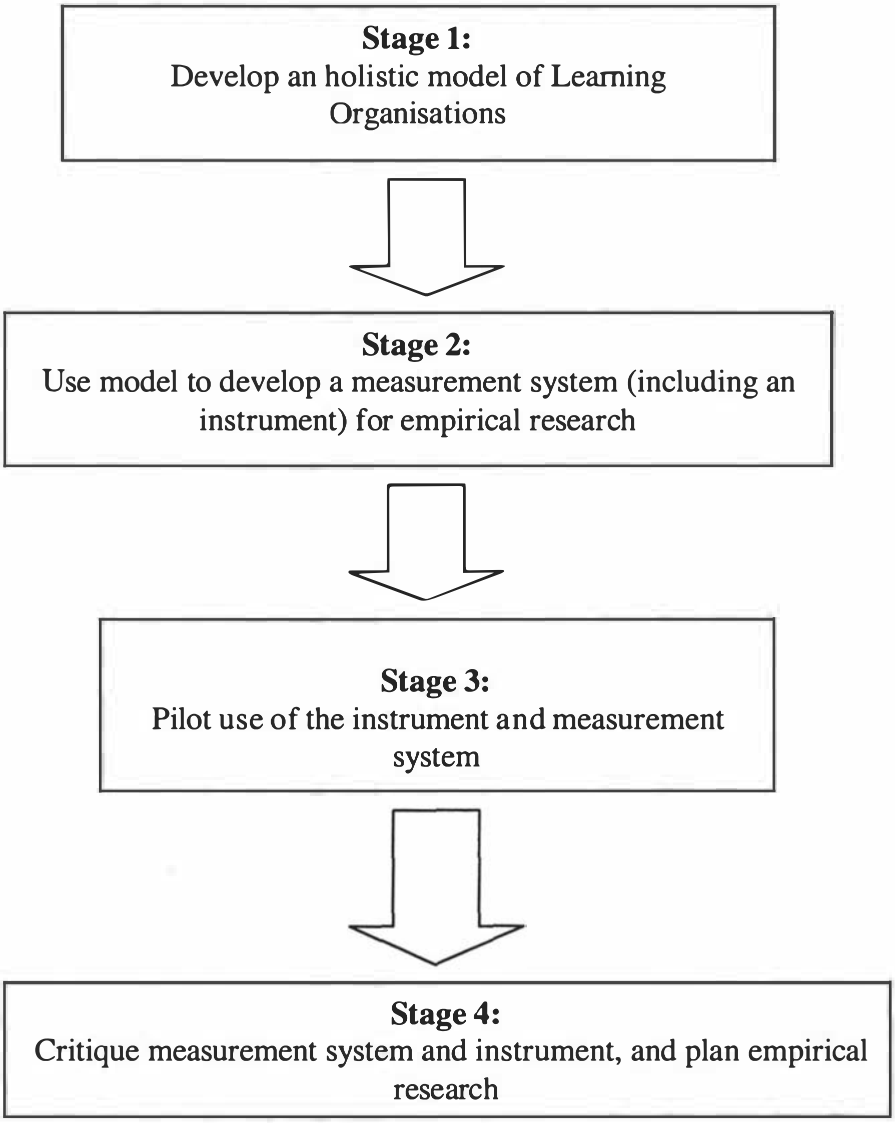
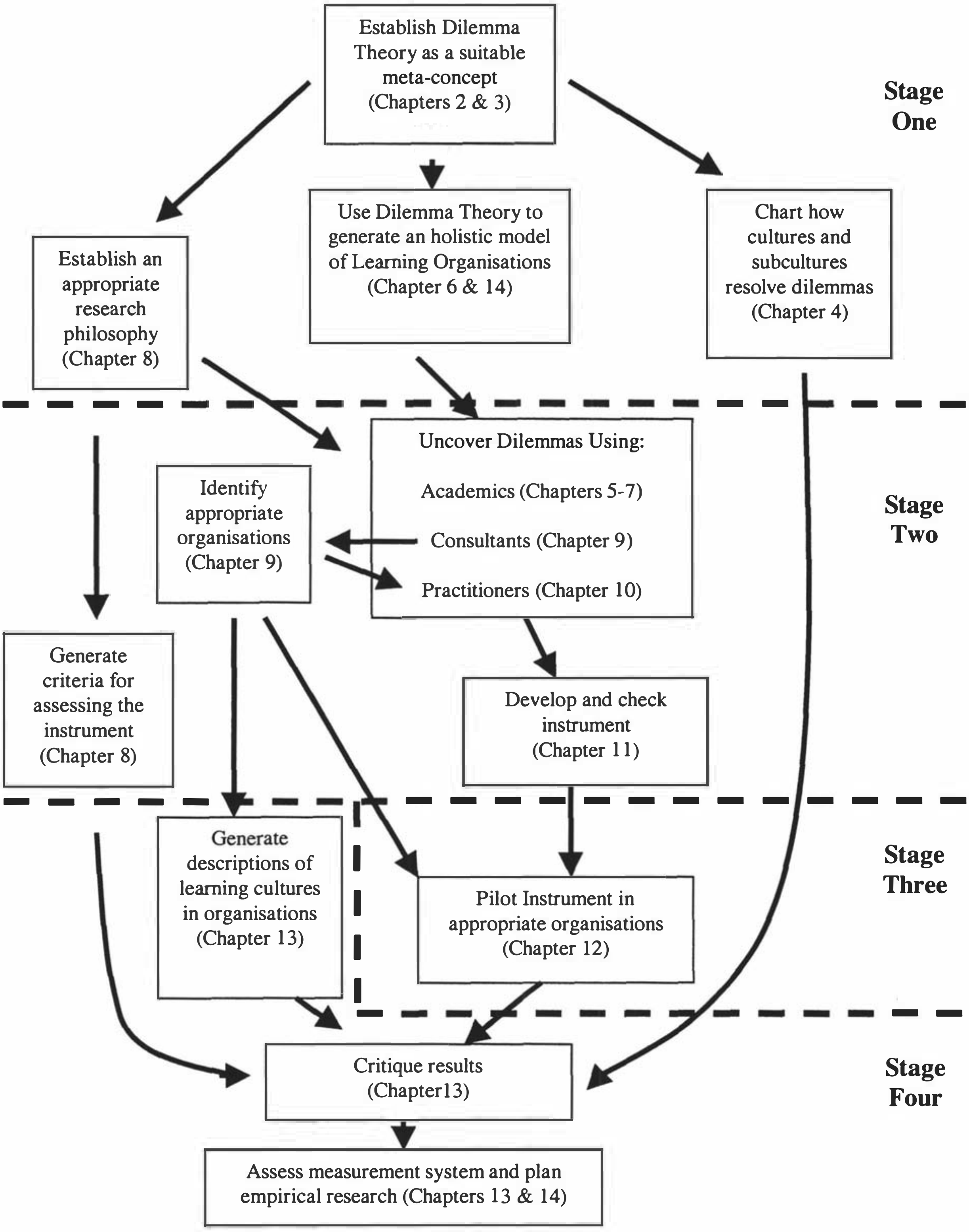

Stage 1:
Develop an holistic model of Learning Organisations
Stage 2:
Use model to develop a measurement system (including an instrument) for empirical research
Stage 3:
Pilot use of the instrument and measurement system
Stage 4:
Critique measurement system and instrument, and plan empirical research

Figure 1.6 shows in greater detailed what is involved in the four stages, and the place of each chapter in the thesis.

Figure 1.6 Expanded Plan of Thesis Structure


Establish Dilemma Theory as a suitable meta-concept (Chapters 2 & 3)
Stage One
Establish an appropriate research philosophy (Chapter 8)
Use Dilemma Theory to generate an holistic model of Learning Organisations (Chapter 6 & 14)
Chart how cultures and subcultures resolve dilemmas (Chapter 4)
Uncover Dilemmas Using:
Academics (Chapters 5-7)
Consultants (Chapter 9)
Practitioners (Chapter 10)
Identify appropriate organisations (Chapter 9)
Stage Two
Generate criteria for assessing the instrument (Chapter 8)
Develop and check instrument (Chapter 11)
Generate descriptions of learning cultures in organisations (Chapter 13)
Pilot Instrument in appropriate organisations (Chapter 12)
Stage Three
Critique results (Chapter13)
Stage Four
Assess measurement system and plan empirical research (Chapters 13 & 14)

The four stages of the research involve the following:

Stage 1: Developing an Holistic Model of Learning Organisations. This stage required a review of literature related to culture (Chapter 2), Dilemma Theory (Chapter 3) and the diverse range of perspectives around the meaning of the term 'Learning Organisation' (Chapter 5). In Chapter 6 Dilemma Theory techniques are used to generate a provisional definition of Learning Organisations based on the literature review. A final discussion of the holistic model is provided in Chapter 14.

Stage 2: Use Model to develop a Measurement System (including Instrument) for Empirical Research. For Dilemma Theory to be applied to Learning Organisations, dilemmas involved in learning and the development of learning cultures need to be identified. The research programme sought to identify dilemmas from three groups making up the community of people interested in Learning Organisations: academics, consultants and practitioners. Dilemmas apparent to academics were surfaced through the literature review (Chapters 5, 6 and 7). Identifying the dilemmas apparent to consultants (Chapter 9) and business practitioners (Chapter 10) required that more active research processes were undertaken, hence there was a need for me to outline my research philosophy (Chapter 8). A secondary use of the research process involving consultants was to identify New Zealand organisations suitable for inclusion in the study. Once dilemmas were surfaced the dilemma-based instrument could be constructed and given some initial testing (Chapter 11).

Stage 3: Pilot the Instrument and Measurement System. The dilemma-based instrument was used to survey a group of organisations, and the results for the organisations summarised (Chapter 12).

Stage 4: Critique the Measurement System and Instrument and Plan Empirical Research. In order to assess the value of the instrument and to identify where improvement could be made, the results were critiqued in a variety of ways. Firstly, how well they aligned with what was known about the characteristics of sub-cultures as discussed in the literature review (Chapter 4). Secondly, the degree to which they aligned with data from interviews with executives from the organisations (Chapter 13). Thirdly, how well they enabled descriptions to be made of organisational learning cultures (Chapter 13). Fourthly, respondents comments were examined to identify errors in the validity of items (Chapter 13). Criteria relevant to the measurement of Learning Organisations (first outlined in Chapter 8) were used to give a summary evaluation of the instrument (Chapter 14). Improvements to the instrument are suggested, and a programme of further validation outlined (Chapter 15).

In the next chapter we begin with a review of the concept of organisational culture. Culture is a concept that features prominently throughout the thesis, and Chapter 2 provides a launching point for our consideration of how Dilemma Theory relates to the study of Learning Organisations.

Chapter 2: Culture

Imagine you are visiting an organisation with which you have regular contact and on arrival you find you have no small change for the parking meter. Will the person you are dealing with in the organisation consider it appropriate to pay for your parking?

The answer is—it depends. In particular, it depends on the organisation you are visiting. You will probably be treated differently by your local bank, the supermarket, the Inland Revenue Department, and your lawyer. Interest in organisational culture arises from the desire to understand such differences.

Bower (1966) captured the essence of culture with the phrase "the way we do things around here." This is a definition that is broad enough to represent the body of work that has developed around the concept, easily accessible to people interested in organisational issues and representative of the spirit of the subject. As such, it has been able to act as a reference point for people writing in the area.

In this chapter we will examine the background to the concept of culture including its roots in anthropology, and how culture within organisations has been conceptualised in managerial literature. As we will see, there are important differences between anthropological and managerial perspectives on culture. By exploring these differences we will have a basis for addressing cultural issues relating to learning organisations in a way that does justice to the vision people working in this area have for their discipline and for their companies.

2.1 Vernacular Culture

In his book *The Age of Heretics*, Art Kleiner (1996) traces the historical roots of interest in the 'soft,' or human side of organisations. He noted the rise of the modern corporation from the 1800s and the change corporations made to what had been a 'vernacular' way of doing business. The term 'vernacular' refers to that which is homegrown. Kleiner explains that prior to the rise of corporations, commerce was carried out within a vernacular culture. Commerce was integrated within local communities. Transactions were carried out between families rather than between individuals. People who were unscrupulous in their business dealings were doing so to the detriment of their neighbours, so that they were putting at risk their own standing within the community.

While I was growing up in a small town in New Zealand, many of the local businesses were still largely vernacular. The local men's clothing store was owned and run by a neighbour. While his products were not home-grown his approach to running the business was thoroughly integrated with the community. It was difficult to make a quick visit to the store—most led to a conversation. Generally this was friendly, though this had nothing to do with 'customer service.' The friendliness sprung from being part of the same community. Similarly, if I deserved it I might enter the store and find myself on the receiving end of a reprimand.

The idea that 'the customer is always right' would have to wait until I started visiting modern corporations. Within many of these the company would do its best to ensure that as a customer I would be treated *as if I were* a friend, even though I wasn't. The staff and managers didn't really care about me personally—sometimes they showed that they cared about me as 'repeat business.'

According to Kleiner, modern corporations began appearing in the 1800s as a response to the opportunities arising to do business on a massive scale. What made the management of massive enterprises possible were the rituals of financial analysis and control. Innovations in management included Henry Ford's development of the assembly line, Du Pont's development of diversification, and Frederick Taylor's work on the scientific management of people.

Embedded within these techniques was an assumption that an individual who could master techniques of financial analysis and control—'the numbers'—would be able to successfully operate as a manager within any modern corporation. The popularity of MBA degrees that taught these techniques gave evidence of this assumption. Management development practitioners operated off the assumption that they could teach managers generic skills of handling people, co-ordinating effort and identifying strategically important variables and thus equip them for work anywhere (Training Research Forum, 1970).

In a later chapter we will explore further why managing by analysis of numbers appeals so much to people within English-speaking democracies such as New Zealand, Australia, Britain and the USA. Suffice to say, many found it reassuring that they could put aside other values and concentrate on getting measurable results. Many still do.

Others, however, felt that concentration on the numbers was unhealthy. According to Kleiner, many of the pioneers of organisational change felt deeply the loss of the vernacular, and longed to imbue within corporations the sense of community that had been lost.

Others recognised that the numbers did not tell the whole story of organisational life (Pondy & Mitroff, 1979). Despite what 'professional' managers might want to believe 'the way we do things around here' differed from organisation to organisation even though the numbers might stay the same. Some began to turn to the anthropological concept of 'culture' to explain these differences. No doubt the motivation for many in business was to find ways of generating better financial results than they had managed in the past.

2.2 Culture in Anthropology

Where interest in the culture of organisations is relatively recent, anthropologists have been discussing the concept for well over a century (Hatch, 1993), though often with little agreement over its meaning (Jenks, 1993). According to Jenks, as is the case with other social science concepts, such as leadership (Blyde, 1998), writers have shown a tendency to contradict their own definitions. For instance, writers in anthropology typically define culture as an abstraction, but then refer to it either as a causal agent, saying "the culture made people do..." or as the equivalent of a group, saying "I belong to a culture."

Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) pointed out a failing of anthropology in their time, which was later to become evident in organisational work on culture: the proliferation of work defining the concept while there is too little theory on the nature of culture. In response to this concern, Pattern Theory has been one of the ways in which anthropologists have explained the development and action of culture. Pattern theory explores how *patterns* of art, religion, technology and other expressions of culture have waxed and waned over time, so that groups acquire characteristics that are independent of individuals (Harris, 1968; Geertz, 1973).

A key anthropological concept in understanding patterns of cultural differences is 'complementarity' (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 1997). When you visit another country, region or organisation the differences you note in the way they go about their lives informs you about your own culture. As Bateson (1974) has commented, cultural differences are not characterised by mutual irrelevance. What characterises the alien culture is what is lacking in your own, so that their culture complements yours. How does this complementarity come about?

All groups of people face similar problems or challenges. For instance, in every group the situation will arise where one member takes an action that is personally rewarding at the expense of the group as a whole. How will the group respond? The group could choose to put the right of the individual ahead of the needs of the group as a whole, or it could choose to do the opposite.

What the group decides when first faced with the situation may be influenced by the conditions. In conditions where the group faces external threats it would make sense to allow the needs of the group as a whole to predominate. The early settlers of what is now the USA, however, were in a different situation. Most had left lands where individuals outside the ruling class had few or no rights. These settlers were seeking a different kind of society, so it is understandable that they might choose to allow individual rights to predominate.

Once an initial decision has been made a precedent has been set for similar situations in the future. According to De Bono (1991) once thinking begins to follow a particular path it becomes easier to follow that path than to establish a new one. Robert Fritz's (1989) book *The Path of Least Resistance* takes its name from this phenomenon. Over time groups no longer have to consciously think about how they will handle situations of this kind. They have learned to value one course of action over its opposite in the sense that that course will be assumed by the group to be of greater value, and that this assumption is held at an unconscious level.

As these values are established they are reflected in the group's language, stories and art (Bateson, 1974), along with their artifacts and ideas (Kroeber and Kluckholm, 1952). As these elements of culture are infused with values they become, in turn, the means by which values are taught to new members (Cole, 1979).

At times the word 'culture' is used by anthropologists as a synonym for 'civilisation' (Tylor, 1958) suggesting that as members of a group begin to share values they develop into something more than a group. Jenks (1993) summarised anthropological concerns with culture as a focus on those aspects of human existence outside the sphere of what is 'merely natural.'

2.3 'Culture' in Organisations

The concept of culture began to be widely adopted by management scholars in the 1980s (Hatch, 1993). Prior to that time there had been scattered discussion in organisational literature. An early example is the work of Philip Selznick (1957). In his book *Leadership and Administration*, he suggested that an organisation becomes an 'institution' as it is infused with value, and develops a unique character. Institutionalisation colours all aspects of organisational life and integrates the members as a community.

The 1960s saw books describing the history and character of leading US institutions by executives who had managed them: Thomas Watson (1963) on IBM and Alfred Sloan (1964) on General Motors. As well as describing the cultures of their organisations, they wrote of the influence the personality of the founders had on the character of their organisations.

English author Anthony Jay (1967, 1972) also described the character of leading companies, including Marks and Spencer and 3M. In doing so he drew on sociological concepts related to culture. He wrote of subcultures within corporations as 'corporate tribes' with networks of scandal, gossip, friendship and feuds that provided members with a sense of belonging. Jay referred to leaders within these networks as 'tribal chieftans' and to shared beliefs as 'corporate faith.'

Harrison (1972) expanded on the idea of organisational character, outlining 'ideologies' that organisations can develop: systems of thought that determine an organisation's character. Ideologies, according to Harrison, specify goals to which organisational members are directed; prescribe relationships between members; indicate how behaviour should be controlled; shape rewards; and establish appropriate methods of dealing with the external environment.

Around this time a number of studies examined organisations from a sociological or anthropological perspective, utilising qualitative research techniques. Trice et al. (1969) interpreted observations of personnel practices as cultural rites and ceremonies. Pettigrew (1973) discussed how the 'social tissue' of culture influenced the introduction of computers within a retail firm. Clark (1970) discussed the importance of 'sagas' in shaping the institutional character of US colleges.

The 1980s saw culture enter the mainstream of management thought. Influential books by Peters and Watermann (1982) and Deal and Kennedy (1982) examined how culture gave some US companies competitive advantages, while Pascale and Athos (1981) and Ouchi (1981) considered the role of culture in the competitiveness of Japanese companies. Trice and Beyer (1993) outline how the period from 1982 to 1985 saw five major conferences on corporate culture, special issues on culture in four major journals, and two textbooks (Schein, 1985; Sathe, 1985). According to Denison (1996) this interest was evidence of widespread rebellion against the dominant 'scientific' paradigm of organisational studies.

2.4 The Meaning of Organisational Culture

In his book *Charting the Corporate Mind* Hampden-Turner (1990) illustrated the nature of a variety of organisational concepts by representing them as animals. His characterisation of a 'culture' was particularly insightful. He described it as:

> "A chameleon-like lizard of such variegated hues that, while everyone acknowledges its splendour, few can agree on a description." (p.134)

The definition is appropriate on both counts: the admiration expressed within business, and the lack of agreement on a description. Tushman and O'Reilly (1996) cited 60 examples of major companies reported in business literature in the preceding year that identify 'culture' as a criticial factor in their success or failure. Jack Welch, head of General Electric, predicted in 1990 that:

> "...in the 1990s the heroes, the winners will be entire companies that have developed cultures that instead of fearing the pace of change, relish it."
>
> (Fortune, 1990, p. 31)

The lack of agreement noted by Hampden-Turner stems from the nature of culture. As mentioned earlier, once a culture is established within a group, it influences all aspects of group life: language, stories, symbols, ceremonies, decision-making, goals, and so on. Writers have struggled to establish what constitutes the essence of culture, and what are its by-products.

Pettigrew (1979) defined culture in a way that highlighted the wide-ranging influence it has on life in an organisation, describing it as:

> "...the system of such collectively accepted meanings operating for a given group at a given time...and the offspring of the concept of culture I have in mind are symbol, language, ideology, belief, ritual, and myth." (p. 574)

Brown (1995) includes many of the same issues in his definition, making mention also that it is the *pattern* of things such as beliefs and values that make up a culture.

Deal and Kennedy (1982) discussed the importance of shared or superordinate goals in culture, noting that people in organisations with consistently outstanding performance have a shared sense of why the organisation exists. Vaill (1982) similarly noted the need for shared purpose within what he called 'high-performing systems.'

In his discussion of high performing companies Ouchi (1981) emphasised the management philosophy that provided underlying premises for decision-making. Without a distinctive philosophy, or where a philosophy exists but is not shared or understood, financial considerations become the sole basis for decisions and consequently results in organisations losing the element of character described earlier and the social integration that comes with institutionalisation.

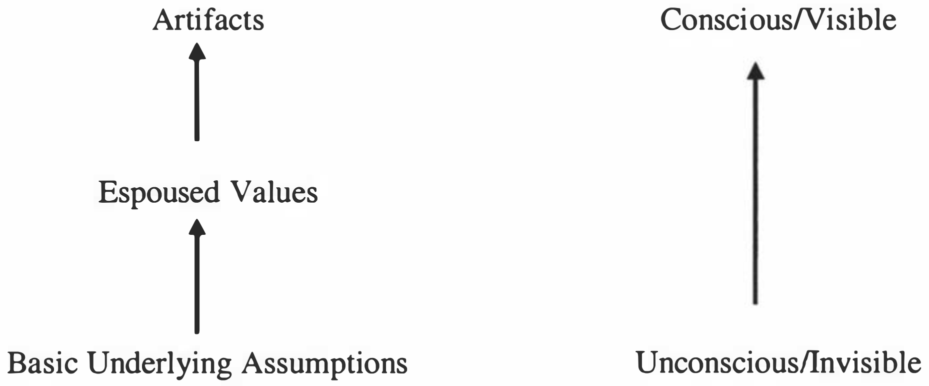
Edgar Schein's (1992) book *Organisational Culture and Leadership* was seminal in summarising existing knowledge of corporate culture and shaping the work that has been done since. Along with those mentioned above, Schein listed eight further approaches he had found in managerial literature for defining culture: observed behavioural regularities when people interact; espoused values; the rules of the games—also known as 'the ropes'; climate; embedded skills; habits of thinking or linguistic paradigms; and root metaphors or integrating symbols.

Schein (1985) provided his own definition that has become the standard within the field (Hatch, 1993). He views culture as:

> "A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group has learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to these problems." (p.9)

Schein suggests that the varying perceptions of culture indicated by approaches already discussed can be integrated by recognising three levels of culture, shown in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1 Schein's Levels of Culture



This definition conforms to the anthropological understanding of culture described by Bateson (1974) where groups form values that over time become unconsciously held assumptions of the best way to act. These lie beneath the consciousness of the group, yet shape the more visible espoused values and artifacts characteristic of the group.

Schein's definition integrates many of the ideas in the managerial literature regarding culture. Earlier writers have expressed the view that the management of culture is the management of shared values (Jaques, 1952; Eldridge & Crombie, 1974; Louis, 1980; Peters, 1980; Schwartz & Davis, 1981; Peters & Watermann, 1982; Tichy, 1982; Tunstall, 1983). Since Schein's work, there has been widespread agreement that values and/or assumptions are at the heart of a culture, and that other elements such as artifacts, language, rituals, heroes and symbols stem from these (Morgan, 1986; Lorsch, 1986; Scholz, 1987; Denison, 1990; Hofstede, Neuijen, Ohayv, & Sanders, 1990; Kotter & Heskett, 1992; Drennan, 1992; Williams, Dobson & Walters, 1993; Brown, 1995).

2.5 Classifying Cultures

Based on their understanding of the concept of culture applied to organisational life, a number of writers have sought to describe particular types of cultures found within the world of commerce.

Often the work of describing culture types results in models outlining four classes of culture. Harrison's (1972) classes were Role, Task, Power and People—the People class is also referred to as Atomistic. A Role culture is one that is primarily concerned with people working to carry out tightly defined procedures within clear roles. These are often referred to as bureaucratic organisations. The Power culture is one in which focus within the organisation is on getting close to the person in the organisation who controls rewards within the group. The Task culture is one in which the group is organised around the task to be carried out. This task-focus enables interdisciplinary groups to work together. Finally, the People or Atomistic culture is a loose connection of people who share a common interest and yet choose to work as 'free spirits.'

British writer, Charles Handy (1987) illustrated different cultures by comparing them to the varying personalities of four Greek gods: Apollo, Athena, Zeus and Dionysus. In many ways Handy's descriptions parallel and build upon Harrison's classifications, with Apollo concerned primarily with roles, Zeus with power, Athena with task and Dionysus with creativity and pleasure-seeking activities of people.

Deal and Kennedy (1982) used four classifications: 'Bet the Company,' 'Work Hard/Play Hard,' 'Tough Guy,' and 'Process.'

Blake and Mouton (1969) found when using their 'Managerial Grid' technique, that managers within companies tend to develop similar patterns of managing. Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid plots managerial activity on two 9-point axes: concern for task and concern for people. They used five classifications for cultures that conform to co-ordinates on their Grid: the 'Escapist' culture (1,1); the 'Country Club' culture (1,9); the 'Authoritarian' culture (9,1); the 'Compromise' culture (5,5); and the 'Team' culture (9,9).

While Blake and Mouton's five types seem to be an exception from the four types suggested by Harrison, Handy and Deal and Kennedy, their classification sheds light on how the others arrived at four types. Blake and Mouton generated their types by creating a quadrant with two axes. The typical quadrant—as the word suggests—consists of four positions, but because Blake and Mouton used a grid rather than a true quadrant, they were able to describe a position that fell in the centre, or 5,5 position.

Graves (1986) has pointed out that the classification systems of Harrison, Handy and Deal and Kennedy can also be represented as quadrant models. Handy and Harrison's four types can be arrived at with axes that rate the degree of 'formalisation' and the degree of 'centralisation' found within a company, as shown in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2 Handy and Harrison's Quadrant Model

Degree of Formalisation		
Hi	Harrison: Role Handy: Apollo	Harrison: Task Handy: Athena
Lo	Harrison: Power Handy: Zeus	Harrison: Atomistic Handy: Dionysius
	Lo	Hi

Degree of Centralisation

Deal and Kennedy's types can be arrived at with a quadrant indicating the amount of risk and the speed of feedback experienced by the companies, as shown in Figure 2.3.

Figure 2.3 Deal and Kennedy's Quadrant Model

Amount of Risk		
Hi	High Risk/Slow Feedback: e.g. Oil Company	High Risk/Fast Feedback: e.g. Film Company
Lo	Low Risk/Slow Feedback: e.g. Insurance	Low Risk/Fast Feedback: e.g. Restaurant
	Slow	Fast

Speed of Feedback

Classification systems are useful to managers who are seeking to understand their organisations. For example, understanding from Deal and Kennedy that your experience within a particular environment has shaped your organisation so that it displays a 'Bet the Company' culture allows you to be conscious of the potential dangers of moving into an environment more suited to a different way of acting. It also highlights potential dangers inherent in mergers or activities involving collaboration with other companies.

2.6 Changing Culture

Greater awareness of the influence culture has on organisational life and performance has naturally led to interest in how culture change can be brought about. A number of models of culture change have been proposed, generally by researchers who have investigated changes, seeking to understand the conditions under which such fundamental changes can occur in an organisation. Brown (1995) reviewed four of the most influential models of culture change: those of Lundberg (1985); Dyer (1985); Schein (1985); and Gagliardi (1986).

Lundberg (1985) presents cultural change as a learning cycle within an organisation as it seeks to cope with crisis. Given the right combination of internal conditions (such as readiness to change) and external pressures, agents in the organisation will engage in cultural visioning that can lead to fundamental shifts in the culture.

Dyer's (1985) model is also based on an organisation perceiving a crisis which cannot be resolved with the current set of cultural assumptions. The breakdown of the old culture allows new leadership to emerge which, if it can establish itself through the conflict that follows, is able to establish a new culture.

Schein (1985) based his model on the proposition that different cultural change processes will operate at different stages of an organisation's life. During an organisation's early growth culture change is unnecessary unless the company faces economic difficulties or succession problems. Culture change takes place through a process of evolution as the organisation learns what works in its situation, or through revolution managed by outsiders in the event of crisis. During organisational 'midlife' culture change is more difficult with assumptions being more strongly embedded in the company's routines and structures. Planned change and organisational development, a process Schein calls 'technological seduction,' incrementalism and change through scandal are the processes most likely to bring about change. Technological seduction occurs where the introduction of new technology fundamentally alters the way the company operates. During organisational 'maturity' culture change is more likely to be needed because of dysfunctionality in the way the existing culture operates. Culture change mechanisms include coercive persuasion by leaders, and change management techniques that involve unfreezing, change and refreezing (Lewin, 1935).

Gagliardi's (1986) model emphasised change as an incremental process of learning requiring skilled leadership. As culture forms around established values, members tend to hold to these for emotional rather than rational reasons. This group of values, however, can be expanded as leaders guide the organisation in experimenting with new ways of acting. Rather than overturning existing values, Gagliardi views these new values as augmenting the existing cultural hierarchy.

Brown (1995) points out that these models share a number of common elements. All suggest that *crises*—or at least difficulties—play a pivotal role in focusing attention on the culture. All make mention of the role *leaders* have in bringing about cultural change. Culture change, according to these models, is built around organisations experiencing *success* with new values. Finally, all emphasise that culture change is a process of *learning*.

2.7 Anthropology vs. Management

We should expect that anthropological descriptions of culture will differ from managerial descriptions. Anthropologists and managers form two different cultures, so we would expect to find differing assumptions shaping the work they do. These different assumptions make themselves evident in a number of ways.

Firstly, managerial literature is more likely to be prescriptive where anthropologists are more likely to describe cultures that exist. Managerial discussion of culture is shaped by the assumption that organisations exist in order to achieve economic ends (de Geus, 1997). Managerial literature is typically concerned with the effectiveness and efficiency of decisions: that is whether they are doing the right things, and how well they are doing them (Drucker, 1967). With regard to culture, effectiveness and efficiency translate into whether the culture is appropriate given the challenges the organisation faces, and how strong the culture is in shaping the actions of organisational members. Managerial literature often refers to the desire to 'manage' culture (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Tichy, 1982) Many organisations seek to bring about 'culture change,' which presumably means shifting from an inappropriate set of assumptions to a set that will better enable the organisation to achieve its economic ends.

In contrast, the concept of 'cultural relativism' is central to anthropological work on culture. This emphasises the need to understand particular cultures and how they have developed, and not to judge one culture according to standards derived from another.

Because of the desire to manage culture, managerial literature is more likely to provide simplified descriptions. Anthropologists are less likely to classify cultures into four types, yet it makes sense to managers in that it gives them a basis for deciding which type would be most appropriate for their company. Geertz (1973) uses the term 'thick description' to describe the anthropological approach to capturing the complexity and diversity of a particular culture.

Anthropologists would also be less welcoming of the concept of culture change. Imagine that within a particular organisation most people put little value on 'customer service.' Most managers would see this as a flaw in the culture. In today's business environment customer service is generally a highly appropriate value, so managers would tend to begin thinking about how they could bring about change. The managers would see this as a *change to* a service culture.

Anthropology is more likely to be concerned that this is a *change from* some existing values. People in the organisation have assumed other types of action to be of greater value than customer service. What are those values? What would be lost in a move away from them?

The two approaches both have merit, which is not surprising—that is the nature of cultural differences. The managerial perspective allows a more proactive stance toward culture, seeing it as something that can be altered to suit the purposes of the group. The anthropological perspective sacrifices this proactivity in order to achieve greater understanding.

Within Western nations, particularly those that are English-speaking, there is a tendency to take an 'either/or' approach to situations where there are two alternatives (de Bono, 1991). The tendency is to choose the perspective that best suits us. There is an alternative approach, which is to reconcile the opposites, thus finding an approach which allows for 'both/and' solutions.

A methodology developed by Charles Hampden-Turner and Fons Trompenaars (2000) is such an approach. Their work, based around the use of dilemmas allows for the study of organisational cultures utilising the anthropological concept of complementarity. This approach maximises understanding while allowing managers to be proactive with regard to culture. Proactivity, though, is expressed in a more organic than mechanistic way, in that managers can 'shape' the culture rather than 'tinkering' with it, as one would with a machine.

This dilemma-based approach, which has been referred to as the 'science of interdependent opposites' (Johnson, 1995) provides a powerful perspective on learning organisations, and will be explored in the following chapter.

2.8 Summary

Culture is a central issue in understanding the learning organisation. The desire to understand both the concept of 'culture' in organisations and the 'learning organisation' arose out of an approach to business that focused on 'the numbers' and lost the sense of the vernacular or community within organisations. Culture refers to the unique set of assumptions and values that shape 'the way we do things around here' within an organisation. While the concept of culture has been derived from anthropology, it has been simplified and given a performance orientation within managerial literature. In creating an holistic model of learning organisations—a model that overcomes differences that currently cause fragmentation—there is value to be gained from incorporating more of the anthropological perspective, particularly the concept of 'complementarity.'

Chapter 3: Dilemma Theory

Organisational discussions of culture have mirrored early concerns held by anthropologists—that work in their area had tended to involve plenty of description and definition without generating background theory. As Hampden-Turner (1990) has expressed the matter in regard to organisational work, it is one thing to describe or map cultures using different categories and classification systems, but it is another thing to truly understand how they form and operate.

Similarly, although Schein (1985) provides a definition of culture that highlights the critical role of shared assumptions and values, it is important to understand how these develop.

Hampden-Turner (1990) has developed a theory-based technology for working with culture known as Dilemma Theory that recognises culture as a pattern, and incorporates the concept of complementarity. Hampden-Turner frames culture as the response to corporate dilemmas.

In this chapter we will examine how culture can be understood through interdependent opposites using Hampden-Turner's technology, and incorporating Johnson's (1993) technology of Polarity Management. A Causal Loop Diagram will be used to explore the dynamics of interdependent opposites, including where leverage might be found when seeking culture change.

3.1 Dilemmas in Culture

Hampden-Turner (1990) explains that the term 'dilemma' is derived from Greek, and literally means "two propositions." Decisions, whether personal or organisational, involve at least one dilemma. If there is only one course of action possible, then there is no decision to be made. Having decided to follow a standard procedure, for instance, you need not make further decisions—your course of action is prescribed.

You will have experienced, however, times when you have felt ambivalent. A variety of phrases are used to describe this feeling: being 'torn' or 'conflicted,' 'between a rock and a hard place,' and 'on the horns of a dilemma.' These phrases describe the feeling that results when presented with two opposite propositions about how you should act to resolve a matter, and while you would like to do both, you are forced to choose.

In the previous chapter we looked at the dilemma between individual rights and the needs of a community and how different groups develop complementary cultures. We will see that there are a variety of dilemmas of this type. Each situation like this requires the group to decide which of the propositions they value more. Some groups decide that they value individualism where others decide they will value communitarianism.

The values expressed in dilemmas are both complementary and interdependent. In a complementary relationship between two values, both are needed if the system is to be complete. However, the situation requires that the group chooses either one value or the other at that particular point in time. Consequently, the values are interdependent, in that a decision to favour one value creates a need to favour the opposite value at some point in the future.

This healthy movement between two values in order to achieve balance over time is referred to as 'circularity of values' (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 1993). Over time, groups of all sorts need to protect both their community and the rights of the individual members.

3.2 Dilemma Dynamics

Balance between opposing and interdependent values may be healthy, but it is difficult to attain. As described in the last chapter, culture forms as a group learns to give precedence to a particular value. How does this learning take place?

When a dilemma first arises a conscious decision is needed. The next time a similar situation arises individual members have a precedent for resolving the dilemma in favour of the value initially chosen. They can point to the gains received from deciding in favour of that value in the past. As mentioned earlier, when groups form there may be a pre-existing need, as was the case during the colonisation of what is now the USA. At that time members felt there was a need for decisions that favoured individual rights. Several decisions valuing individualism were unlikely to reduce this need significantly. Nor would these decisions immediately create a need to build the community. The colonists would arrive in the new land with a high level of 'esprit de corps' that would not be quickly diminished.

When people take the same action repeatedly, or repeatedly resolve dilemmas in the same way, they become 'skilled' (Jacques & Clement, 1991), that is, able to take the action or resolve the dilemma at an unconscious level. In this way, a series of decisions to favour a particular value typically results in that value becoming an unconscious assumption. The group faced with a similar situation resolves the dilemma without thinking about the options—it is assumed that the established way of acting is 'the way we do things around here.'

Used this way, skill can be a liability for a group or for individuals. They can unconsciously rely on actions and decisions that no longer give them the results they desire and may, indeed, make their situations worse. Argyris (1990) refers to situations like this as 'skilled incompetence.'

As well as individuals learning to rely on one value, over time they create 'architecture' that supports the particular value. The founders of the US built the value of individualism into their constitution. The design of the legal and governmental systems made it easier for decision-makers to continue to favour individualism.

3.3 Schismogenesis[1]

It is reasonable to assume that any group will have a diversity of members. While the community as a whole may have adopted a particular value so that it has reached the level of an unconscious assumption, some individual members of the community will be fully aware of the need for the opposite value and may well advocate actions in support of this neglected value. Johnson (1992) describes those holding to established values as 'tradition-bearers' and those advocating the opposite as 'crusaders.' While crusading for change may seem likely to help achieve circularity between the values, frequently it makes matters worse through a process termed 'schismogenesis' (Bateson, 1974).

Schismogenesis is the process by which people or groups with opposite ways of acting drive each other to extremes of behaviour. The term literally means 'a growing split in the structure of ideas' (Hampden-Turner, 1983). When complementary values or ideas are split apart, with individuals or groups determined to live heroically at the extreme of one value, pathological consequences must follow (Hampden-Turner, 1983).

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[1] The author first published a discussion of these cultural dynamics as "Countering Cultural Polarities" *Proceedings of the 17th International conference of the Systems Dynamics Society,* 20-23 July, 1999, Wellington New Zealand (see Appendix 1a).

Bateson (1974) suggests, for example, that alcoholism is a consequence of individuals trying to live out an impossibly unbalanced self-concept of heroic 'power over the bottle.'

Tannen (1990) has used the concept of schismogenesis to explain common rifts in interpersonal settings. An introverted person may be naturally quiet in conversation. An extroverted person may feel, listening to the introverted companion, that the conversation is dragging, and so begins speaking with greater volume and energy. The introvert may then feel the extrovert is being overly theatrical and compensate by becoming even more quiet. The extrovert, in turn, becomes ever louder. Both parties to the conversation typically end up frustrated with the situation, but in a classic form of 'the enemy is out there' thinking (Senge, 1990) blame the other person and fail to see their own role in the process.

Hampden-Turner (1983) examined values based conflicts within the macro-culture of Britain, and outlined a number of patterns that represented dangerous or pathological processes affecting the British economy. These patterns are likely to be found in any human system undergoing schismogenesis, and are a forerunner to crisis.

One symptom is *specialisation by social class* so that one group of people feels a stewardship of a particular value or set of values, leaving the complementary values in the care of another group. The values come to be associated with the status of the two groups and crossing of boundaries is frowned upon.

Polarised ideologies are another symptom. Where complementary values exist, pursuing one value creates a need for its opposite. The process of schismogenesis is aided when individuals or groups talk of their values as if they can be pursued forever and are therefore good, and the opposite values as if they can only be held in extreme and are therefore bad. In reality, both values can be taken to extreme and neither can be pursued forever.

In tandem with the symptoms mentioned above, groups engage in *win-lose conflict with assumptions of scarcity.* From their polarised positions groups are unable to recognise the worth of opposing values. People often fear that recognition may not be reciprocated, so acknowledging others' values weakens one's own position in the competition for what are assumed to be scarce resources.

A further symptom of the process of groups becoming polarised is *collapse of the middle ground* with little room available for people who do not wish to belong to either of the extremes. With only the extreme positions available, people tend to *oscillate rapidly* between extremes: with no middle ground there is nowhere else to go when one's traditional position is untenable or when one has dabbled in the opposing value and found it uncomfortable.

3.4 Reconciliation

According to Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars (1997) Western nations, and English-speaking democracies in particular are characterised by macro-cultures where it is assumed one value must win at the expense of the other. This is reflected in the propensity of people in the West to treat all manner of interactions as games, with winners and losers.

Tannen (1998) suggests that as a result of the Western love of winning games, conversation in Western nations is characterised by contention which she calls an 'argument culture.'

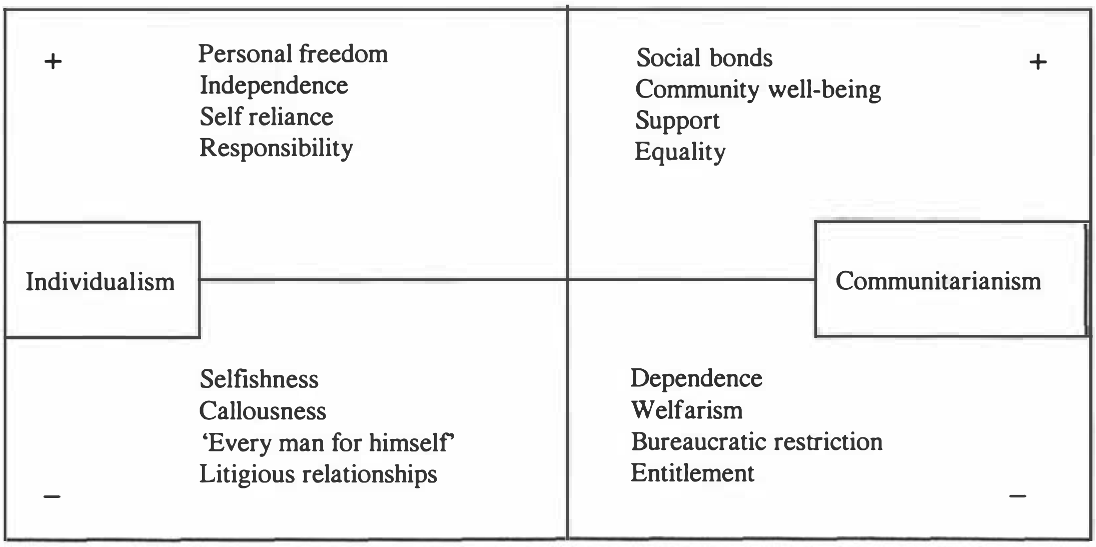
Other macro-cultures are characterised by dilemma 'resolution.' East Asian nations in particular typically seek solutions that involve 'both/and' solutions and where the middle ground is valued. Japanese car manufacturers, for example revolutionised the automotive industry by breaking out of the Western pattern of marketing cars as either high quality or low cost. Instead, they sought to manufacture cars that were both high quality and low cost. (Hampden-Turner, 1990). Products and services that reconcile opposing values have greater value than those which maximise one at the expense of another (Hampden-Turner, 1990), and organisations that can reconcile opposing values are able to create environments in which a more diverse range of people can feel comfortable (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 1998).

Hampden-Turner (1990) has outlined a process by which organisations can reconcile strategically important dilemmas. The process involves first *eliciting* and *mapping* the dilemmas. Terms used to express the dilemmas can then be *processed* into forms less likely to generate polarisation, by changing them from noun form to present participles (adding *-ing*). Groups can start to loosen the grip of established mindsets about their values by *framing* and *contextualising*: imagining how each value can act as a context for the opposite. Groups can then explore how reconciliation can be achieved through *sequencing* the values over time, creating a *cycle* between the values that achieves a dynamic balance, and *synergising* the various pairs of polarised values impacting on the group.

3.5 Reconciliation Through Polarity Management

Johnson (1993) has outlined an alternative approach to enabling groups to understand and manage opposing values inherent in their culture in order to bring about reconciliation, utilising what he terms 'polarity maps.' A polarity map consists of a quadrant that shows the two values in opposition, along with the 'upside' and 'downside' associated with each value. Figure 3.1 shows a polarity map for the opposing values of individualism and communitarianism.

Figure 3.1 Polarity Map for Individualism and Communitarianism

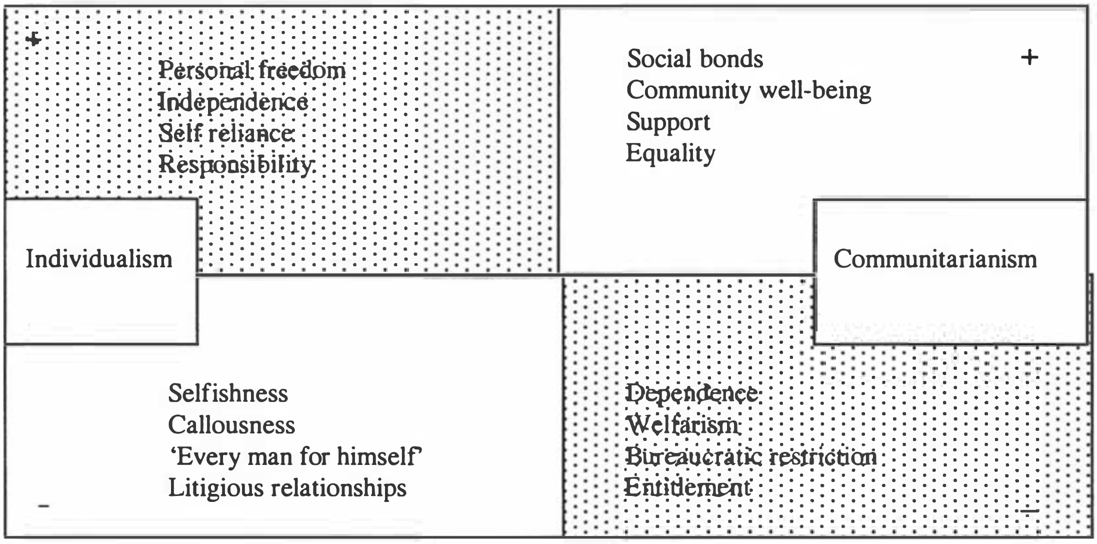

+
Personal freedom
Independence
Self reliance
Responsibility
Social bonds
Community well-being
Support
Equality
+
Individualism
Communitarianism
Selfishness
Callousness
'Every man for himself'
Litigious relationships
–
Dependence
Welfarism
Bureaucratic restriction
Entitlement
–

The 'upside' (outlined in the '+' square on each side of the map) represents the gains that can be enjoyed by a group pursuing the associated value. The 'downside' (outlined in the '-' square on each side of the map) represents the dangers facing a group that pursues the associated value too far. The downside dangers are experienced when a group pursues a value for too long at the expense of its opposite.

Polarity maps can represent the patterns of schismogenesis described by Hampden-Turner. For example, where two parties with polarised ideologies are in conflict their arguments will represent opposing diagonals on the map. An ideologue advocating individualism will only speak (and possibly only see) the shaded area of the polarity map in Figure 3.2, while the ideologue advocating communitarianism speaks only about the white area.

The result of ideological conflict over values is groups continuing to work in the direction of their preferred value. The longer they pursue a value, and therefore stay on one side of the polarity map, the more intensely they will experience the downside of the value. Consequently, ideological conflict typically results in groups getting stuck in the downside of their preferred value, even though some in the group are crusading for change. This is the pathological process described by Hampden-Turner (1983).

Figure 3.2 Areas Seen By Ideologues

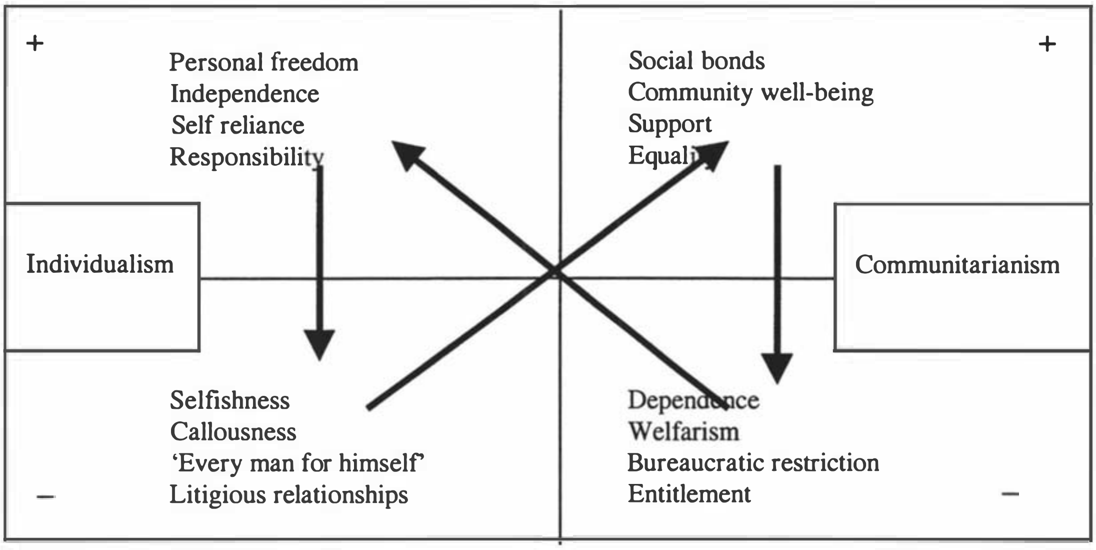

+
Personal freedom
Independence
Self reliance
Responsibility
Social bonds
Community well-being
Support
Equality
+
Individualism
Communitarianism
Selfishness
Callousness
'Every man for himself'
Litigious relationships
-
Dependence
Welfarism
Bureaucratic restriction
Entitlement
—

According to Johnson (1993) groups cannot get out of a downside with more of the same value that got them there. If a group is experiencing the downside of individualism, more heroic individualism will not get them out. What is needed is a diagonal shift to the opposite upside.

Eventually that move to the opposing value will result in the group experiencing the opposite downside. That, in turn, signals the need to move back to the original value, moving on the diagonal from downside to upside. This movement, shown in Figure 3.3, is referred to by Johnson as the 'polarity two-step' and, appropriately traces the path of an infinity loop; appropriate because a dynamic balance needs to be achieved between opposing values like these if a group is to operate sustainably.

Inherent in the polarity two step is the paradoxical lesson for groups, that the way to get the most from what you value may be to move in the opposite direction, so that *at a later time* you can move back to what you value and fully experience its upside.

Figure 3.3 The Polarity Two-Step


+
Personal freedom
Independence
Self reliance
Responsibility
Social bonds
Community well-being
Support
Equality
+
Individualism
Communitarianism
Selfishness
Callousness
'Every man for himself'
Litigious relationships
–
Dependence
Welfarism
Bureaucratic restriction
Entitlement
–

According to Johnson, conflict often arises in a group because members frame polarities as 'problems needing to be solved.' That is, when they see evidence of the downside of someone's activity, they view these downside experiences as a problem that can be fixed by a shift to the upside of the opposing value. While this is true, it is only partly true: it only acknowledges the existence of two quadrants on the polarity map; for instance, the shaded squares in Figure 3.2. To fully explore values-based, or cultural conflicts it is essential to acknowledge *all* parts of the map so that solutions can be found that enable reconciliation. When talking to members of a culture that hold values opposite to one's own, one must first acknowledge the parts of the map most evident to them. Stephen Covey (1993) acknowledged the importance of this approach in his best selling book *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. His recommended habits include 'Seek Win/Win solutions' and 'Seek first to understand.' These habits are given a cultural context by Johnson's polarity map technology.

3.6 Diagramming Interdependent Opposites

The systemic structure of cultural dynamics described by Hampden-Turner and Johnson can be represented using a CLD[2]. The basis of the structure, shown in Figure

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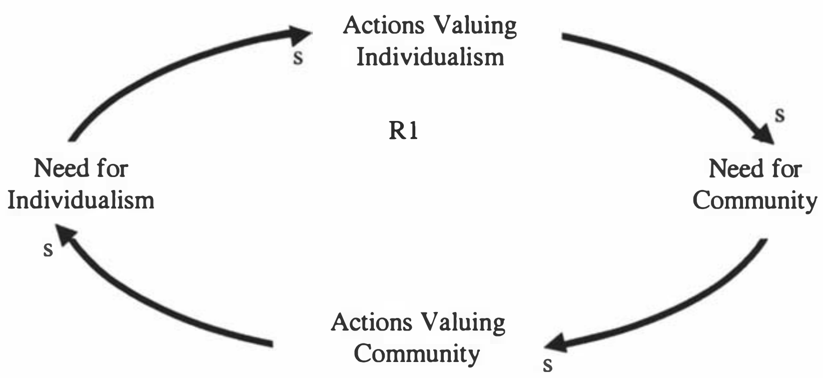
[2] This CLD was previously published by the author as "The Structure of Paradox: managing interdependent opposites" in *Organizational Learning at Work: embracing the challenges of the new workplace*, K. Wardman-O'Reilly ed. Waltham MA: Pegasus Communications, 1999, pg. 15-25. (see Appendix 1b)

3.4, is the reinforcing cycle (R1) that represents the healthy circularity between opposing values.

Figure 3.4 Circularity of Values

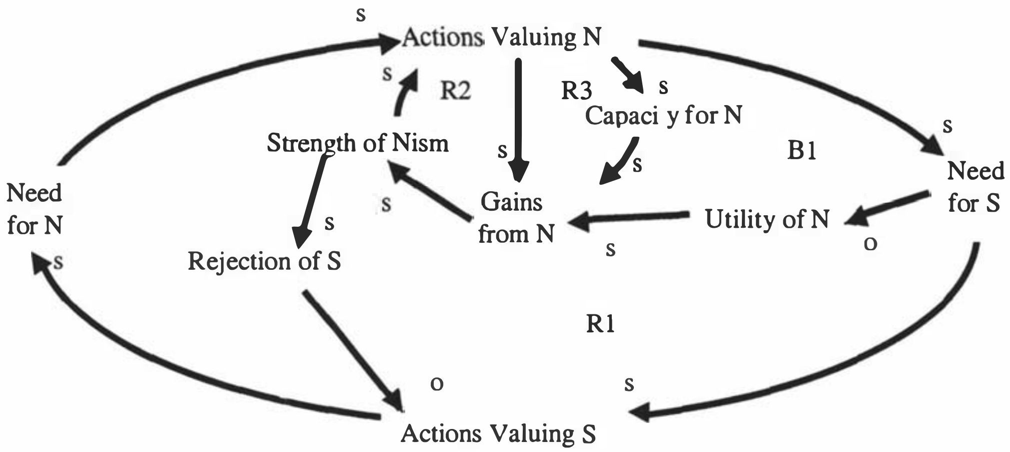


Where there is a healthy circularity of values in operation, actions that value individualism over time create a need for community. When this need for community reaches a certain point it causes the group to take actions valuing the community. These in turn start to build a need for individualism, which eventually will cause the group to take actions valuing individualism. Thus there is a continuous movement between the values, providing the group with a dynamic balance. We refer to this as dynamic balance, because at any given point the group will be valuing individualism or community, yet over time the movement between the values provides balance.

While Figure 3.4 shows the circularity of value using as examples individualism and community which we have used throughout the chapter, any pair of opposing values could be used.

As we build the CLD throughout the remainder of this chapter we will substitute ‘N’ and ‘S’ (as in ‘North’ and ‘South’) to represent any pair of interdependent opposite values. As we have noted earlier, healthy circularity of values is rare. Other reinforcing processes lead to an over-reliance on a particular value, as shown in Figure 3.5. The reinforcing loops R2 and R3 develop as actions that favour a particular value feed their own growth. It was described earlier how, as a group takes actions favouring a value such as individualism, the group experiences gains that leads to a belief that that value is pre-eminent, leading to more actions favouring that value. This process is shown in R2. At the same time the group builds up architecture supporting the value, so its capacity for those actions increases as shown in R3.

Figure 3.5 Over-reliance on One Value

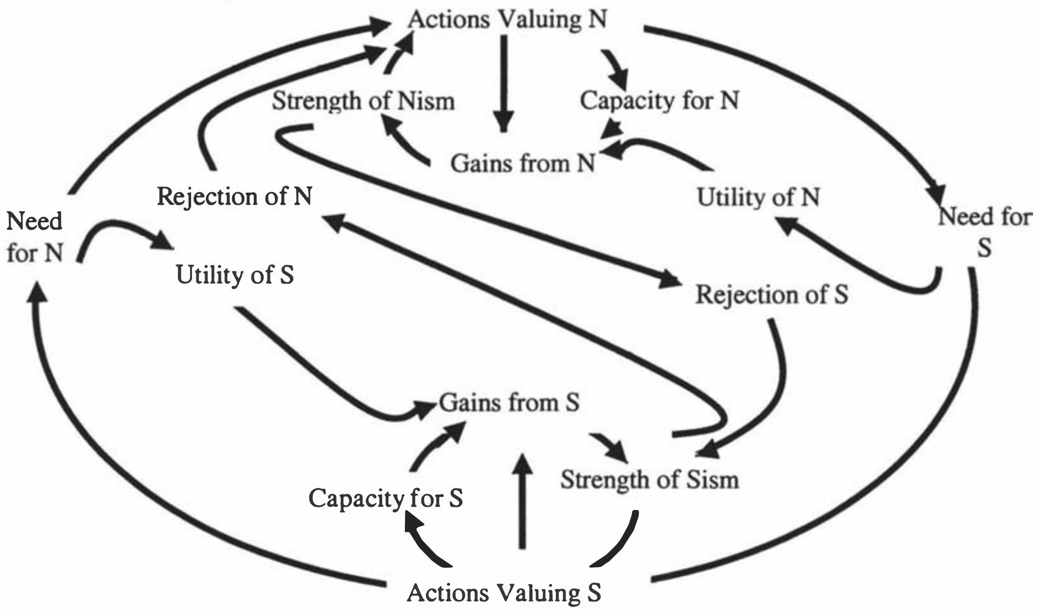


Where a group is prone to 'either/or' thinking the growing strength of one value (e.g. Strength of 'N'ism) also leads to a rejection of the opposite value. Groups assume that if 'N' is good, 'S' must be bad.

These processes disrupt the healthy operation of R1. In particular, the link between 'Need for S' and 'Actions Valuing S' is weakened. The need for the opposing value continues to grow, but the culture formed around the initial value prevents the group from taking actions that favour the opposing value. The group gets stuck in the downside of its favoured value as the utility of that value falls, yet the group continues to try to rely upon it, despite diminishing gains. This falling utility of the preferred value is shown in B1, a balancing loop that limits the growth of R2 and R3.

In diverse groups, sub-groups that advocate and crusade for the neglected value of the pair form. This leads us to the final form of the CLD, with the inner-loops that formed around Value N mirrored around Value S, as shown in Figure 3.6. As the systemic structure outlined in Figure 3.6 operates the group is split around opposite values, becoming increasingly strong in their adherence to their own value while rejecting the opposing value. This schismogenetic pattern operates to the detriment of the group as a whole, because it disrupts the healthy circularity needed to provide balance associated with sustainability.

Figure 3.6 Interdependent Opposites in Conflict[3]


Actions Valuing N
Strength of Nism
Capacity for N
Gains from N
Rejection of N
Utility of N
Need for N
Need for S
Utility of S
Rejection of S
Gains from S
Strength of Sism
Capacity for S
Actions Valuing S

3.7 Leverage

Leverage is the term used in the study of systems dynamics to indicate where a group can most effectively act in order to bring about the results it desires (Senge, 1990). A lever is an instrument used to generate maximum force with a minimum effort. Similarly, by understanding the dynamics of systemic structure we can identify where to act to generate the most effective change.

It was discussed in the last chapter how popular managerial literature has encouraged 'culture change' as a strategy for ensuring that companies can achieve the results they desire. How much leverage does 'culture change' have, if the systemic structure outlined above is an accurate representation of how culture operates?

To consider this question, we will assume that 'culture change' means shifting from one culture, or set of unconsciously held assumptions, to another.

What gives rise to a desire for culture change? The dynamics described earlier suggest that the desire arises as a result of schismogenetic patterns that lead a group or company to get stuck in crisis—that is the downside of the values upon which they have been unconsciously relying. The executives of the company involved will have discovered that there is no leverage in trying harder to make the traditional values work: they only lead the company further into its current crisis.

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[3] For the sake of clarity 'same' and 'opposite' indicators and loop identifiers have not been included on this diagram. See Figure 3.5 for these relationships.

To get out of the crisis it may be decided to substitute a new set of values for those that are no longer working. It may be that the executives who have supported the traditional values are also substituted for a new group who can lead the process of institutionalising the new values. What is the likely outcome?

Initially the change will be a 'breath of fresh air.' Johnson (1993) has used the analogy of breathing to illustrate the polarity two-step. Breathing consists of two opposite processes: inhaling and exhaling. A schismogenetic crisis is akin to being able only to inhale. Exhaling is essential to prevent the build-up of carbon dioxide, a poison. The company that switches from an 'inhaling' set of values to an 'exhaling' set will feel a huge sense of relief as it is finally able to rid itself of the poisonous elements associated with its previous culture.

The relief, however, is likely to be temporary, just as it would be if you shifted from only allowing yourself to inhale, to only allowing yourself to exhale. The same processes outlined in Figure 3.6 will begin to operate around the new values: increased capacity and belief in the new values leading to over-reliance rather than circularity.

Substitution, then, is also a low leverage strategy for dealing with cultural issues in that it gives only temporary relief. Indeed, some companies are divided over the change and tentative about the new values so that they begin to oscillate between them in the manner described by Hampden-Turner (1983) and Fritz (1989)

The fundamental problem with substitution is that those involved continue to take a linear view of culture. Culture, to them, is a means of achieving their ends. If the present culture is not assisting them toward their ends it needs to be changed to a culture that does. In holding this view people do not learn how to manage polarities over time in order to attain balance and sustainability.

Greater leverage lies in shifting to a view of culture as a pattern of interdependent opposite values. Groups will naturally develop a preference for one set of values over another. As long as they are consciously aware of this tendency they can periodically take actions contrary to their natural inclination for as long as needed to maintain their balance as a social system.

3.8 Consequences of the Perspective

As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, much of the literature on organisational culture has developed from a perspective that aims to categorise cultures rather than to explain how culture develops. Moving from the 'categories' perspective to the 'interdependent opposites' perspectives involves what Senge (1990) describes as a 'metanoia': a shift in mind. What is involved in this shift?

Fundamental to interest in both organisational learning and culture is the view that organisations need to be understood as living systems or communities (de Geus, 1997; Senge, 2000). A category-based approach to culture inclines the user to take a more mechanistic approach to culture. It seems a natural step from placing a culture within a category to asking, "Is this the right category for our organisation to be in?" The category approach appeals to the belief many executives have that all aspects of organisation can be controlled, including culture.

The interdependent opposite viewpoint, in contrast, inclines the viewer to see the organisation as a living system in which culture is akin to the system's personality. Rather than approaching culture as an object needing to be categorised, assessed and adjusted, the viewer is more likely to seek first simply to understand the culture. Given that the interdependent opposites viewpoint frames culture as a pattern of values, the viewer recognises that any extant culture will be as it is because it provides organisational members with outcomes they value. The viewer will also recognise that every culture will limit the ability of members to respond to some of the challenges they face. Culture causes people to neglect some of the values they need.

The process of culture change is viewed differently, then, depending on the perspective one has. For some it is a matter of establishing the 'ideal' culture for the organisation's future, categorising the existing culture, and making adjustments to the way people think to close the gap between the ideal and the existing. For others—those with an interdependent opposites perspective—change is a matter of helping people to become conscious of the way dynamics of culture currently shape decisions within the organisation. This increased consciousness or awareness gives people mobility—the ability to move in any desired direction without self-constraint (Gallwey, 2000).

So, where a category-based approach seeks to change values so that they will support different behaviours, the interdependent opposites approach seeks to surface values so that they no longer restrict the choice of behaviour open to the organisation or its members.

The change in viewpoint described here does not sit easily with everyone. Many people are used to viewing organisational systems as mechanical processes they can engineer in order to get the outcomes they want. The interdependent opposites approach does not offer the promise of control inherent in category based approaches, and it is for that reason it has been adopted for this research. It is the author's belief that it fits better with the reality of organisations as living systems.

3.9 Summary

This chapter has summarised Dilemma Theory. This is an approach to understanding culture, using pairs of interdependent opposite values. The chapter has outlined some of the core concepts of Dilemma Theory, such as the need for reconciliation of opposing values, and the tendency toward schismogenesis where one value is culturally preferred and the other is suppressed. The chapter showed how dilemmas can be charted using Polarity Maps, and how the dynamics of Dilemma Theory can be expressed in a Casual Loop Diagram.

This thesis sets out to explore the culture of learning organisations using Dilemma Theory. In later chapters we will identify dilemmas that are particularly pertinent to organisations undertaking learning efforts. We will use the Polarity Maps discussed in this chapter to chart the dilemmas as they are discussed.

Before applying Dilemma Theory to learning in organisations, we will see how it has been applied to understanding other cultures including subcultures that operate within organisations. This will serve to (a) deepen our understanding of Dilemma Theory as a method for exploring culture, and (b) examine the results of efforts to chart learning cultures within organisations.

Addendum:

Because dilemmas are based on opposing values, they can appear to be 'linear': requiring an 'either/or' response from people within a community. Communities, however, as they encounter dilemmas can develop a variety of strategies for resolving dilemmas. Five of these strategies are outlined in Appendix 8 (page 508).

Chapter 4: Cultures and Subcultures

In the previous chapter we have established that culture can be understood as the pattern of dilemma resolution that characterises a group. Many groups are unable to manage the conflicts that arise as a result of the dilemmas that they face. Consequently, rather than achieve a reconciliation of values they fall into patterns of schismogenesis leading to crisis. Polarity maps and the CLD 'Interdependent Opposites in Conflict' provide insight into how these types of crises can be averted, and reconciliation achieved through dynamic balance.

In this chapter we will examine some of the characteristic patterns of dilemma resolution characterising business practice in New Zealand and other Western nations—in particular, other English-speaking democracies. As we will see, dilemma-based approaches have been used to describe cultural differences between macro-cultures; between functions within organisations; and between hierarchical levels of organisations.

We will conclude the chapter by examining how the concept of the learning organisation can be understood as a response to schismogenetic patterns within Western nations.

4.1 Macro-Cultural Differences

Charles Hampden-Turner and Fons Trompenaars have published collaborative research on culture since 1993. The Trompenaars database is believed to be the world's largest contemporary store of information on global business culture issues (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 1997). Their database is designed around seven pairs of interdependent opposite values, established from anthropological literature, and which enable them to provide a 'thick description' of characteristic decision making patterns in macro-cultures of the world.

Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars use seven primary dimensions in their research.

4.1.1 Making Rules and Discovering Exceptions: All groups are required to establish rules in some form, and to have standard procedures or routines for handling matters. When a valued member of the group breaks a rule or ignores a standard procedure, or no rule seems to apply in a particular case a dilemma is created: does the group value *universalism*, finding the rule that seems most relevant and applying it universally; or does the group value *particularism*, considering the case on its unique merits regardless of the rule. Dilemmas where one must decide whether to make an exception to a rule for a person with whom you have a close relationship fall within this dimension.

4.1.2 Analysing or Integrating: When faced with a complex problem a group can either deconstruct the complexity through a process of analysis, or view the complexity integratively, reconstructing the larger system and viewing the situation holistically. A group that values *analysing* prefers to work within specialised roles and toward specific criteria such as profitability. A group that values *integrating* prefers to compound or harmonise diverse contributions within a piece of work and appreciate diffuse criteria such as knowledge and beauty within performance.

4.1.3 Communities made up of Individuals: As discussed earlier, groups face dilemmas involving the primacy of the community as a whole, or the rights of each individual within the group. A group that values *individualism* acts on the assumption that the group as a whole will be better off if each individual is given freedom to pursue their own interests. A group valuing *communitarianism* assumes that everyone will be collectively better off if all members work to serve the group as a whole.

4.1.4 Status awarded to Achievers or Ascribed: All groups must establish ways in which status will be awarded to members. Status may be in the form of resources and the health of the group depends on resources going to those who can use them most effectively. Should such decisions be made based on *achievement*, with resources and rank going to those who have established a record of results that benefit the group? Or, should status, resources and rank be awarded through a process of *ascription*? That is, members can have status ascribed to them based on who they are—their family or educational background, seniority, gender, potential, or some other factor.

4.1.5 Inner- or Outer-Directed: Groups have to face up to the way in which they will interact with the world outside the group. An *inner-directed* group is likely to cast itself as heroic, providing its own direction despite the vagaries of the world outside, and rejecting ideas that are 'not invented here.' An *outer-directed* group is more likely to see itself as steered by forces beyond its control and to put less trust in its own ability to find solutions, looking instead for ideas from without that it can imitate.

4.1.6 The Way Time is Viewed: All groups face situations when a large number of tasks must be completed within a given period of time. Some groups learn to view time *sequentially*, so that tasks are completed in the shortest possible time. Such groups tend to enter into a 'race' against time. Other groups view time as a *synchronous* dance in which efforts are coordinated.

4.1.7 Balancing Equality and Hierarchy: Groups have to face issues relating to how decisions are made on behalf of others. Groups that value *equality* aim to allow people to contribute to a consensus on matters that affect them. In other groups *hierarchy* is valued, with certain people being given authority to make decisions on behalf of others. While it is desirable to have people contributing to issues that affect them, it is time consuming. Groups that gave everyone the opportunity to have their say on every issue that affects them would become immobilised, so they need to establish the level at which issues will be resolved hierarchically.

4.2 Macro-Cultures in English-Speaking Democracies

Research by Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars (1997) has revealed that companies in English-speaking democracies, such as New Zealand, Australia, Britain, Canada and the USA, operate within an identifiable macro-culture that is quite different from East Asian macro-cultures. In particular, English-speaking democracies are characterised by a preference for universalismover particularism; individualism over communitarianism; analysis over integration; and achievement over ascription.

These values are structural elements that shape the way in which organisations are run and the decisions managers make. Many New Zealand managers may believe that it is simply 'best practice' that leads them to want individuals within their organisations to compete with one another in striving to meet measurable performance standards. This form of business, though, reflects a cultural preference for the *achievement* of *analytically* derived, specific criteria, applied *universally* to *individuals* throughout the organisation.

Russell Ackoff (1997) traces the advent of these values in Western thought to the Renaissance and the exploration by Europeans of humanity's place in the world. He suggests that the resulting work of mathematicians and scientists such as Galileo, Descartes and Newton, which emphasised exploration of universal principles through analytical inquiry gave birth to the 'Machine Age.' The advances that became possible through analysis and use of technological innovations established these values as central to patterns of Western thinking.

The earlier discussion of cultural dynamics and the tendency toward schismogenesis would suggest that there must be a downside to these values; a loss experienced through over-emphasis of certain values at the expense of their complementary opposites. Ackoff notes that one such downside of 'Machine Age' thinking is the dehumanisation of work.

Trompenaars (1993) has taken this further in his comparison of analytical and integrative cultures. Analysis means to deconstruct or 'cut something into pieces.' Clearly, analysis is not something you would want to do to a living thing—cutting up a living system would mean its death. So, analytical thought tends to treat systems as though they are non-living, even if they are alive. Trompenaars uses the example of a football made of leather produced from the hide of a dead bull. You can kick the football to make it go where you want. If you tried to kick the live bull to get it to go where you want you will experience greater difficulty. As a living system, the bull has its own will and desires.

Within Western macro-cultures we can see this tendency to treat organisations as footballs rather than living communities. Much of the language of business uses machine metaphors, such as references to 'gearing up' or 're-engineering' (Hock, 1997). And rather than deal with 'people' there is a tendency to refer to 'human resources' or 'competencies' as though we are working with non-living systems.

4.3 Masculine and Feminine Values

Hampden-Turner (1994) has pointed out that the values of universalism, individualism, analysis and achievement are characteristically masculine, and that particularism, communitarianism, integration and ascription are characteristically feminine. That is, while individual males and females can act in accord with either value set, a pattern that distinguishes females from males is a tendency to value relationships ahead of rules (particularism); to be sensitive to the relationships between objects rather than focused on the objects themselves (integration); to acknowledge long-term commitment over short term contribution (ascription); and to value cooperation over competition, social engagement over isolation (communitarianism).

This situation creates a dilemma for women working within many Western organisations. According to Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars (1997) those companies are likely to be suffering from an over-reliance on values of universalism, individualism, analysis and achievement. Because of the process of schismogenesis, executives within these companies may not be aware of the values-based nature of their difficulties, and may be struggling to get out of crises with actions based on more of the same values that got them into the mess in the first place. At the same time, the 'missing' values the organisations need—particularism, communitarianism, integration and ascription—are available to the organisation, being strongly held by female members in particular. For women to influence the values of the organisation they must first get to positions of influence. As communities, organisations allow into positions of influence those who do what the community values. So paradoxically, in order to get short-term success in the form of advancement women need to demonstrate *masculine* values even though doing so is detrimental to the organisation in the long-term.

In organisations where cultural issues are left unmanaged this paradox is unlikely to be addressed consciously; instead, women who wish to succeed adopting the masculine values of the organisation. Hampden-Turner (1994) found this to be the case in researching the values of American women executives whose responses to values-based dilemmas showed them to be equally universalistic and analytical as American male executives, and to be *more* individualistic and achievement-oriented. Hampden-Turner argues that women have learned this is what they must do in order to reach executive levels in organisations.

Ramsey and Ramsey (1996) found similar results for women in the aviation industry. Women flying instructors had largely adopted the values of individualism, analysis and universalism characteristic of this very masculine industry.[1] This is despite evidence that critical challenges facing aviation, as indicated by research into accident causation, are primarily human rather than technical (Warren & O'Neill, 1993) and indicate a need for more feminine values.

4.4 Functional Cultures

Analytical, rule-based thinking has been associated with functions of the left-hemisphere of the brain, where the right hemisphere, it is postulated, is responsible for more intuitive, visual and creative thinking (Hermann, 1988).

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[1] It is a useful shorthand to refer to cultures as 'masculine' or 'feminine' where they reflect the value sets mentioned above. This shorthand reflects the experience of working within such environments. This has been discussed by the author in the article Ramsey, D. & Ramsey, P. (1996). Feminine and masculine values in flight instructing. *Women in Management Review*, 11, 8, 4-12 (see Appendix 1c).

Trompenaars (cited in Hampden-Turner, 1990) endeavoured to explore differences in modes of thinking across organisational functions, relating them to right and left hemisphere functions. His research framed right and left hemisphere functions as complementary opposites that corresponded directly with the cultural values discussed earlier.

Trompenaars presented managers with dilemmas that forced them to choose how they would resolve a situation along continuums between: 'the individual' and 'the team'; 'profit' and 'stakeholders'; 'tasks' and 'relationships'; judging performance against a 'single criteria' and within 'historical context'; valuing 'income responsibility' and 'opportunity to work with a new group'; and working 'on your own' or 'together'. The first item in each pair was the left hemisphere option.

Trompenaars consistently found that managers in the Finance function of organisations were more likely to answer at the left-hemisphere end of each continuum than managers in other functions. The Sales and Marketing function in particular was more likely to answer at the right hemisphere end of the continuum, perhaps reflecting the more creative nature of the function.

Evidently the nature of the Finance function inclines managers within it to focus on isolated figures, single out individuals for blame and to concentrate on profitability as the company's only real goal.

What is the effect on companies when the left hemisphere thinking of Finance is allowed to dominate? Richard Pascale (1990) contrasted the differences between automobile manufacturers General Motors and Honda, and found that the role of the Finance function within the two companies was remarkably different, and generated fundamental differences in the way the companies operate.

Pascale interviewed a wide range of managers at General Motors (GM) concerning the company's malaise during the 1980s. A consistent theme running through the interviews was that the Finance function was the dominant influence in the company to the detriment of the organisation's health. 'Finance people' occupied the top slots of not only Finance, but other disciplines and product divisions as well. Since 1958 all GM Chairmen were Finance alumni. GM managers reported this resulted in the company becoming completely focused on quantifiable criteria, in particular volume and revenue. Quality was an issue to which managers paid lip service but which GM had enormous difficulty managing.

In contrast with GM, Honda has taken action designed to generate healthy conflict between varied points of view within the company, and to avoid allowing one function to dominate. Honda has spun-off R&D and Engineering as two separate, wholly owned companies with their own presidents. Manufacturing operates within the parent company acts as the third 'leg of the stool.' Honda executives describe these groups as three tribes, each with a distinct identity and pride in what they do, and who continually prod Honda to view matters from different vantage points. This philosophy is supported by management practices such as having each Honda manager exchange jobs for a two-week period each year with a counterpart in another function.

Pascale (1990) contends that conflict occurs naturally within organisations and that the way organisations respond to conflict directly affects their capacity to learn. Organisations require processes of both alignment (fit) and differentiation (split). Boundaries created within organisations by the process of differentiation are both necessary and arbitrary, giving rise to contention. Organisations must transcend this complexity by orchestrating the processes of fit, split and contention. Pascale says:

> "This is not just an incremental increase in the difficulty of the management task. It requires a different mindset. It looks to the tension (or dynamic synthesis) between contradictory opposites as the engine of self-renewal." (p. 24)

We can, without difficulty, frame Pascale's work as the management of interdependent opposites. He acknowledges the need to achieve a dynamic balance between complementary values or viewpoints, and provides the General Motors example to illustrate the schismogenetic process that can occur when one function or viewpoint is allowed to dominate in an organisation.

4.5 Occupational Cultures

Citing the research by Trompenaars mentioned earlier, Hampden-Turner (1990) observed that the pattern of values held by managers appeared to change as they progressed up organisational hierarchies, so that General Managers held a distinctive pattern of values different to any of the functions from which they had come. The pattern noted by Hampden-Turner was that people entering senior levels of management became more holistic in their views (a right hemisphere function, according to

Trompenaars) while at the same time more likely to value individual accountability (a left hemisphere function).

This finding has been confirmed and expanded upon by Schein (1996), who has explained it as part of a pattern of 'occupational' subcultures that can be found within every organisations. Schein has found that every organisation develops three subcultures: an 'operator' culture based around the organisation's operational people; an 'engineering' culture based around the designers and technocrats who drive the organisation's core technologies; and an 'executive' culture that develops around the organisation's executive management.

The operator culture is the most difficult to describe, according to Schein, because it is shaped by the core technology of the organisation in which it functions. However, there are a number of characteristics shared across organisations. More than other groups within an organisation, operators understand that human interaction is necessary for work to be done efficiently. They realise that no set of rules adequately allows for the complexity of the operations in which they are engaged, because their work is governed by a multitude of interdependencies. This realisation means that they are more likely than other occupational groups to value collaborative endeavour and teamwork.

The engineering culture forms around those within the organisation charged with designing products and systems. Typically they aim to engineer systems with utility, elegance and permanence that is not dependent on the fickle nature of operators. They like to design systems, therefore, that require standard responses from operators, or which do not require operators at all. Schein found that within engineering cultures people believed they could master the world, overcoming any problem using linear, cause-and-effect quantitative thinking to find solutions.

Executive cultures form around those with high levels of managerial responsibility within an organisation. As people move up through organisation hierarchies the necessity of maintaining the financial health of the organisation becomes a primary concern. Because they are managing other managers rather than operators, and because the size of their units makes it impossible to know everyone individually, their work involves a high level of abstraction and more 'impersonal' ways of acting. According to Schein, people in an executive culture tend to assume they are in a war with competitors, in an economic environment that is potentially hostile, and that there will be casualties within the organisation. They often feel isolated and alone, but need to appear in control. They are happy to see experimentation as long as they stay in control. While they see the need for the organisation to act as a team their desire for control means that they prefer accountability to rest with individuals. The value placed on relationships and community is lost as executives rise through organisational hierarchies. They develop a tendency to treat people as a necessary evil; in an ideal world their organisation would be a well-oiled machine free of the complication of people. They would rather get necessary activities done through contract-based relationships than treat the organisation as a community.

The differences between the operator culture and the other two involve clear differences in values, with operators emphasising community and viewing people as the source of an organisation's wealth, where engineers and executives focus on task and view people as the problem. There are also key differences between engineers and executives that create potential for conflict. Engineers seek elegant and permanent solutions to problems that will be safe under all circumstances. They are attracted to costly solutions executives believe the organisation cannot afford. Executives feel strongly that their world is one of imperfect information in which permanent solutions are impossible: they seek short-run coping while struggling to maintain a strategic focus.

Schein's work mirrors that described earlier on the macroculture of Western business. At an operator level the need for community generates a feminine occupational culture. In contrast to this, within engineering and executive cultures the Western preference for masculine values incline people toward 'machine' models of organisation that emphasise individualism, analysis, universal routines or procedures, and achievement. Schein points out the dangers of schismogenesis arising from the cultural differences existing between the occupations. Each of the three value systems can justify itself and point to contributions it makes to the health of organisations. This justification, however, can lead those in each culture to ignore the contributions of the other two. Schein calls for cross-cultural 'dialogue' that bridges the occupational boundaries found within organisations, saying that this is a key to organisational learning.

Broadly speaking, we have seen that organisations within Western nations, and English-speaking democracies in particular, have a cultural tendency to over-emphasise values of individualism, analysis, universalism and achievement. These values are reinforced by the macrocultures of the societies in which organisations operate and are further embedded in many organisations by power invested in more masculine functions such as finance, and in the executive and engineering occupational groups.

We can see evidence in a number of areas of schismogenetic processes taking place around these masculine values at the expense of the complementary feminine values. We have already discussed how Hampden-Turner (1993) found evidence that women in US companies were under pressure to adopt more masculine values. Similarly, traditionally 'personal' and human functions within organisations such as 'Personnel'—which we might expect to be more feminine—are under pressure to adopt masculine values in the way they operate, in order to establish their credibility within organisations (Torrington & Hall, 1987).

According to the cultural dynamics described in Chapter 3 this over-emphasis on masculine values must, in the long-run, be unhealthy for organisations as the need for feminine values of integration, community, particularism and ascription goes unmet.

4.6 Enter the Learning Organisation[2]

In 1990 Peter Senge brought the subject of the 'learning organisation' to international attention with the publication of his book *The Fifth Discipline: the art and practice of the learning organisation.* In his book Senge highlighted the need for learning within companies and organisations of all sorts. He discussed some of the problems inherent in the way most corporations are run that limit their ability to learn, terming these problems organisational 'learning disabilities.' And, he outlined five areas of organisational practice, termed 'disciplines,' which would contribute to an organisation's capacity to learn.

We can see in Senge's work a desire to respond to the unhealthy cultural patterns described above. Senge listed seven learning disabilities, and as we will see, each of these is symptomatic of an over-emphasis on masculine values. The seven disabilities are:

"I am my position": When people identify strongly with the role or position they have within an organisation their thinking tends to be narrow and inflexible, limiting the degree to which they can learn outside arbitrarily set boundaries. This disability directly relates to valuing analytical thinking at the expense of integrative thinking.

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[2] The author first published this analysis of Senge's disabilities and disciplines as P. Ramsey (2001). Learning to be Complete: the challenge of cultural dynamics. *Reflections,* 3, 1, 49-56 (See Appendix 1d).

"The enemy is out there": When people focus on objects rather than the relationship between the objects they will tend to fall into this thinking trap. Where they experience conflict they will view it as stemming from one or other of the parties involved, rather than it being a problem with the relationship. For conflicts involving you, the tendency will be to blame others rather than seeing your own role. This disability also relates directly to analytical thinking, and inability to see integrative elements of structure such as relationships.

The illusion of taking charge: Managers often feel a strong desire to act, to show they are in control of problems they face. They become more aggressive in fighting what they see as 'the enemy out there' rather than seeking to understand the true nature of the situation they face. This disability reflects the masculine value of analysis identified with 'the enemy is out there' along with the aggressive competitiveness associated with groups that value individualistic achievement.

The fixation on events: The illusion of taking charge encourages managers to focus on particular events, rather than taking a long term view. With a long term perspective managers are more likely to identify patterns to the events that affect them, and identify the relationships between events, so they can intervene at a structural rather than event level. The fixation on events is another symptom of analytical thinking, which cuts off a particular event and treats it in isolation from larger patterns and relationships which require integrative thinking to perceive.

The parable of the boiled frog: This disability gets its name from the inability of frogs to detect gradual changes in temperature. When placed in warm water that is heated gradually a frog will fall asleep and not notice the water temperature rise to boiling. Similarly, within organisations people are more likely to focus on immediate threats and opportunities rather than gradual processes. This disability is closely related to the fixation on events and analysis.

The delusion of learning from experience: While we learn best from experience, within most organisations the consequences of our actions do not affect us directly. Consequences may occur distant from us in time or location, perhaps landing in a different part of the organisation, or arriving after the decision-maker responsible has been replaced by someone else. It is this new person who receives the blame or acclamation for the consequences they experience. This unhealthy process arises from the same analytical view of the world responsible for the fixation on events. Further, it appeals to the individualism that leads people to discount problems they may be creating for people elsewhere in their community.

The myth of the management team: Groups of managers in Western organisations often spend greater effort creating a facade of cohesiveness rather than building their capacity to work together on embarrassing and threatening issues that confront them. Fights over turf and avoidance of anything that makes individuals look bad, even though these endanger the health of the team, are direct expressions of individualism at the expense of communitarianism.

Where Senge's disabilities are symptoms of schismogenetic processes leading to overemphasis of masculine values, the disciplines he encourages organisations and teams to develop are expressions of the neglected feminine values we have been discussing. The five disciplines Senge advocates are:

Personal Mastery: The learning organisation rests on the creative orientation of its individual members. For people to create what is important to them they need to (1) have a vision of what it is they want to create; (2) see current reality as it really is; and (3) live with the creative tension that exists between vision and reality, while they work to bring their vision into reality. According to Senge this discipline involves combining the *intuition* necessary for vision (a feminine value) with the *rationality* needed to see reality as it is (a masculine value). Senge links personal mastery with *communitarian* qualities of 'seeing our connectedness to the whole,' the quality of 'compassion' and 'commitment to the whole.'

Mental Models: For people to learn together, they need to recognise that we do not interact with the world directly. Rather we see the world through our mental models: the unique set of assumptions, stories and images we carry in our heads. Acknowledging the diversity of mental models in an organisation enables people to see the challenges they face from a variety of perspectives, and to understand what would otherwise be perplexing interactions between members with different sets of assumptions. This discipline represents a move away from a universalist position of assuming that there is one, true meaning that people should give to what they observe. Rather, it takes the more feminine position of valuing the *particular* meaning someone gives based on a unique perspective.

Shared Vision: According to Senge, you cannot have a learning organisation without a shared vision: a shared goal that is important to those making up the community. The discipline of shared vision relates directly to the value of *communitarianism*; of having people bound together by common aspiration rather than pursuing individualistic goals.

Team Learning: Many 'teams' are really collections of individuals who happen to work together. The discipline of team learning aims to align the energies of individuals so that they act together as one integrated system. The key to this discipline is appreciation for the power of conversation and dialogue based on regard for others in the team. Team learning speaks directly to feminine values of *communitarianism* and *integration*. It also relates to the value of *ascription*, in that people are ascribed status because of their membership in the team. Their commitment to the vision of the team, rather than their relative levels of achievement, qualify them to contribute to conversations within the team.

Systems Thinking: Systems thinking is a discipline for seeing and understanding patterns of interconnectedness in complex situations. It is the antidote for the problems created by analytical, cause-and-effect thinking, and is thus directly related to the feminine value of integration.

The discussion in this section has shown a connection between the learning disabilities described by Senge and problems created by schismogenetic patterns operating around masculine values in Western organisations. There is also a clear relationship between the disciplines of organisational learning outlined by Senge, and the complementary and neglected feminine values. Evidently, understanding cultural patterns provides a valuable insight into the need for, and operation of learning organisations.

4.7 Summary

The previous chapter discussed how culture can be understood as patterns of dilemma resolution shaping what is valued by groups. In this chapter we have seen that organisations are likely to be affected by patterns of values in macrocultures and subcultures. Organisations in English speaking democracies such as New Zealand typically resolve dilemmas by valuing universalism, analysis, individualism and achievement to the neglect of particularism, integration, communitarianism and ascription. This pattern corresponds to value differences between genders, so that the macro-culture of New Zealand could be described as masculine.

Sub-cultures, some of which may be thought of as masculine or feminine, also form within organisations. These may operate around functional groups such as Finance or Human Resource Management. Subcultures also form around occupational groups which can be characterised as operators, engineers and executives.

The pre-eminence of masculine values in Western business is one way of explaining the need that has been created for learning organisations. Learning organisations allow for the expression of feminine values that are typically neglected in Western organisations.

The research upon which this thesis is based will explore further cultural patterns within New Zealand business, and the effect these patterns are likely to have on organisational attempts to create learning organisations. In the next chapter, we will explore in greater depth what is meant by the term 'learning organisation' as it is used in managerial literature.

Chapter 5: Perspectives On The Learning Organisation

In the preceding chapters we have seen how the anthropological concept of culture has been applied to an understanding of organisation not reflected in analytical and mechanistic views. Cultures—including macrocultures and subcultures—can be understood as patterns of values that are held as unconscious assumptions about the way things are best done by members of the group. Values have complementary opposites that are represented in other cultures or subcultures.

We have also considered how the cultures of many organisations in English-speaking democracies have over-emphasised 'masculine' values of universalism, analysis, individualism and achievement. This over-emphasis represents a schismogenetic process that has created a need for complementary values of particularism, integration, communitarianism and ascription. Key concepts associated with the learning organisation can be framed as an attempt to meet this need.

In this chapter we will explore further what is meant by the term 'the learning organisation.' Garvin (2000) concluded, after reviewing the literature, that a clear definition of learning organisations has proved elusive over the years. Management literature contains a number of divergent perspectives on the nature of learning organisations, and this variety of definitions may account for the problems of definition discussed by Garvin. Cultural techniques discussed earlier will be used to resolve potential conflicts between what might appear to be opposed perspectives.

To begin the chapter we will consider how the term learning is commonly used and how this differs from its usage in literature on learning organisations. We will then address a concern regularly expressed within the literature: that learning is something that cannot be done by organisations.

Firstly, consider what it means to 'learn.' This is a term that can be, and has been used in a variety of ways by the general public and by people writing about learning organisations. Understanding the various ways in which the term is used can go some way toward reconciling different perspectives on what it means to be a learning organisation.

5.1 What is Learning?

A key element shaping the way people think about learning organisations is the word 'learning.' While contributors to managerial literature may have a specialised meaning in mind, business practitioners may interpret their work based on common usage. So, we will start by examining the roots of the word 'learning' and dictionary definitions of the term.

According to Shipley (1984) 'learn' has its origins in an Old English word *leis* meaning 'track,' 'furrow' or 'footprint.' The Old English term *leornian*, which means 'following a track,' is also derived from *leis*. These words stem from the Latin *lira*, meaning 'furrow.' The word 'delirious' is derived from *lira*, and literally means to be 'out of the furrow.' So, we can get a sense of the original meaning of the word 'learning' by imagining an experienced farmer creating a straight furrow. A young farm worker then turns his hand to the plough, trying to master its use so that his furrows follow the straight one already set.

For a time 'learn' in English could also be used properly to mean 'to teach,' as in the phrase "I'll learn you" which is now considered ungrammatical. This meaning is also derived from the Latin *lira* and still exists in Germanic languages with words such as *lehren* in German and *lora* in Swedish. In English the word 'lore,' meaning 'knowledge' still survives.

This etymology suggests that the original intention of the word 'learning' was to portray a convergent process. A standard existed, like a straight furrow, and learning involved building one's capacity to meet that standard. As we will see, many perspectives on learning organisations emphasise a divergent process of experimentation and transformation. Such divergent processes aim to shift people and organisations out of existing furrows, making them 'delirious.'

Dictionary definitions of learning tend to follow the convergent intent of the root words with emphasis on acquisition of existing knowledge, as shown in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Dictionary Definitions of Learning

Dictionary	Definition
Oxford English	"To acquire knowledge"
Chambers	"To be informed; to get to know; to gain knowledge, skill or ability"
Webster's New World College	"To get knowledge of a subject, skill or art; to come to know what happened; to come to know how; to fix in mind, or memorise; to acquire as a habit or attitude."
Collins Modern English	"To gain knowledge or skill"

Some definitions used in connection with organisational learning appear to indicate a convergent process. Argyris (1990) defines learning as 'detecting and correcting error.' Error is any mismatch between intention and implementation. The apparent convergence in Argyris' definition, however, is deceiving. The convergence is not a matter of learning *what* is known by experts, but rather learning *how* to achieve what is desired. Because error is often created by unhealthy patterns of interaction—which Argyris refers to as 'skilled incompetence' learning requires people to move away from this existing 'furrow' of behaviour in order to achieve what is intended. Argyris and Schon (1978) emphasise that learning has only happened when new knowledge is translated into different behaviour that can be replicated.

Other definitions of learning more directly emphasise divergent processes. Kolb (1976) refers to learning as a 'process where knowledge is created through the transformation of experience.' Thus new experiences can generate new knowledge. Chew, Leonard-Barton, & Bohn, (1991) and Leonard-Barton (1992) similarly include the creation of knowledge in definitions of learning.

The definition of learning provided by Heifetz (1994) puts a heavy emphasis on non-convergent processes. He suggests that learning has to do with 'resolving adaptive problems.' By this he means problems with no easy answers and which thus require new ways of doing things. Adaptive problems, as described by Heifetz, are those which cannot be resolved by reference to an expert. Experts are able to resolve technical problems; that is, problems where there are established solutions which can be applied.

According to this view, the convergent process of acquiring technical solutions from an expert does not constitute learning because no new knowledge is being created.

Kim (1998) treats learning in a more convergent way, by presenting it as the process by which competence is built. Learning is what enables people (whether as individuals or collectives) to progress to greater levels of competence, and Kim outlines five levels. At the *novice* level people have a beginning awareness of a subject. At the *advanced beginner* level there is a marginally acceptable level of performance, where someone can reliably follow prescribed steps in a process. At the next level, *competence*, a learner has all the technical information needed and has begun to internalise new skills. At a *proficient* level, people can reliably apply the tools they have in a highly flexible though still conscious manner. Finally, at the *expert* level people have a fully internalised capacity for perception and action and utilise both intuitively.

It is evident that some of the definitions of 'learning' presented in organisational learning literature differ in emphasis from dictionary definitions that indicate the more common usage of the term. Common usage, as represented by major dictionaries, emphasises convergent processes where organisational learning literature emphasises divergent processes.

5.2 Disputes Over Terminology

Before examining perspectives on the nature of learning organisations, we should consider whether there is any value in doing so. Some have suggested that we should not. Beck (1989) says that learning organisations may well be a chimera. Let's consider two objections to the term 'Learning Organisation.'

The first is that the term is an example of inappropriate anthropomorphism. That is, it is misleading to speak of an organisation as if it were human. Further, it is wrong to suggest that an organisation can learn, when learning is something individuals do (Thompson, 1995; Dixon, 1997).

Paradoxically, the second objection is that the term implies that only some organisations learn, when evidently learning is done by all organisations. Nevis and DiBella (1998) suggest that while learning in some organisations may be dysfunctional it is still learning. It is more appropriate, therefore, to speak of 'organisational learning' rather than a 'learning organisation.' Nevis and DiBella argue that organisational behaviour is studied in universities around the world, but calling some organisations 'behaving organisations' makes little sense—behaviour takes place in all organisations. Let's consider each of these objections in turn.

Is it inappropriate to speak of an organisation learning in the same way an individual learns? Is this inappropriate anthropomorphism? This argument is based on the assumption that an organisation *is not* a living human system—that only individuals can be thought of as living human systems. This assumption makes sense within Western nations who demonstrate an over-reliance on individualism and analysis. Within communitarian and integrative cultures people would struggle to understand the argument, reasoning that it is obvious that a collective—the family, tribe, community, society or organisation—has a life of its own. Senge et al. (1994) illustrate this by referring to tribes of the Northern Transvaal in South Africa. Implicit in the language of these tribes is the spirit of *ubuntu*; a belief that a person is a person because of other people. Failing to acknowledge others implies that they do not exist. Similarly, the Bible has many examples of collectives described as single living entities: for example, husband and wife are referred to as "one flesh" (Genesis 2:24) the nation of Israel as God's "servant" (Isaiah 43:10) and the Christian congregation as a "body" (Colossians 1:18).

Research carried out by Royal Dutch Shell Oil (De Geus, 1997) investigated why, when most major corporations had a life-expectancy of only 40 years some were able to survive much longer. They concluded that people within the organisations that survived viewed their companies as "living human systems". People within organisations with short life expectancies viewed their organisations as non-living, "economic entities." The Royal Dutch Shell researchers concluded that thinking of an organisation as a living human system is appropriate because it supports organisational health.

As a living human system an organisation will have its own personality, separate from the personalities of individuals within it. It will also be able to learn. Kolb (1976) has framed learning as a cycle of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation. Each of these processes can be performed by a collective: a group a share an experience, engage in a reflective conversation on their observations, develop shared concepts or theories and jointly undertake experiments. In doing so, they are learning, not simply as individuals, but rather as a collective.

So the argument that the term 'learning organisation' is inappropriate anthropomorphism is spurious because organisations are already living human systems. The argument is an example of the schismogenetic process described in Chapter 4: an over-reliance on masculine values of individualism and analysis leading to the rejection of interdependent values of communitarianism and integration.

The second argument against the term is that all organisations learn, therefore the term 'learning organisation' is tautological. Nevis and DiBella (1998) prefer use of the term 'organisational learning' in talking about what and how organisations learn.

In making this argument Nevis and DiBella choose to isolate the word *learning* in the term 'learning organisation' and treat it as an adjective, rather than treat the whole term as a compound noun. Treating the term this way suggests that someone's purpose in using the term is to categorise organisations as either 'learning' or 'non-learning' organisations.

Is that what people writing in the field are truly seeking to do? Examination of much of the literature suggests this is not the case. Many writers use the term 'learning organisation' as a compound noun, in an effort to articulate a vision of what organisations can be. Kofman and Senge (1993) say that the term is a linguistic creation that aims to describe an ideal organisation: one that anyone would like to work within. Senge says that the learning organisation has always been an idea (Fullmer and Keys, 1998). Redding (1997) too describes the learning organisation as an ideal, saying it is unlikely that any 'pure' one exists. Gephart et.al (1996) and McGill and Slocum (1994) likewise emphasise that the value of the term is in what it *does* as a vision: that it is a 'journey not a destination' and an 'on-going process not an end product.'

These authors evidently find the vision of a 'learning organisation' one that is meaningful and inspiring; it is a vision that moved them to write. The individuals and organisations that have assimilated these views and are pursuing the goal of becoming a learning organisation similarly give evidence that it is a meaningful and inspiring vision.

Nevis and DiBella's preference for the term 'organisational learning' discounts the value of the 'learning organisation' as a vision. In doing so, they too indicate a preference for masculine values. They choose a term that can be applied universally to organisations, rejecting a vision that may be adopted by particular organisations. In keeping with analytical thinking, the inspirational and emotional impact of the vision is discounted, and learning is framed instrumentally—as a means to economic ends—rather than as a way of being for a living company.

Both of the arguments against use of the term 'learning organisation' appear to have their roots in assumptions associated with the over-reliance on masculine values. These arguments, we could say, are examples of the kinds of thinking that give rise to the need for learning organisations. So, rather than rejecting the term, we will, in an effort to understand the vision, now examine more closely perspectives on what constitutes a learning organisation.

Why consider more than one perspective? The 'Learning Organisation' is considered by many to be a vision of the sort of place in which we would all want to work (Kofman and Senge, 1993). As a vision it operates to bring about change. Gallwey (2000) has explained that change is a naturally occurring process in humans when they detect a difference between the performance they desire and their current level of performance. The key to change happening naturally is awareness of actual performance. You can only improve those aspects of performance about which you are aware. Different perspectives on what is a learning organisation have the power to make people aware of a range of ways in which their organisations might improve.

To identify perspectives I carried out a review of literature on the Learning Organisation, giving particular attention to the way authors defined the term and described the characteristics of Learning Organisations. It was apparent that people were using the term 'learning organisation' as a metaphor that captured what they considered ideal in healthy organisations. As a metaphor, the term operates as a mechanism for making explicit impressions and understandings that could not otherwise be easily expressed (Bateson, 1972; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). There is, however, a danger in discussing metaphors that people hold dearly. Bateson explains that metaphors lose some of their power when people become aware that they are metaphors rather than the thing itself. For this reason we will discuss these as 'perspectives' rather than talking of metaphors, or variations on the 'learning organisation' metaphor.

As the literature review progressed, six broad perspectives emerged. Each represented a different way of explaining what was meant by the term 'learning organisation.' Each perspective acts as an alternative vantage point from which to view the subject. Some writers discuss learning organisations from more than one perspective. The six perspectives are shown in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2 Perspectives on Learning Organisations

Six ways of understanding what it means to be a 'Learning Organisation':

1. an environment that fosters continuous individual learning;
2. an organisation made up of groups in which people learn to work as one;
3. a 'new workplace' that more fully represents diverse human values;
4. an organisation that is conscious about learning and the management of knowledge;
5. an environment that encourages experimentation, risk taking and transformation; and
6. an organisation that continually builds capacity.

Each of these will be considered in turn, and in the next chapter we will see how the different perspectives can be reconciled.[1]

In discussing the learning organisation as a vision we were introduced to Kofman and Senge's (1993) phrase: "the kind of place in which we would all like to work." This appears to provide the same kind of touchstone definition as Bower provided for the study of organisational culture. You will recall that Bower defined culture as "the way we do things around here." Kofman and Senge's definition is similar: it is broad enough to act as an umbrella for diverse perspectives while communicating the spirit others attempt to capture. As a consequence, it provides us with a reference point from which to critique perspectives.

To some it may seem simplistic that such a broad and diverse field is categorised into just six perspectives. This relatively small number is deliberate, keeping in mind that the purpose of this work is to synthesise fragmented contributions in a way that is accessible to practitioners. I have deliberately focused on the essence of each perspective, sacrificing some of the richness of individual contributions in order to generate a coherent story of the differences and similarities that make up the field.

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[1] This discussion of the six perspectives on Learning Organisations has been accepted for publication as the following book chapter: Ramsey, P. The Learning Organisation Metaphor, in P. Kumar (Ed.). *Organisational Learning for All Seasons* (Due for publication in May, 2003). See Appendix 1e.

5.3 Continuous Individual Learning

For many, the experience of work involves little in the way of personal development. Work is a chore and a drudgery. Many see an inescapable clash between the needs of individuals and the needs of organisations. Organisations impose as many onerous duties upon workers as they can, while workers seek to protect themselves against exploitation by the organisation for which they work.

In his seminal work *The Human Side of Enterprise* Douglas McGregor (1960) outlined his belief that this alienation came about because of self-perpetuating assumptions held by executives. According to McGregor it is common for managers to assume that people naturally dislike work, shirk responsibility, and need tight controls on their behaviour if they are to be productive. This set of assumptions about people, called 'Theory X' by McGregor, lead managers to exercise governance in restrictive and controlling ways. People naturally rebel under these kinds of conditions, leading to anti-organisation behaviours that confirm for managers that their Theory X assumptions are accurate.

McGregor believed that a different set of assumptions—Theory Y—would lead to a different climate and more productive worker-manager relationships within the organisation. Theory Y assumptions include beliefs that work is natural, that people readily accept responsibility and exercise self-control when in the service of objectives to which they are committed.

McGregor's work sets the scene for what many see as key to the learning organisation. In many organisations it is assumed that the potential of people to develop is limited and that there is little to be gained by further investments in their capability. Investments such as training or opportunities for personal growth are not only costly to the company, but likely to be wasted, as the now-more-valuable employees are more attractive to other employers who will offer them higher paid work. Consequently, competitors benefit from the company's investment in development. While it may be politic for managers to talk about people in the company as assets, in practise it appears sensible to treat them as expenses. After all, the investment made in developing employees cannot be recouped by selling employees who are no longer needed.

This type of thinking leads to practises most people will recognise: training opportunities treated as privileges for employees; training budgets among the first to be cut when money is tight; and replacing experienced people with younger, less experienced workers who are cheaper to employ. In keeping with the self-perpetuating nature of assumptions in McGregor's work, skills learned in formal training fail to take root in the harsh environment created by managers' beliefs that training is a waste of effort, and consequently confirm those assumptions.

Many people have experienced the frustration of working within organisations where these restrictive assumptions reign. Many have of vision of an organisation that operates on different assumptions, more aligned with Theory Y. In particular, an organisation in which all members are encouraged to learn and develop (Honold, 1991; Pedler, Burgoyne, & Boydell, 1991; Kramlinger, 1992) and the organisation deliberately facilitates this learning and personal development (Beck, 1989; Morris, 1995; Mumford, 1995). It is a vision of an organisation with a culture that supports and rewards learning (Pedler et.al, 1991, Kline & Saunders, 1993), even re-awakening the joy of learning in all members of the organisation (Kline & Saunders, 1993).

There are several reasons for pursuing this vision of the learning organisation as an environment that makes continuous learning possible. Continuous learning by its members provides the foundation for rapid organisational change or transformation (Pedler et.al, 1991; Morris, 1995; Joyce, Wolf & Calhoun, 1993; Thompson, 1995; Butler, 1996). Contrary to Theory X assumptions, continuous learning and personal development can be the basis for organisational achievement with learning a direct driver of the company's capability to generate revenue, profit and economic value (Beck, 1989; Thompson, 1995). Further, Harman and Harman (1990) suggest that economically successful societies have reached a point in their development where it no longer makes sense for consumption to be its central focus. They believe that the real purpose of society and its institutions is to create opportunities for self-development.

An organisation that stimulates continuous learning in this way requires some assumptions that appear unusual in comparison to those held by most companies. From a continuous learning perspective, in a learning organisation it would be assumed that: everyone can be a source of ideas, those closest to the problem are likely to have the best ideas and new ideas are valuable (Kramlinger, 1992); a mistake is an opportunity to learn (Kramlinger, 1992, Kline & Saunders, 1993); information technology should be used to inform and empower people (Pedler et.al, 1991; Marquardt, 1996); and the organisation should facilitate as much transfer or sharing of knowledge as possible (Pedler et.al, 1991; Kline & Saunders, 1993).

While this perspective represents a significant shift away from Theory X assumptions and business practices based on analytical values it does not fully adopt the neglected values described in earlier chapters. In particular, the 'continuous learning' perspective focuses on *individual* learning rather than explicitly viewing the learning organisation as a living human system. It is a perspective that can easily fall prey to two barriers to organisational learning described by Dilworth (1995): the tendency to treat learning as an individual phenomenon, rather than something that can involve groups; and the fixation on formal training as the pre-eminent method of making learning happen. Notably, Butler (1996) warns of the danger of 'shifting the burden' of development from individual organisational members to formal courses, while maintaining an individual learning perspective.

The second of these traps is evident an article by Gordon (1992). Entitled "Performance technology: a blueprint for the learning organisation," Gordon's article assumes that a learning organisation is one in which plenty of individual learning happens. As a consequence, he suggests that Performance Engineering techniques derived from analytical and behaviourist approaches to learning can bring about the same outcomes as Senge's five disciplines of the learning organisation: desirable performance integrated with organisational goals.

It is worth noting that Gordon advocates techniques based around masculine values of individualism and analysis, and frames his argument in mechanistic terms. In essense, Gordon sees no need for an approach involving neglected values. We can conclude that a downside of the 'continuous individual learning' perspective is that it does not go far enough. People will feel that it can be achieved without the organisation truly becoming "the sort of place in which we would all like to work." This type of thinking gives rise to processes described by Davenport and Prusak (1998) where organisations that value knowledge but do not value communitarianism lure bright people into the company and then isolate them.

In particular, the 'continuous individual learning' perspective neglects integrative and communitarian values. Another of the major themes in literature on the learning organisation speaks directly to this need—it is the 'groups learning to work as one' perspective.

5.4 Learning to Work as One

Imagine being invited to dance by an attractive partner. You love to dance, and you admire your partner's technique. But something unusual happens. Your partner has arranged for the two of you to be dancing in separate rooms. The same music plays in each room, at the same time. Are you dancing together?

People within an individualistic, analytical culture may be able to reason that you are dancing together. Those who value integration and community, and who know how dance partners adjust to one another in a cybernetic way understand that it is ludicrous to describe the arrangement as 'dancing together.' Something is missing when you do not truly connect.

Many people know the feeling of failing to connect with colleagues at work. They may be doing interdependent work in close proximity to one another, but it feels like they are dancing in different rooms. Ewen (1988) has commented that over the last century there has been a pervasive lament of aloneness, isolation, invisibility and insignificance.

These feelings of isolation create for people feelings of fragmentation. They generate existential anxieties based around questions like "Who am I?" According to Mitroff and Pauchant (1990) the effect of this isolation on organisations is disastrous. In their studies of organisational crises, they found that existential anxieties lay behind most of the tragedies befalling corporations. They concluded that most organisations are incapable of managing change or finding their way out of crisis because they are so fully taxed in attempting to manage personal and existential crises of their own members.

Most people have had the experience of working within a group where, due to the personal or existential crises Mitroff and Pauchant mention, some members begin to play political games. Others in the group feel compelled to engage in the same game-playing behaviour in order to defend themselves. The result is a group that may present a facade of being a cohesive team, but which in reality is too busy with its internal strife to be as productive as it ought. Senge (1990) described this situation as the 'myth of the management team.'

We described earlier how, within integrative cultures, the collective can be viewed as one living system. The destructive political games described above break down the integrating forces that enable groups to function as one. Clearly, groups that are able to find a different way of relating are able to form connections that are more rewarding personally, and more productive for the organisation. Marquardt (1996) describes what is sought as a group learning collectively, as if it were a single brain.

Senge has suggested that the generative point in becoming a learning organisation is small groups forming around commitments (Galagan, 1991). This concept of an organisation made up of groups acting as one to achieve shared visions constitutes a major theme within organisational literature on the nature of learning organisations.

Within such groups, learning takes place at two levels. The group learns to operate as a collective, and also learns together about the nature of its work.

In learning to operate as a collective, Wuagneux (1998) describes a process of learning similar to that described by Kim (1998). As the group becomes expert at working with one another they internalise their knowledge of what it takes to make others in the group effective. Their unconscious competence at managing the internal process of working together frees them to focus their conscious effort on what the group is trying to achieve.

According to Wuagneux, groups develop this skill at working together by going through five phases of development. He terms the initial phase *courtship* where members have a high degree of energy and commitment to the purpose of the group, but knowing little about one another. As the group learns to work together they move into a phase of *contemplation*, where they develop structure in the group, and begin expressing complex ideas and questions. The next phase is *challenge*, where the group experiences instability as members ask "what's in this for me?" Working through this challenge the group develops to the stage of *connection*, in which individual strengths are surfaced. Finally, the group reaches the phase of *cognition*, characterised by wellness and close relationships that enable them to tackle greater challenges.

Isaacs (1993) outlines a similar process, using a metaphor of a container. In the process of making steel, metal needs to be melted. For this to happen safely, steel millers must use a container—a crucible—that is strong enough to handle the energy contained in the molten metal. In the same way, groups must often deal with issues that contain lots of energy—issues that spark strong feelings in people. To do so safely, the group needs to operate within a strong container of trust, respect and social connection.

When people first come together no such container exists. Most people sense that this is the case, and so only deal with issues that have little energy (for example, talking about the weather) or find defensive ways to take the energy from what they are saying. According to Isaacs, at this early stage they are dealing with instability *of* the container.

When people sense that the container is strong enough, they will begin to express their views with more energy. Hence there is a shift from instability *of* the container, to instability *in* the container. As the group works through this instability they are able to achieve alignment; that is, they work together as one.

According to Ryan (1995) this process is fundamental in an organisation becoming a learning organisation. Because a group cares for relationships between its members they engender more open, honest communication, setting the scene for new insights into the issues that face them. Many writers refer to the open and honest communication that can take place within an aligned group as 'dialogue,' suggesting that it is an identifying characteristic of learning organisations (Bohm, 1990; Senge, 1990; Kramlinger, 1992; Kline and Saunders, 1993; Kofman and Senge, 1993; Ellinor and Gerard, 1998).

Dialogue is conversation that reflects the integrative nature of a group learning together as one entity. Bohm (1990) contrasts dialogue with 'discussion.' The word 'dialogue' is derived from Greek, and implies a stream of meaning flowing through a conversation. In contrast, discussion has the same root as 'percussion' and 'concussion,' and implies a clashing of ideas. According to Bohm, discussion emphasises analysis and breaking up of ideas. Bohm's description of discussion emphasises masculine values described by Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars (1997): analysis, individualism and competitive achievement. We can imagine discussion as a conversation that takes place in a container that the conversation systematically destroys as it progresses. Dialogue, on the other hand, takes place within the container and builds the container as it progresses (Ellinor and Gerard, 1998).

From this perspective of learning organisations as companies made up of groups that learn as one, the concept of learning as an *individual* process becomes meaningless. If you are a part of a group and you gain some new knowledge, there must be a social impact. Perhaps you belong to a group in which highly competitive discussion is the norm. In that case, your new knowledge may be destroyed while still in a fragile state, by others who are not prepared to be influenced by it. Or, you may choose not to share what you know with others in the group out of fear of how they react. Or, you may decide to use the knowledge to 'win' the next discussion. Any of these reactions results in a weakening of the group's container.

If, instead, you belong to an aligned group that practises dialogue, everything *you* learn is being learned by the 'single brain' that is the whole group—that is, it will inform future conversations within the group, so it is as good as known to everyone. From this perspective, then, all learning must be understood as a social process (Dilworth, 1995; Schwandt, 1995; Stamps, 1997).

While the goal of this perspective is to have the group as a whole learning together, there are skills that individuals can learn in order to contribute more effectively to dialogue. These include skills of suspending judgement, balancing advocacy and enquiry, identifying unstated assumptions, and reframing problems (Senge, 1990; Senge, Kleiner, Roberts, Ross, Roth, & Smith, 1993; Ellinor and Gerard, 1998).

The process of dialogue resembles closely that of improvisational drama and music. A dialogue is an improvised conversation, where structure and meaning emerges over time. It contrasts with many of the meetings we often experience at work, where we can predict ahead of time the likely pattern the conversation will follow. Isaacs (1999) suggests that people can become more effective at dialogue by becoming sensitive to and skilled at four roles common to both dialogue and improvised drama: offering, yielding, bystanding and blocking. People typically develop patterns of contributing only one or two of these roles in conversation, doing so at an unconscious level. By becoming sensitive and competent at each of the roles we are more likely to be able to protect the fluidity and movement in our conversations.

A further way that groups can improve the quality of the conversations is by becoming more aware of the different ways members contribute to group functioning. Differences have the potential to cause conflict within a group, or to be used by the group to enable more robust functioning (Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars, 1993; Ramsey, 1997). It has been suggested that groups seek to better understand and utilise differences in personality style (Myers and Myers, 1980; Keirsey, 1984), the team roles people naturally adopt (Belbin, 1981), and the learning preferences of members (Kolb, 1975).

A particularly powerful means of helping groups utilise members' capacities is the understanding of 'human dynamics' as described by Seagal and Horne (1996). Human dynamics is the study of the different ways people process information. The way that you process information will affect how you experience the world, your memory, and the way you learn and communicate. Seagal and Horne explain differences in ways people process information as the dynamic interaction between three 'principles' operating within all humans: the mental, emotional and physical principles. Seagal and Horne (1996) have discussed in detail five major ways that these principles interact dynamically: the Mental-Physical, Emotional-Physical, Emotional Mental, Physical-Mental and Physical Emotional dynamics.

The Mental-Physical dynamic is relatively uncommon. People with this dynamic experience the world in a linear, objective way. The way they process information gives them a particular capacity for objectivity and long-term thinking.

The Emotional-Physical dynamic is much more common. People with this dynamic experience the world in an emotional way, being particularly attuned to relationships. They value variety and connection with others, and have an enhanced capacity for creativity and maintenance of relationships.

The Emotional-Mental dynamic also enables people to experience the world in an emotional way, though with a particular sensitivity to ideas. People with this dynamic naturally seek variety in their experiences, placing high value on movement and exploration of what is new. It is a dynamic that encourages learning through experimentation.

The Physical-Mental dynamic inclines people to purposefully establish structure that is substantial and real. Rather than deal in the abstract, people with this dynamic prefer to work with what is concrete. Similarly, the Physical-Emotional dynamic inclines people toward the concrete, in this case with a tendency toward dealing with natural, whole systems.

These five dynamics contain natural complementarities. The Emotional-Physical dynamics provides a capacity for maintenance of group relationships, where the Physical-Mental dynamic provides a focus on task completion. Mental-Physical is objective where Emotional-Mental and Emotional-Physical are relational. Physical-Mental and Physical-Emotional dynamics deal in the concrete where Mental-Physical and Emotional-Mental are more at home in the abstract. A group made up of people who represent a variety of dynamics are thus more able to deal with a variety of challenges in a sustainable way. Understanding the differences in human dynamics existing in a group enables the group to operate in unity.

Human dynamics also provides an insight into why the 'group operating as one' perspective is incomplete. With its focus on relationships within groups making up organisations, this perspective is by nature relational in a way that corresponds to the Emotional-Physical dynamic. The strengths of the perspective are in its ability to encourage healthy on-going relationships between people at an interpersonal level. It promotes a view of organisation based around teams rather than hierarchy (Albert and Bradley, 1997). At the same time, it is a perspective that does not allow for some of the needs of people making up organisations. These needs, corresponding to some of the other dynamics outlined by Seagal and Horne, form the basis for the other perspectives.

For example, where the Emotional-Physical perspective views the learning organisation from the level of the group looking up toward the whole organisation, a Mental-Physical perspective would naturally look at the learning organisation from the top down, conceptualising the 'whole' first. We will be calling this view the 'New Workplace' perspective.

Where the Emotional-Physical perspective is comfortable working with intangible relationships, the Physical-Mental perspective would seek to turn the intangible into substantial, concrete organisational systems and structures that embody learning. We will call this view the 'Conscious about Learning' perspective.

Where the Emotional-Physical perspective defines learning organisations in terms of social relationships, an Emotional-Mental perspective would emphasise experimentation, change and risk-taking. We will call this view the 'Experimentation and Change' perspective.

Finally, where the Emotional-Subjective perspective emphasises building a learning organisation with a focus on the relationships amongst groups, the Physical-Emotional perspective encourages a whole system view of the organisation, which we will call the 'Capacity-Building' perspective.

We will continue our review by considering the 'New Workplace' perspective.

5.5 The New Workplace

Standing at the bottom of the hill looking up, is a very different perspective from standing at the top of the hill looking down. If you enter a small town and spend time in amongst various social groups—families, sports teams, work groups etc.—you will find out about the nature of those entities from a 'bottom of the hill' perspective. If you speak to the mayor of the town, who happens to be interested in the overall health of all the groups and the town as a whole, you will get a 'top of the hill' perspective. Similarly many contributors to literature on learning organisations seek to describe the nature of the whole organisation rather than focus on particular relationships within teams. These contributions may still accept that it makes sense to view teams as the basic unit of the organisation, however their focus is on what they want the groups to share. In particular, they seek to describe 'the way we do things around here' in a learning organisation; they naturally take a cultural or anthropological approach to their subject.[2]

We saw in earlier chapters of this work that cultures can be understood in terms of complementarities—unconscious reliance on one value over its interdependent opposite. We call this the 'new workplace' perspective to capture what many writers express: existing organisations have cultures that have over-emphasised particular values and that the organisations of the future will need to have a different balance of values. While we have already discussed the learning organisation as a response to schismogenetic over-reliance on masculine values, we have not considered how others have framed the same concern.

Underlying the identified need for a new workplace is the view that existing workplaces are unnatural and that elements essential for sustainable worklife are missing. Csikszentmihalyi (1997) has found that most people feel a deep ambivalence toward work and that young people learn this ambivalence early in life. Young people quickly label some activities—such as those associated with academic subjects—as 'work' and others—such as involvement in sports—as 'play.' In most people's minds work is necessary but unpleasant, where play is pleasant but useless.

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[2] For a discussion of this perspective see Ramsey, P. (2001). Natural Learning: Creating Productive Learning Environments. In Roche, A. & McDonald, J. (Ed.s). *Systems, Settings, People.* Adelaide: NCETA, 139-144 (See Appendix 1f).

For some, the learning organisation is an opportunity to address this split between work and play. They desire work to be a place where people can experience full psychological engagement that they find invigorating (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997; Senge, 1998). Interestingly, in order to reconcile work and play, for this to be the case workplaces may have to take on the characteristics of a game: in particular people need to be able to act in a context of safety (Deming, 1986; Kim & Mullen, 1993; Zlevor, 1994; Fullmer & Keys, 1998) and there needs to be opportunity to learn through doing (Fullmer & Keys, 1998). Blanchard (1998) describes the learning organisation as one in which the classroom and the workplace have merged. This merging has been described as a 'renaissance' of learning at work (Thompson, 1995) and a 'reawakening' of the joy of learning (Kline & Saunders, 1993) indicating that it is viewed as the healing of an arbitrary schism of values.

Others have suggested that the split that needing to be healed at work is that between outward action and inward personal growth. Pirsig (1989) describes this as a split between classical thinking and romantic thinking. The need for executives to combine growth of inner 'character' and outward action is a theme in contemporary leadership literature (Covey, 1989; 1990; 1993; Kouzes & Posner, 1993; Koestenbaum, 1991; Blyde, 1997).

Zuboff (1988) has suggested that mechanisation and automation have contributed to this split by allowing organisations to achieve innovation without craftsmanship, or sentient involvement. Automation, however, builds into machines what is already known. Intelligent technology will allow for an informating process where the user is no longer a machine 'operator' but rather, the person works with technology in a way that generates new knowledge that can then be captured in the technology—mutual interaction between people and the things with which they work.

From the basis of Pirsig and Zuboff's work, Lessem (1991) described a learning organisation as one that aligned the inward-oriented process of learning, with the outward-oriented process of innovation. According to Lessem, many organisations attempt to innovate and change without learning, which he compares to trying to continuously exhale without taking time to inhale.

Where some describe the 'new workplace' as a merging of values, others frame it as a place characterised by alternative values to those currently dominating the business environment. As we have discussed in earlier chapters creating a culture with 'merged' values or a balance between opposing values, can be done by sequencing values to achieve circularity between the opposites (Hampden-Turner, 1990). When people advocate a shift from one set of values to an alternative set they are seeking balance while describing the movement as if it was linear rather than circular.

Viewed in this linear way, the new workplace is described as a 'learning' organisation, to distinguish it from other types of organisation. For instance, it is a *learning* organisation as opposed to a *knowing* organisation (Ryan, 1995). The theme of 'learning versus knowing' is fundamental to understanding the new workplace perspective.

Most of us are familiar with the shared assumptions of a Knowing Organisation culture. In most organisations it is assumed that: the majority of people are ignorant and need to be told what to do by experts (Ryan, 1995; Handy, 1995); experts in the training department can care for the learning needs of people by predicting in advance the skill and knowledge requirements of people and by supplying these in advance (Baldwin, Danielson, & Wiggenhorn, 1997); that managers are appointed to their positions in recognition of their superior levels of expertise and therefore should tell others what to do; and problems we face have an established solution known by an expert somewhere who will be able to tell us what to do (Heifetz, 1994).

These knowing assumptions lead to a variety of familiar situations. People within organisations become reliant on experts. This reliance reinforces peoples' belief in their own ignorance, feeding further reliance and the inability to implement the lengthy and detailed recommendations of the experts (Kofmann & Senge, 1993; Heifetz, 1994). As we have seen, complex problems often involve dilemmas based around opposing values. There are typically some 'experts' advocating one value and other 'experts' advocating another. In the knowing organisation we often assume that the person who advocates their position most vigorously and effectively is the most expert; an assumption that gives rise to argument and contention (Tannen, 1998) rather than groups working together as one. People in knowing organisations respond to problems through a process of technical rationality: diagnosing the problem; identifying the appropriate expert; having the expert solve the problem; and implementing the solution (Senge & Kim, 1997).

A Learning Organisation, from this perspective, is one based around a different set of assumptions. Learning assumptions include that: people at all levels of the organisations have competence they can contribute (Kim & Mullen, 1993) and that conversations between people throughout the organisation are essential if these contributions are to be made (Brown & Isaacs, 1997); people can learn to solve their own problems through the process of coaching (Baldwin et al., 1997; Cory & Bradley, 1998); and that learning is a function of both what people have been told by experts and the tacit knowledge within them that can be elicited through questions (Revans, 1980).

Organisations that operate off these assumptions are more likely to find that learning emerges from experience and can spread throughout the organisation. It allows people in different fields to share their knowledge rather than use it against one another in 'expert' battles. It enables bridges to be built between islands of technical rationality (Senge & Kim, 1997). Links across functions and between levels of the organisation allow all to share in both thinking and doing (Victor & Boynton, 1998).

Where some writers discuss two orientations organisations may have, McGill and Slocum (1994) make finer distinctions. They define 'Knowing Companies' as those dedicated to finding the one best way to do business, and 'Learning Organisations' as those that see every experience as an opportunity to get smarter. They describe two other orientations: 'Problem Solving Companies,' who see business as a series of problems to be fixed; and 'Understanding Companies,' who rely on strong cultural values to guide action. Kim (1990; 1991) also talks of the difference between Problem-Solving Organisations who seek to get out of the crisis they are in, and Learning Organisations who seek to understand the nature of their problems so that they can operate with greater leverage.

The 'new workplace' perspective takes a view from above that seeks to encapsulate the nature of the whole organisation. It is natural, therefore, that there is a heavy emphasis within this body of literature on the role that leaders take in establishing such a workplace (Senge, 1990b) and the type of leadership that is required.

Heifetz (1994) expresses the leader's role in terms of the dilemmas they face. The complexity of organisational problems means that there are no 'easy answers' able to be provided by experts. Leaders face problems that require bridging the gap between values people hold and the reality they face. The leaders role is to mobilise conflicting perspectives in order to generate creativity and learning, combining existing values and knowledge in new ways so that innovative solutions can emerge.

Where Heifetz describes the role of leaders, others have sought to explain the orientation of those leaders who will be able to create the relationships required within the new workplace. The 'traditional boss' operating within a knowing organisation is motivated by personal drive to achieve within a competitive, independent environment, and uses a 'command and control' approach to achieve desired results (McGee-Cooper & Trammell, 1999). The outcome of this approach to leadership is relationships that are emotionally neutral or cold (Block, 1993).

In contrast, leaders in the new workplace are encouraged to act as servants (Greenleaf, 1982; McGee-Cooper & Trammell, 1999) or stewards (Block, 1993) to others in the organisation. This requires a desire to serve others and share information; to coach and to listen; to act collaboratively; and to make personal sacrifices for the good of the whole.

The contrast between these two approaches to leadership parallels the two models of organisation—machine and community—described earlier. For those who imagine the organisation is a machine, the leader's role is that of 'driver.' Drivers may have a neutral relationship with their machinery, knowing that they might soon be trading it in on a new model that gives them better performance. For those who see their organisation as a community the need for warm and upbuilding relationships is apparent. Communities work most effectively when people focus on the contribution they can make to others rather than what they can get for themselves (Reynolds, 1984).

In summary, the new workplace perspective views the learning organisation from above, seeking to describe the nature of the whole and concentrating on issues of culture and leadership. The name 'learning organisation' is used to communicate the essence of such a workplace, and to describe what is an essential difference between it and traditional workplaces which primarily value expertise and problem solving.

While this perspective appeals to those who appreciate an overview, it is far too abstract for many. As a perspective it sacrifices the concrete details to explain more clearly the principles on which the learning organisation operates. It is no surprise that other writers seek to explain learning organisations in a much more practical and concrete way, emphasising the detail of what it takes to build such an enterprise. This 'conscious about learning' perspective is the one we will look to next.

5.6 Conscious About Learning

Imagine that you are working in a university where a variety of courses are run each semester, each with its own course manager. One of your colleagues takes a semester of leave and you are asked to stand in temporarily as course manager. As you run the course you see opportunities to make improvements. You implement your ideas, many of which work. By the end of the semester you have learned a great deal about the course, and this learning is represented in the changes you have made.

Before the next semester begins your colleague returns from leave and takes over management of the course. You are keen to share your learning, but your colleague is not interested in the changes you have made. The course goes back to the way it was run before your learning.

In this situation, while learning has taken place it has been learning for you rather than for the organisation. This situation happens because organisations are often conscious about managing the core business of enterprise (in this case, the courses, students and so forth) but do not consciously manage the knowledge contained within the organisation. Organisational successes and failures are more likely to be attributed to visible factors such as leadership or structure, rather than less visible factors like learning processes used (Schwandt, 1995). Contributing to the situation is the challenge involved in managing something as abstract as 'knowledge' especially where that knowledge is tacit. This perspective, as described by Garvin (1993) and Marquardt (1996), is that a learning organisation is one that is continually transforming itself to better collect, manage and use knowledge for corporate success. Tobin (1996) describes this as 'transformational learning.' As Kim (1990) points out, this implies that a learning organisation needs to manage its learning processes so that they are consistent with its strategy and objectives. This needs to be done actively and explicitly so that no areas of strategic importance are neglected (Kim, 1991).

The 'conscious about learning perspective' is, as we have mentioned already, concerned with making explicit and concrete what is otherwise intangible and, thus, easily ignored. This perspective provides us with the opportunity to clarify the links between the learning organisation and two emerging conceptual frameworks that are closely related: 'organisational memory' and 'knowledge management.'

When we take the position that organisations are living human systems we imply that they have memories, just as individual humans have memories. And, just as learning can be thought of as a process of committing something to one's memory, organisational learning can be thought of as embedding knowledge in the organisation's memory.

The idea of collective memory has its roots in the Durkheim school of sociology (Stein, 1995). Argyris and Schon (1978) linked information systems memory to organisational learning, and Weick (1979) articulated the link between learning and memory at an organisational level. According to Weick (1979):

> "If an organisation is to learn anything, then the distribution of its memory, the accuracy of that memory, and the conditions under which that memory is treated as a constraint become crucial characteristics of organising." (p. 20)

Based on the idea that organisational learning must involve building the organisation's memory, Huber (1991) suggested that learning processes include knowledge acquisition, information distribution within the organisation, information interpretation and organisational memory. Dixon (1997) suggested that processes of knowledge retrieval from organisational memory needed to be included in any discussion of learning processes. Garvin (2000) builds on these descriptions of process in providing his definition of learning organisations:

> "A learning organisation is an organisation skilled at creating, acquiring, interpreting, transferring and retaining knowledge, and at purposefully modifying its behaviour to reflect new knowledge and insights." (p. 9)

Walsh and Ungson (1991) have extended the idea of an organisational memory in order to make explicit the implications for management. They suggest that knowledge and learning entering an organisation can be stored in 5 'bins':

1. The memories of individuals in the organisation and the culture—that is, memories that are collectively retained.
2. Transformations, or processes by which inputs are transformed into outputs. So a manufacturing organisation, on learning that a certain technique improves the quality of its outputs, may embed this knowledge in its processes by changing the tools that are used, and so on.

3. Structures, such as the roles given to organisational members. These particularly influence retrieval of knowledge. Someone in the organisation may have the knowledge that others need, but not have the role that allows them to share what they know.
4. Ecology: the physical structure of the workplace holds information about membership. The physical layout of a classroom, for instance, does much to shape the behaviour of teacher and students, so knowledge of how interaction can best take place can be 'memorised' by changing the layout.
5. External archives: all manner of external agencies hold knowledge that is useful to an organisation. Clients, for instance, may have learned how best to get want they want from an organisation, so they act as an extension of the organisation's memory.

To see the effect of organisational memory consider what might happen as we attempt to have teachers adopt a new approach to working with students that involves having regular opportunities for the students to talk to one another during a lesson. It might be that one teacher has tried this, and learned that the conversations generated in class improve the depth of students understanding. Imagine how the knowledge stored in a variety of 'bins' might impact on adoption.

Firstly, as we train teachers how to put this new process into effect we have to deal with the knowledge stored in each of their heads. Their classroom experience may mean they have deep-seated beliefs that classes need to be kept under control. Allowing uncontrolled conversation thus feels wrong and even though the teacher may accept the idea in principle they may not be able to articulate why they find the new practice disturbing.

Equipment in the rooms in which teaching takes place is designed to enable the teacher to impart knowledge to the class. It may be standard practice to use PowerPoint displays which are built around knowledge of presenting information with high levels of clarity (such as in the default use of bullet points). The 'transformation' bin is thus filled with knowledge about how classroom behaviour ought to be, and is not aligned with the desired change.

When teachers begin to introduce the change they encounter difficulties. When seeking help and clarification knowledge in the 'structural' bin leads them to turn to colleagues—who are also struggling with the change—or their academic heads, who don't fully understand what is intended and can only encourage them to "try harder."

The people who really understand the change are in roles that do not give them opportunities to contribute.

The ecology of the classrooms may also contain embedded knowledge that frustrates the change. Tiered seating and furniture fixed to the floor so that all students face the teacher represents knowledge learned by people about how to help the 'teacher imparts knowledge' process. Thus the furniture makes student-to-student conversation uncomfortable, and the sterile room doesn't represent conditions under which people are used to talking to one another.

Finally, the students (an external archive) have memories and therefore expectations about how classes ought to be conducted. They are used to judging teachers on the basis of clarity, and have come to believe that if knowledge isn't in the examination it is not important, so see little point in listening to one another. Note that the examination is a transformation 'bin' storing knowledge about how to process students, and the knowledge contained within it is not aligned with the change.

As well as organisational memory affecting change, change can have dramatic affects on memory. Graham (1995) suggests that organisations that reorganise or restructure too often suffer confabulation—memory loss involving confusion as to identity and understanding of how to get things done efficiently.

So, if we seek to move new learning from the individual memory of a member of the organisation, to the collective organisational memory we face a challenging task, created by the interconnectedness of the organisational memory system. Organisational architecture represents learning of the past (Senge et. al, 1994) which may not be aligned with the strategic direction of the organisation. Techniques and interventions such as systems thinking (Kim, 1990), use of conversation to generate shared meaning (Brown & Isaacs, 1996; Ellinor & Gerard, 1998) and the development of 'learning histories' (Roth & Kleiner, 1998) are among those suggested as ways of uncovering and building organisational memory that supports strategic initiatives. Roth and Kleiner (1999) frame the challenge of working with organisational memory as building 'reflective infrastructure': processes of sharing knowledge and building collective experience so that new groups of innovators "stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before" (pg. 460).

Efforts such as these are often discussed in terms of 'Knowledge Management' within organisations. Having developed a much greater understanding of the nature of knowledge and how it acts as a source of advantage for organisations (Earl & Scott, 1999), we need to be much more conscious of how we deal with the knowledge assets of the organisations to which we belong (Allee, 1997). Gorey and Dobat (1996) suggest that the need to manage knowledge signals a shift from the industrial era to a new era where intellect is the economic basis for success. Attempts to manage knowledge have been described as building organisational memory, as we have already discussed, and also as building organisational intelligence (Allee, 1997, 1998), organisational intellect (Quinn, Anderson, & Finkelstein, 1996), or building knowledge-creating companies (Nonaka, 1991). According to Allee (2000), knowledge cannot be separated from the communities that create it, use it and transform it, so it makes sense to view ‘knowledge management’ as an integral part of a learning organisation, rather than a separate issue.

Our growing understanding of knowledge involves being able to distinguish between different types of knowledge, and manage these different types accordingly. What different types of knowledge exist within organisations?

Durrance (1998) discusses the key distinction between ‘tacit’ and ‘explicit’ knowledge. Explicit knowledge is that which can be committed to paper, and is thus easily transferred between people. Tacit knowledge is that which people learn by doing. Those things a master craftsman struggles to describe represent tacit knowledge of how something is best done. Quinn et al. (1996) make distinctions along a continuum from explicit to tacit, starting with cognitive knowledge (or ‘know what’) at the explicit end. Further along the continuum are advanced skills (‘know how’), then system understanding and trained intuition (‘know why’). Finally, at the tacit end of the continuum is self motivated creativity (‘care why’). As one moves along the continuum from ‘know what’ to ‘care why’, the knowledge represented becomes increasingly important and less easily expressed.

Nonaka (1991) has described how some companies manage the process of working with tacit knowledge. With techniques such as the use of metaphor, individual organisation members are enabled to articulate—or, make explicit—tacit knowledge. This can then be shared throughout the organisation, so that the knowledge is held by the organisation as a whole. As organisational members use the knowledge they have learned they internalise it, so that it becomes tacit once more. The knowledge has moved from individually-held tacit knowledge through to organisationally-held tacit knowledge.

Earl and Scott (1999) differentiate between organisational and technical knowledge, indicating that each of these types may be either tacit or explicit. This gives four categories of knowledge, each of which needs to be managed differently if organisations are to leverage the value of its knowledge assets.

Finally, Dixon (2000) focuses on the learning process: that is, managing knowledge based on how it needs to be transferred, rather than the type of knowledge being dealt with. She distinguishes between five types of knowledge transfer. The first is *serial transfer*, where a team needs to transfer knowledge gained on one project to other projects the team is undertaking. *Near transfer*, involves a transfer of knowledge from one team to another team undertaking a similar task. *Far transfer*, involves transfer of tacit knowledge from one team to another where the tasks are not similar, or 'non-routine.' *Strategic transfer* differs from far transfer in scope. Where far transfer still relates to application of knowledge to a discrete project, strategic transfer deals with knowledge that impacts large parts of the organisation and therefore is far more complex. *Expert transfer* is transfer of explicit expert knowledge about tasks done infrequently. An organisation may have many people needing occasional bits of knowledge easily supplied by an expert. They need to be able to identify the expert and clearly state what they need to know so that the transfer can happen. Processes and techniques can be designed to ensure that each type of transfer can be managed effectively, and those organisations that are conscious about designing knowledge systems thus constitute learning organisations (Ulrich, Jick & Van Glinow, 1993; Olonoff, 2000; Garvin 1993).

Garvin (2000) suggests a number of litmus tests to establish whether an organisation practicing techniques associated with management of knowledge truly constitutes a learning organisation. He poses the following questions: Does the organisation have a defined learning agenda? Is the organisation open to discordant information? Does the organisation avoid repeated mistakes? Does the organisation lose critical knowledge when key people leave? Does the organisation act on what it knows?

In summary, the 'conscious about learning' perspective is based around the proposition that organisations are living human systems and, as such, have 'memories' in which they store knowledge. A learning organisation is, therefore, one that is skilled in committing important knowledge to its memory in a way that enables it to be easily accessed by the organisation as a whole. This perspective encourages executives to become skilled at distinguishing between types of knowledge and the processes by which it can be transferred throughout the organisation.

It is readily apparent that this perspective, with its emphasis on learning processes and refined distinctions between types of knowledge, places high value on the mechanics and detail of learning. Some people feel that this level of detail is unnecessary, and obscures the point of learning. They are more inclined toward a perspective focused on learning as experimentation, which we will consider next.

5.7 Experimentation and Change

Where some members of a community are inclined to value detail and purposeful planning, others are more naturally concerned with movement and change (Seagal and Horne, 1997). The 'experimentation and change' perspective reflects this orientation toward action and movement.

For many, the clearest evidence of learning is changed behaviour. On that basis, a learning organisation is one that is constantly changing or transforming itself .

This perspective is often expressed as a response to the business environment. The turbulent, competitive nature of business means that there is an imperative to learn (Owen, 1991), and that the rate of learning must exceed the rate of change in the environment (Revans, 1980; de Geus, 1988). The need to learn is often expressed as requiring strong emotional engagement—or "zealous commitment" (Littlewood, 1999)—throughout the organisation. And it is presented as part of a process of natural selection where one either learns or is eaten; indeed the 'wolf at the door' is a metaphor used by some authors taking this perspective (Watkins & Marsick, 1993; Hutchens, 1998).

The following excerpts are also indicative of the imperative nature of the perspective that learning is about change and transformation.

> "Change is the constant. The only way to survive is as a learning organisation—to continuously adapt, learn, be change-responsive, to reinvent the reality and the future, to transform" Rolls (1995) p. 8

> "...for a company the message is "learn or die" and the learning must focus on dominance." Vollmann, (1996) p. 23

Collins and Porras (1994) make a direct link between this approach to organisational success and Darwinian evolution. In their words visionary organisations "try a lot of stuff and keep what works," thus allowing incremental change through experimentation to drive learning. Collins and Porras found many examples of successful executives for whom experimentation and natural selection were guiding ideas. Evolutionary processes are theorised to involve two central processes: undirected variation through random genetic mutation; and natural selection, where those changes that are beneficial survive, and those that are unsuccessful die. Applied to organisations, the variation is unlikely to be purely randomised, but rather the result of individuals and groups responding to particular situations that arise in their work.

It should be noted that Collins and Porras (1994) discuss natural selection as a process of change *within* organisations, where business ideas either produce useful ideas or do not. The 'learn or be eaten' imperatives mentioned earlier are concerned with natural selection *between* competing organisations; as Schein (1993) suggests, organisations have to learn to adapt faster and faster or 'be weeded out in the economic evolutionary process.' The common understanding is that evolutionary processes drive learning and that organisations need to continuously transform themselves in order to survive.

Using evolutionary processes as a model for learning organisations assumes that change is synonymous with learning. The reasoning appears to be (1) the purpose of learning is to produce changed behaviour, therefore (2) change—or adoption of new behaviours—represents learning. Consequently, we can say that (3) a learning organisation is one that is in a constant state of change (Thompson, 1995; Honold, 1991; Peddler et. al, 1991; Morris, 1995). Based on this rationale, a company can work to become a learning organisation by increasing the readiness to change of its individual members (Dym, 1998; Dym & Huston, 1998) and of the organisation as a whole (Redding & Catalanello, 1994).

The 'experimentation and change' perspective owes a great deal to the work of Kurt Lewin (1935), who described the change process as consisting of three stages: unfreezing, moving and refreezing. The 'learning organisation' is, in this sense, either permanently unfrozen or operating with a speeded up unfreezing process. Schein (1993, 1996) has suggested this can be done through the management of anxiety, so that the fear of not learning—Survival Anxiety—becomes greater than the fear of the unknown—Change Anxiety.

This perspective on the learning organisation is also consistent with behaviourist views of learning. Behaviourist writers tend to view mental processes as too difficult to observe, and assume that understanding of mental processes such as learning need to be inferred by observable, relatively permanent changes in behaviour (Skinner, 1974; Greenberg & Baron, 1993). As Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars (1993) suggest, this is an approach to learning that is particularly representative of US values, so we might expect that the 'experimentation and change' perspective is one that is shared by people working within the US business environment, or are significantly influenced by US models of organisation.

While many people taking this perspective might do so with the relatively simple view that learning and change are synonymous, others might present a more complex explanation of the meaning of learning. Kleiner (1996), for example, describes the work of Charlie Krone at Procter and Gamble's Lima plant in the 1960s. Krone and other executives at the plant fostered continuous improvement through experimentation by conceiving of the organisation as an 'open system.' As such, the plant would be a 'learning' organisation because to its members it was a 'work in process' that would never be finished. At no point would members of the organisation declare that they had learned what there was to know and that the plant was in its final form.

According to Kleiner, Krone's efforts at Procter and Gamble were significantly influenced by researchers such as Fred Emery and Eric Trist who were, at the time, beginning to articulate the analogy between corporations and living systems (Trist & Sofer, 1959; Emery, 1969). Leonard-Barton (1992) has continued with the application of ecological concepts to manufacturing, suggesting that manufacturing plants be operated as 'learning laboratories' that challenge the assumption that errors can be eliminated by careful planning.

It may be evident in the discussion of the 'experimentation and change' perspective that some literature on change emphasises the imperative of "learn or die" while others focus on generation of ideas through experimentation. Given that evolutionary processes are theorised to consist of both generation of variation and of natural selection, we are treating the work as one body of literature. There is a marked difference in tone, however, between work that emphasises experimenting to create new knowledge and work that says organisations will die if they do not change.

When the 'new workplace' perspective was discussed earlier, leadership was mentioned as a key issue. From that perspective, the leader's role is to create a work environment that holds to the values associated with learning. The 'experiment and change' perspective also emphasises leadership, though the role is conceived differently. Within this perspective, leadership is associated with stimulating movement and change in order to bring about transformation (Vollman, 1996) in response to competitive pressures that feature highly in the minds of top executives (Schein, 1996).

The 'experiment and change' model appeals to many people, particularly executives, because it directly addresses the immediate pressures and realities of the business environment. For some, however, this perspective appears to be self-defeating. By emphasising continuous change in response to competition, this perspective encourages organisations to get into escalating 'change' conflicts with other organisations, thus driving up the level of turbulence in the business environment. If this is the case, learning organisations may well be what systems thinkers call a "fix that fails": a response to a problem that ultimately makes the problem worse. Others may find it unattractive because the change that it promotes appears to be change for its own sake. It is change away from current practice rather than toward any ideal. Another perspective evident within the literature conceives of the learning organisation as one moving toward an ideal: we will call this the 'capacity building' perspective.

5.8 Capacity Building

Shortly before her death, systems thinking pioneer Donnella Meadows wrote about her ambivalence to change in our society. In her column "The Global Citizen," she wrote:

> "Simple miracles. Satisfying work, like baking bread or building a shelf. Fresh, delicious food. . . . Health for land and people. Sometimes I wonder, with all our supposed progress, what we're rushing toward and what we're leaving behind." "An Ode to the Cow and the Milk," January 25, 2001

Evolutionary processes do not generally resolve the concerns Meadows was expressing; they deal with problems or opportunities as they arise without exploring deeper rigidities or prevailing assumptions shaping behaviour in a system (Blake & Mouton, 1968).

Throughout this chapter we have dealt with perspectives that enable people to give meaning to the term 'learning organisation,' and most of the perspectives we have discussed are based on the assumption that organisations are ecological, or living human systems. While many people associate evolutionary processes with change in ecological systems there are other, observable processes that we can also use to conceptualise change and learning. Of particular interest is the process of 'maturation,' where a living system builds its capacity to meet the demands of the environment as it goes through its life. Intriguingly, this change of view enables us to take a perspective that answers the concerns expressed by Meadows.

Hawken (1993) explains the process of ecological maturation by describing how a forest develops. If you were to scrape a patch of ground bare, there would be an immediate burst of growth as the area was colonised by fast-growing weeds. The weeds represent an immature system, in that soil quality is sacrificed for growth, there is little diversity and the plants are generally low in usefulness. During this immature stage, growth is emphasised, enabling the bare ground to be covered.

After a time, a mature ecosystem starts to develop, with weeds giving way to a diverse range of more complex plants until eventually the 'climax' system—a community of plants and organisms co-existing—is attained. In the immature system most energy is being used to create growth. In the climax system energy is devoted to the continuation of existing communities. Where the immature system sucks energy from its surroundings in order to generate growth, the climax system is self-sustaining.

Similarly, humans can be viewed as living systems that, over time, develop their cognitive and affective capacities until they reach the climax state of adulthood (Bower, 1979). As with ecological systems, immaturity in humans is associated with growth and instability, while adulthood is associated with stability. Learning still takes place within adults, though it does not represent the fundamental changes in reasoning capability that occur as children develop (Wadsworth, 1996).

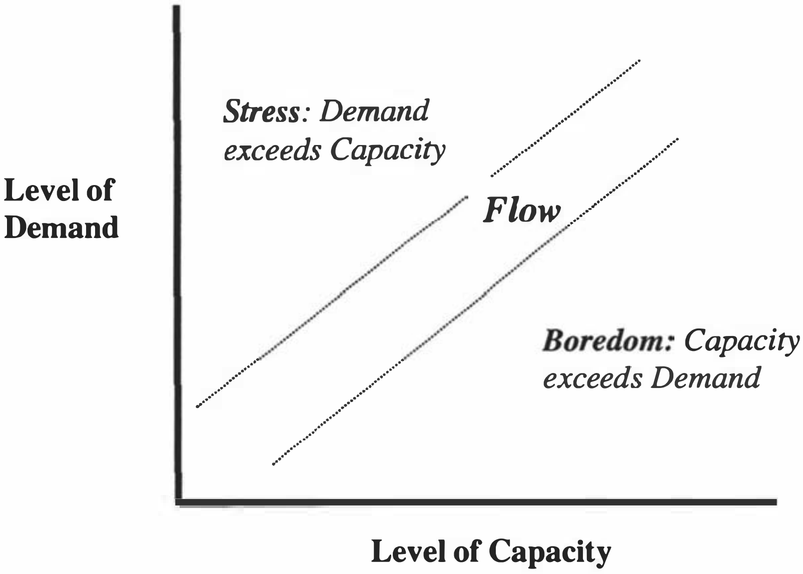
So, we can conceive of a learning organisation as one that develops toward a presumed climax state, just as ecological systems and individual human systems develop until they reach maturity. While maturing is a natural process for a living system, it is unusual in organisations because of the value the current work environment places on growth associated with immaturity (Wann, 1990).

This 'maturing' perspective is fundamentally different from the 'evolving' perspective described earlier. Where evolution is change away from the existing state, maturation is change toward the climax state. In a mature, climax state an organisation would be able to support diversity while using energy efficiently in bringing about the ends it wants.

A number of writers in the field of learning organisations take this 'learning toward maturity' approach. Senge (1990) for example, defines a learning organisation as a group of people continuously building their capacity to create what is important to them. In defining learning organisations this way, Senge links learning and maturing with capacity building. How can we understand this?

Gallwey (2000) suggests that a mature human system needs to balance performance, learning and the experience of work. Csikszentmihalyi (1997) also discusses balanced work, saying that the quality of the experience we have depends on the relationship between demand and capacity (see Figure 5.1). His work helps us to understand the link between learning and capacity building.

Figure 5.1 Demand, Capacity and Flow



Stress: Demand exceeds Capacity
Level of Demand
Flow
Boredom: Capacity exceeds Demand
Level of Capacity

Csikszentmihalyi's (1997) research has demonstrated that we have our optimal experiences when the demands on us match our capacity. If the demands placed upon us are greater than our capacity we experience stress. If demands are less than our capacity the experience is boredom. Gallwey defines performance as meeting the demands that are placed upon us. Learning, on the other hand, increases our capacity. So, learning involves moving further along the X axis shown in Figure 5.1, while the level of performance relates to the position on the Y axis. In this sense, then, a learning organisation is one that continuously moves to the right along the X axis, thus building capacity, with a view to balancing demand and ensuring optimal experience for organisational members and the organisation as a whole.[3]

Commentators like Hock (1997) suggest that most organisations are currently in crisis, unable to meet the demands placed upon them or create the results that are important to them. A number of writers have suggested what the capacities are that will enable organisations to get out of this crisis: that is, to create the results that are important to them. Kim (1998) suggests that organisations need a creative orientation, insight into complexity, and the capacity for reflective conversation. Kim also describes levels of capacity in each of these ranging from novice to expert. According to this taxonomy, a mature organisation is one that will have become expert in each of the three areas. Senge (1990) is more specific, suggesting that organisations need the capacity to operate expertly in 5 disciplines: shared vision, mental models, personal mastery, team learning and systems thinking. Others, including Watkins and Marsick (1992, 1993) and Garvin (1993), provide alternative prescriptions of the capacities and practices they associate with a mature learning organisation. McGill and Slocum (1994) outline key processes that take place within learning organisations, while indicating that learning organisations are the most developed form of organisations skilled at using knowledge.

Argyris (1990) focuses on the process of maturing, rather than describing the nature of the climax state. He indicates he is operating from a 'capacity building' perspective when he defines learning as the 'elimination of error' where error is the gap between what is desired and the actual results of the organisation; so, learning is directed toward a desired state for the organisation. Maturation happens through the process of 'double loop' learning. When there is a mismatch between the results an organisation aims for and those it gets, many organisations engage only in 'single-loop' learning: they allow the mismatch to provide them with feedback about the quality of the strategy they adopted. Double loop learning uses the mismatch to look beyond the strategy with questions like "Why did we adopt that strategy in the first place?" and "Why have we set our standards where we have?" In this way, organisations explore the governing variables—those issues shaping the way the organisation functions.

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[3] The author has discussed the balance between performance and learning in more depth in "The Culture of Training" in Ramsey, Franklin and Ramsey (2000). See Appendix 1g. The effect that over-emphasising performance has on individual learners has been discussed in Ramsey, P., Franklin, P., Ramsey, D. & Wells, R. (2002). Rethinking Grades for Sustainable Learning. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 39, 2, 117-123 (See Appendix 1h).

The 'capacity building' perspective is attractive on a number of accounts. Firstly, it links work on Learning Organisations with issues of business sustainability, which also treat capacity as a deeply embedded principle (Hawken, 1993; Hawken, Lovins and Lovins, 1999). Secondly, the 'capacity building' perspective is able to accommodate a broad range of issues relating to efforts to build a learning organisation. Indeed, it is able to accommodate each of the other perspectives, as we will see in the following chapters. Finally, the perspective lends itself to analysis through dilemma theory, by suggesting there is an interdependent and opposite relationship between performance (exploiting existing capacity) and learning (building future capacity) which may conform to the cultural dynamics described in earlier chapters.

We will explore the implications of the various perspectives in the following chapters, by considering how they may operate to generate culturally based conflict, and then using them to build a model of a learning organisation: one in which 'we would all like to work.'

5.9 Summary

The term 'learning organisation' has entered the language of business and organisations, yet there is a wide range of meanings given to the term. Some have argued that it is not a useful term, either because they think it is inaccurate to describe collective entities such as organisations as learning, when it is individuals who learn, or because they feel all organisations learn so it is not a useful distinction. In making these arguments they ignore the appeal and meaning the term has for those who have adopted it.

In exploring the meaning and appeal of the term 'learning organisations' literature was categorised into 6 perspectives:

- The 'continuous individual learning' perspective views learning as an individual process, so that a learning organisation is one that fosters individual learning throughout the organisation.
- The 'learning to work as one' perspective views learning as a social process, so that a 'learning organisation' is one made up of groups that have built social bonds sufficiently to say they experience the learning process collectively rather than individually.
- The 'new workplace' perspective seeks to use learning to generate values associated with ideal work; consequently a 'learning organisation' is one with a culture that values 'learning' above other values, such as 'knowing.'
- The 'conscious about learning' perspective views organisations as having memory systems, so that a 'learning organisation' is one that consciously manages the process of storing, accessing and using the knowledge it has acquired.
- The 'experimentation and change' perspective equates learning with change and adaptation to its environment, thus a 'learning organisation' is one that is never finished—it is an open system constantly experimenting in order to survive in a competitive environment.
- The 'capacity building' perspective views learning as a process of developing and maturing so that it can balance performance, learning and experience. Thus a 'learning organisation' is one that seeks to operate as a mature living entity operating at optimum.

In the next chapter we will explore how the different perspectives involve diverse values that may be the source of organisational conflict if poorly managed.

Chapter 6: Reconciling Perspectives in a Model

In the previous chapter we discussed the meaning given to the term 'Learning Organisation' and outlined six perspectives on the term that are represented in the literature. For people and organisations pursuing the goal of becoming a learning organisation, each perspective provides a different way of conceiving of and expressing the goal they have adopted. In this chapter we will consider ways in which the differences between these perspectives can be reconciled. We do this in order to generate a more complete model of learning organisations than can be attained using any one perspective alone. This is a provisional model that will be used as a basis for the studies described in subsequent chapters of this thesis. One outcome of these studies will be an holistic model of Learning Organisations presented in Chapter 14.

For the moment, let's assume that the people who are concerned with the matter of creating learning organisations make up a community. They could be described as a 'community of practice.' That is, rather than being a group bound together by geography or membership of some organisational unit, they share common interest in an area of knowledge and consult with one another as to how they should handle challenges they face (Wenger, 1998).

Senge and Kim (1997) have suggested that there is such a community of practice in the area of Organisational Learning: people who seek to foster understanding and utilisation of organisational learning concepts. They warn however, that the community of practice is in danger of fragmentation. Like many communities of its kind, this community has members who are primarily interested in research (acting as 'academics'), some who are interested in practice (acting as 'business practitioners') and some who see their role as capacity-building (by acting as 'consultants').

Although these three roles have the potential to provide support to one another, often the institutions involved frustrate one another, undermining the health of the community as a whole. The Society for Organisational Learning (SoL) was established with the explicit purpose of overcoming this fragmentation to build a learning community.

How does the existence of different perspectives within a community affect the functioning of the community? How will the different meanings outlined in the previous chapter influence the functioning of the organisational learning 'community of practice'? Will it contribute to healthy diversity within the community or lead to further fragmentation?

As we have seen in our discussion of values-based conflict and schismogenesis, both fragmentation and cohesion are possible. In particular, the underlying values embedded in the different perspectives give rise to the cultural dynamics discussed in chapter 3. In this chapter we will explore more closely the dilemmas represented by the various perspectives.

To understand these dilemmas, we need to consider the values represented by each of the perspectives. In doing so, some potential conflicts become apparent. Other conflicts are directly expressed in the literature relating to learning organisations.

Firstly, consider the nature of the various perspectives, particularly as we compare them to one another. The 'continuous individual learning' perspective provides a direct contrast with 'teams learning as one' based around the Individual—Collective value pairing: the former perspective is *individualistic*, where the latter is *communitarian*. A notable feature of the 'conscious about learning' perspective is the effort involved in making knowledge assets and memory systems explicit and thus manageable. This perspective is, therefore, highly *specific* or *analytical*, and thus contrasts with the much more *diffuse* and *integrative* 'new workplace' perspective. The 'new workplace' perspective encourages people to work on relatively intangible organisational issues such as culture and values thus seeking *emotional engagement* with people. In contrast the 'conscious about learning' perspective seeks to create tangible systems to deal with the intangible nature of knowledge and learning and does so in a more *emotionally neutral* way. The 'experimentation and change' perspective emphasises competition and *achievement*, where the 'capacity building' perspective, with its emphasis on accepting diversity, values *ascription.*

Table 6.1 summarises the perspectives, along with some of the values represented by each. In this chapter we will use Johnson's (1993) Polarity Maps to describe the nature of values based conflicts inherent in the perspective, along with Hampden-Turner's (1990) methodology for mapping the vicious cycles that are possible within communities engaged in values-based conflict.

Table 6.1 Perspectives and Values

Perspective	Definition of a Learning Organisation	Values
Continuous Individual Learning	An entity that makes a deliberate investment in the development and growth of individuals, seeing this as the basis for on-going improvement of the organisation as a whole.	Individualism
Teams Learning Together As One	A place where people recognise learning as a social process, so that deliberate effort is made to build the 'container' in which groups operate, enabling people to concentrate on achieving what is truly important.	Communitarianism
New Workplace	A place where 'learning' is valued ahead of 'knowing' and a deliberate effort is made to create a workplace ecology that enables learning to thrive.	Diffuse Emotionally Engaged
Conscious About Learning	An entity with a memory system, which pays particular attention to the way knowledge is acquired, stored, shared and accessed	Specific Emotionally Neutral
Experimentation And Change	An open system that is perpetually ready to change, conscious that it is operating in a highly competitive environment where one must 'learn or die.'	Achievement
Capacity Building	A community seeking to develop itself into a mature, sustainability entity with diverse capacities.	Ascription

6.1 Individual vs. Social Learning

As discussed in the previous chapter, for some writers in the area of learning organisations it is axiomatic that individuals learn, and therefore interventions or techniques should focus on individual learning and development. Wardman-O'Reilly (1999) makes the point that organisational learning must start with individual learning, opening ourselves up to new understandings and mental models. From an individualistic perspective, the danger inherent in a focus on social learning is that it allows individuals to avoid the challenge and risk of personal change.

From the social learning perspective, what individuals learn is of no value unless they are prepared to share new knowledge with those they work with, thus the learning organisation should focus on creating teams that constantly build the social bonds that make learning possible. From this perspective the inherent danger of individual learning is that it may happen at the expense of team connectedness. In that case the organisation would become filled with individually clever, learned people who do not share what they know with one another, limiting the organisation's ability to achieve what it wants. These individually clever people are also more likely to leave for greener pastures when they are most needed, taking their learning with them.

As discussed in Chapter 3, in a situation like this where there are apparently opposing values, each value has an 'upside' and a 'downside.' The upside (+) is the benefit an organisation gains from the value, which only happens if the value is kept in balance with its opposite. Where balance is lost and the value is taken to an extreme, the organisation experiences the value's downside (-). The Polarity Map shown in Figure 6.1 shows the upsides and downsides of the Individual—Social polarity.

Figure 6.1 Individual Learning—Social Learning Polarity Map

	Individual Learning	Social Learning
+	Individual members take personal responsibility for change, building their capacity to contribute to organisational success.	'Container building' within teams creates an environment safe for learning, and where individuals naturally share what they know to benefit the team.
-	Individuals, motivated by self-centred ambition, learn in ways that destroy social bonds (e.g. trust) and leave when the going gets tough.	People find ways to avoid having to make personal changes, waiting around for someone else to do the learning the organisation needs.

6.2 Systems vs. Culture

From the 'new workplace' perspective, a learning organisation represents a shift to values that enhance the dignity of people, moving away from the situation where people feel they must appear knowledgeable even when they are not, to a situation where people are prepared to learn from one another. The 'new workplace' perspective also aims to have people emotionally engaged with their work, so that they find fulfilment and meaning in what they do. People working from this perspective may see danger in pursuing the 'conscious about knowledge' perspective because it focuses in an emotionally neutral way (which they may describe as 'heartless') on systems such as data-bases and benchmarking, rather than dealing with aspirations people have regarding work.

The 'conscious about learning' perspective emphasises working with knowledge in a way that is specific and concrete. From this perspective, people aim to generate practices and systems that directly result in knowledge getting to where it is needed so that the organisation can function effectively and efficiently. People with this perspective may view the 'new workplace' perspective as too abstract, and in danger of descending into well-intentioned chaos. Dixon (2000), for example, has argued that the idea of having to create a learning culture is a 'myth.' Her work focuses on creating systems that get people to exchange knowledge they have, and letting the culture take care of itself (or not—from this perspective it doesn't matter, as long as knowledge sharing is taking place).

The polarity between the workplace culture and knowledge management processes has been mentioned by Garvin (2000) and directly expressed by Por and Molloy (2000) who discuss the need for both dynamic conversations (culture) and powerful knowledge bases (systems) in a 'knowledge ecology' in order for the organisation to operate as a learning organisation.

Figure 6.2 Systems Based—Culture Based Learning Polarity Map

+	Members of an organisation deliberately design systems to make sharing of knowledge a 'default' process throughout the company	Learning is regarded as an identifying value of the organisation, with people encouraged to reconcile learning differences, rather than engage in competitive argument.	+
Learning As a System			Learning as Culture
-	Knowledge management is mechanically driven, with emphasis given to impersonal databases. Few people participate.	While people espouse a desire to learn together, they don't get around to it, hamstrung by lack of workable channels.	-

The downside of each value is shown in Figure 6.2. Neglect of culture can lead to over-emphasis on technical systems, so that organisations invest in databases that few people use. Neglect of systems results in people wanting to have meaningful conversations but lacking the systems or organisational memory to make them worthwhile. The conversations thus end up as empty chats amongst well-meaning but uninformed participants.

As with the Individual—Social polarity, the specific and analytical systems-based approach needs to be reconciled with the more diffuse culture-based approach in order for learning to be sustainable.

6.3 Change vs. Maturity

The 'experimentation and change' perspective is based on the assumption that an organisation needs to be prepared to make change in any direction, so that it can adapt or respond to demands of its environment. The emphasis of this perspective is on learning as 'doing': whatever is needed is what gets done. The contrast with the 'capacity building' perspective is direct. 'Capacity building' encourages learning toward a mature state, rather than learning in any direction. Maturity of a system brings with it stability: the mature system has an identity of its own so that, while it is more capable than an immature system, it has definite views of what it is prepared to do. The emphasis of the 'capacity building' perspective is 'being': learning to be what you wish to become.

While some have discussed the Being—Doing polarity directly (Khoo, 1999) others experience it as a tension between 'acting' and 'reflecting,' and as 'behaviour change' and 'new ways of thinking' (Garvin, 2000). The 'experiment and change' perspective encourages learners to focus on external actions, comparing them to the demands of the environment. The 'capacity building' perspective encourages learners to reflect on their internal functioning, asking whether it is sufficient to allow them to be who they wish to be. Figure 6.3 shows the Acting—Reflecting polarity.

Figure 6.3 Acting—Reflecting Polarity Map

	Acting	Reflecting	
+	Learning is associated with doing new things and seeing what results. Learning is fast and responsive, directly connected to desired results.	Learning is based on deep and productive thought about the meaning of experiences and their relation to what those in the system aspire to be.	+
–	Fast paced change results in loss of identity and cohesion. Life in the system is chaotic and confused.	Time spent in reflection and conversation prevents those involved from getting things done. Reluctance to change results in threats to survival.	–

A number of researchers into learning have commented on the difficulty of enabling individual learners to achieve balance between acting and reflecting. In particular, the realities of organisational life appear to encourage the world view that learning is about acting, and that reflecting is wasteful (Scott, Butler & Edwards, 2001). Particular effort needs to be made to encourage learners to engage in reflective processes (Honey & Povah, 1986).

The contrast between 'experiment and change' and 'capacity building' involves a further polarity that has been discussed in literature on learning organisations: the Leader Driven—Community Based polarity. Some writers have suggested that leadership provides the impetus for learning by supporting and legitimising change efforts (Rooke & Torbert, 1999). Indeed, organisational change is often associated with transformational leadership (Bass, 1985).

Those taking a 'capacity building' perspective often find emphasis of the leader's role inconsistent with their understanding of organisational learning. While leadership can be exercised in ways that promote community and dialogue (Isaacs, 1999) often it is associated with mechanistic 'command and control' approaches to governing others (Block, 1993). The 'capacity building' perspective emphasises the need for a system—that is, the organisational community as a whole—to develop its own capacity in leadership functions. Senge (1990), for instance, emphasises the need for the community to have a 'shared vision' rather than having leaders sell their personal vision to the organisation. According to this perspective the capacity of a system to self-organise is the basis for generative learning. The Leader Driven—Community Based polarity is shown in Figure 6.4.

Figure 6.4 Leader-Driven—Community Based Polarity Map

	Leader Driven Change	Community Based Maturation
+	Transformational leaders provide support and legitimacy for change, modelling healthy learning practice.	Members of an organisational community organise themselves to learn as they pursue visions that unite them. In doing so they build their capacity and identity.
-	Leaders destroy community bonds with command and control approaches, in an effort to achieve the leaders' goals.	Communities become rigid in established roles, with no one providing impetus to change, despite threats from outside the organisation.

As discussed above, polarities of ‘Doing vs. Being’ and ‘Leader Driven Change vs. Community Based Maturation’ are aspects of the broader ‘Experimentation and Change vs. Capacity Building’ polarity. Both the ‘Doing’ and ‘Leader Driven’ aspects are focused on adapting organisational behaviours to meet environmental demands, such as competition. ‘Being’ and ‘Community Based’ place emphasis on the system maturing over time into a complete entity with a deep, coherent understanding of its own identity. Figure 6.5 presents the broader ‘Experimentation and Change vs. Capacity Building’ polarity.

Figure 6.5 Experimentation and Change—Capacity Building Polarity Map

	Experiment-ing and Changing	Capacity Building
+	The organisation acts as an open system, freely learning to do whatever is required for survival, under the direction of transformational leadership.	The organisation treats itself as an organism on a journey of maturation, where—as a community—it establishes a coherent identity and substantial capacity.
-	Controlling executives demanding constant change erode the coherence and identity of the community, undermining its capacity.	Concepts of identity and coherence prevent members exploring new activity. Internal focus generates self-centred decline.

6.4 Limitations to Perspectives

The polarity maps shown in Figure 6.1 to 6.5 outline some of the dilemmas facing companies seeking to be learning organisations. As indicated, each of the perspectives emphasises values that are in interdependent opposite relationships with values of other perspectives. This has important implications for executives.

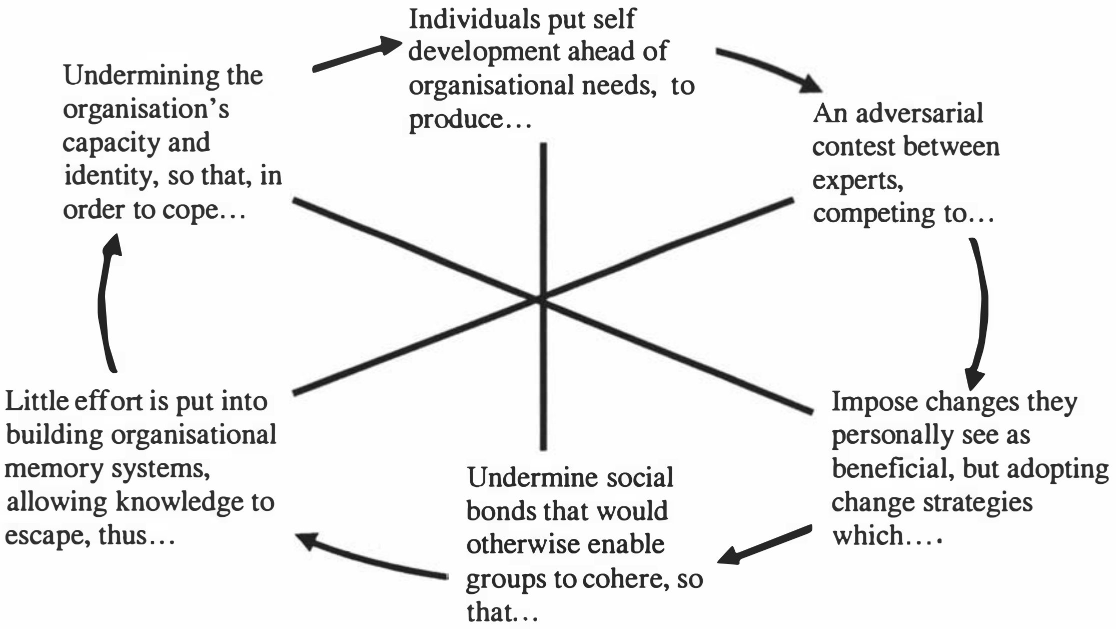
Firstly, when seeking to become a learning organisation, there is danger in adopting a single perspective. Each perspective has a possible downside—a critical situation that could face the company, if the strength of that perspective brought with it neglect of its complement. Processes of schismogenesis make such downsides highly possible unless the circularity of values is consciously managed.

Managing the circularity of values requires a change of thinking about the existence of different perspectives. Anyone holding to a particular perspective might reasonably be expected to believe they knew what was required for a company to be a learning organisation. Their perspective would adequately explain the term and give direction to an organisation that was seeking to pursue the goal. Furthermore, those holding the perspective will have seen the gains that their perspective can generate for an organisation, and will have built their personal capacity to enable organisations to achieve these gains. Whichever perspective a person holds, there is likely to be sufficient evidence to convince them it is 'right.'

As Johnson (1993) suggests, where there are polarities involved it is easy to be 'right' but challenging to be complete. With at least 6 perspectives on what it means to be a learning organisation, each of which has a supporting body of knowledge and practice, it is particularly easy to be right. Completeness, however, involves seeing beyond one's own perspective so that the organisation is able to avoid traps of schismogenesis.

Consider what can happen for an organisation seeking to be a learning organisation, yet operating off a single perspective. In a New Zealand organisation, the macroculture is likely to incline the company toward either the 'Continuous Individual Learning' or 'Experimentation and Change perspectives.' [1] When we pursue one perspective while neglecting all others we can expect to set up a vicious cycle of decline. Figure 6.6 shows what might happen in pursuit of 'Continuous Individual Learning.'

Figure 6.6 Vicious Cycle of Individual Learning


Individuals put self development ahead of organisational needs, to produce...
An adversarial contest between experts, competing to...
Impose changes they personally see as beneficial, but adopting change strategies which....
Undermine social bonds that would otherwise enable groups to cohere, so that...
Little effort is put into building organisational memory systems, allowing knowledge to escape, thus...
Undermining the organisation's capacity and identity, so that, in order to cope...

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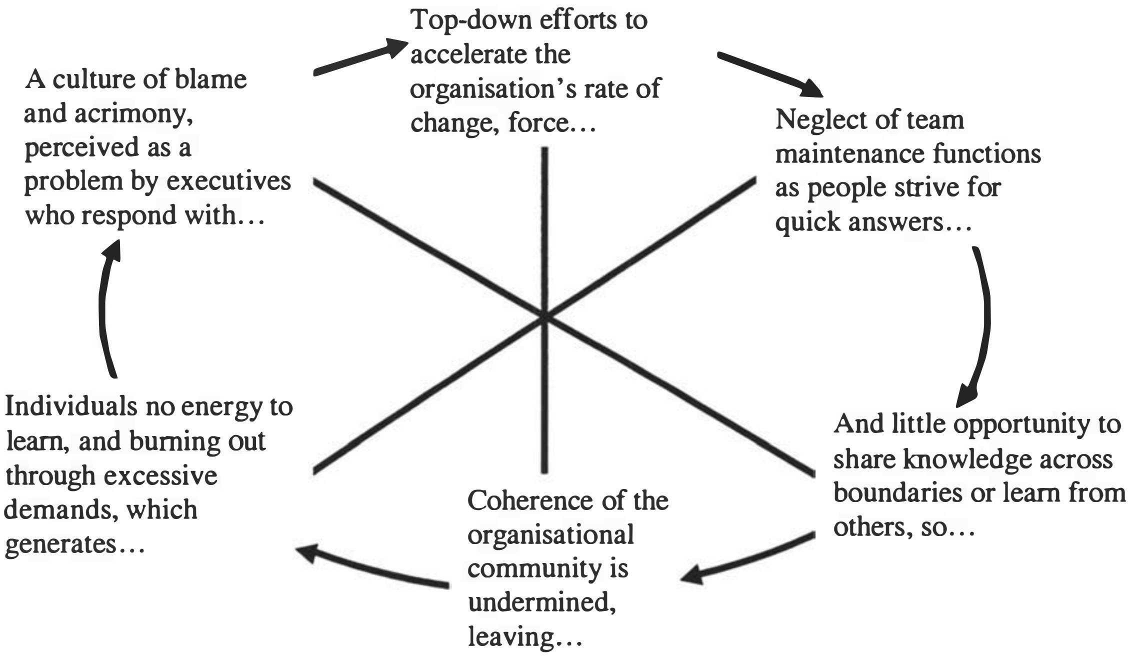
[1] This is postulated because these perspectives are aligned with 'masculine' New Zealand values of individualism and analysis. While the 'Conscious About Learning' perspective is similarly masculine, it involves a complexity of analysis we might associate with an 'engineering culture' (Schein, 1996). High quality engineering is not generally associated with New Zealand organisations. New Zealand produces relatively few engineering graduates, compared with other 'masculine' macrocultures, such as the USA.

The vicious cycle of Figure 6.6 is created by perspectives identified as dilemmas opposite one another in a sequence that generates a coherent story of decline. The lines running across the centre of the figure indicate the tension between pairs of opposite perspectives, while the outer loop describes the cycle of decline. Where Figure 6.6 shows how a vicious cycle can be generated from the 'Continuous Individual Learning' perspective, Figure 6.7 indicates how 'Experimentation and Change' might do the same.

Figure 6.7 Vicious Cycle of Change-Based Learning


Top-down efforts to accelerate the organisation's rate of change, force...
Neglect of team maintenance functions as people strive for quick answers...
And little opportunity to share knowledge across boundaries or learn from others, so...
Coherence of the organisational community is undermined, leaving...
Individuals no energy to learn, and burning out through excessive demands, which generates...
A culture of blame and acrimony, perceived as a problem by executives who respond with...

To avoid schismogenesis and achieve a more complete approach to their broader work of creating learning organisations, holders of particular perspectives need to understand the complementarity involved. Someone who holds a 'individual' perspective needs to recognise those with the 'social' perspective as part of the same community of practice (Wenger, 1998). Each perspective feels complete because it is stored within people for whom it is the whole picture. However, from the perspective of the community involved—that is, all those interested in the field of learning organisations—completeness involves being able to use whichever perspective is needed at a given point in time. The community as a whole has an understanding of what makes a learning organisation: this understanding is an integrated mix of a range of perspectives. Each perspective, however, is stored separately within individuals and groups making up that community (Hampden-Turner, 2001). The complete picture requires integrative work between members of the community, reconciling their perspectives to meet the challenges that face them.

6.5 Reconciling Perspectives

Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars (1997) have discussed how certain values are more open to reconciliation than others. For example, Universalism and Particularism are a pair of interdependent opposite values. Universalism refers to the assumption that decisions should be made on the basis of universal rules or standards. Particularism refers to the assumption that decisions should be made according to factors involved in a particular situation, such as the relationship the decision-maker has with those involved. While universalism does not make room for particularism—rules are to be applied universally—particularism does allow room for universalism: there are some particular situations where one would want to apply universal principles.

This ability to reconcile opposites is particularly common to East-Asian cultures and uncommon to Western cultures. According to Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars (1997) East-Asian nations, such as Japan, China and Singapore value harmony, or *wa*. They write:

> "Harmony (or *wa)*... is a value of values. Prince Shotku in eighth century Japan pronounced that *wa* was the supreme value of all civil societies. Values are not good or bad *in themselves*, but are good when they harmonise with other values and bad when they clash or fight with other values." (p. 14)

Just as East-Asian values make reconciliation and harmonisation easier, some perspectives are more open to reconciliation than others. In particular, the 'Teams Learning to Work Together,' 'New Workplace' and 'Capacity Building' perspectives are based on values similar to East-Asian cultures, and are thus open to reconciliation. Both East-Asian cultures and the perspectives mentioned above have values of collectivism, integration and ascription. In both cases organisations are viewed as living systems. Consider how each of the perspectives mentioned makes room for its opposite.

The 'Teams Learning to Work Together' perspective makes allowance for continuous individual learning. While members of a team learn together and each member is growing in sensitivity to others, the individual members are necessarily learning. The process—and much of the content—of learning may be social, but it is stored individually (Hampden-Turner, 2001). While this is true of 'Teams Learning to Work Together' it is not the case with 'Continuous Individual Learning.' Individual learning can be encouraged within organisation without any effort being made to generate social learning. Indeed, the individualistic nature of the perspective is likely to cause social learning to be neglected.

The 'New Workplace' perspective encourages the development of a culture that values learning. Within such an organisational culture, even though systems for sharing knowledge may appear somewhat mechanistic, they are likely to be appreciated for the assistance they give to the learning process. Thus, the 'New Workplace' perspective is able to accommodate the values of the 'Conscious About Learning' perspective. People who are skilled at engineering learning systems and knowledge databases are likely to be appreciated.

Where the 'Conscious About Learning' perspective predominates in an organisation, the highly analytical, engineering-based culture is likely to be dismissive of people with the diffuse values of the 'New Workplace' perspective.

The 'Capacity Building' perspective accommodates any capacities that are important to the life and health of a mature community, which includes the capacities for change and leadership. The 'Capacity Building' perspective is thus able to accommodate the 'Experimentation and Change' perspective, but again this accommodation is not reciprocal. The 'Experimentation and Change' perspective encourages movement and change for its own sake, and adherents are likely to be uncomfortable with the stability associated with 'Capacity Building.'

By reconciling each of the dilemmas indicated by the pairs of opposing perspectives we are able to create a virtuous cycle of improvement (Hampden-Turner, 1990). Such a virtuous cycle is shown in Figure 6.8. A key difference between the virtuous cycle and the vicious cycles of Figures 6.6 and 6.7 is that the lines across the centre of the cycle now represent harmonising approaches enabling the dilemmas involved to be reconciled rather than tensions producing schismogenesis.

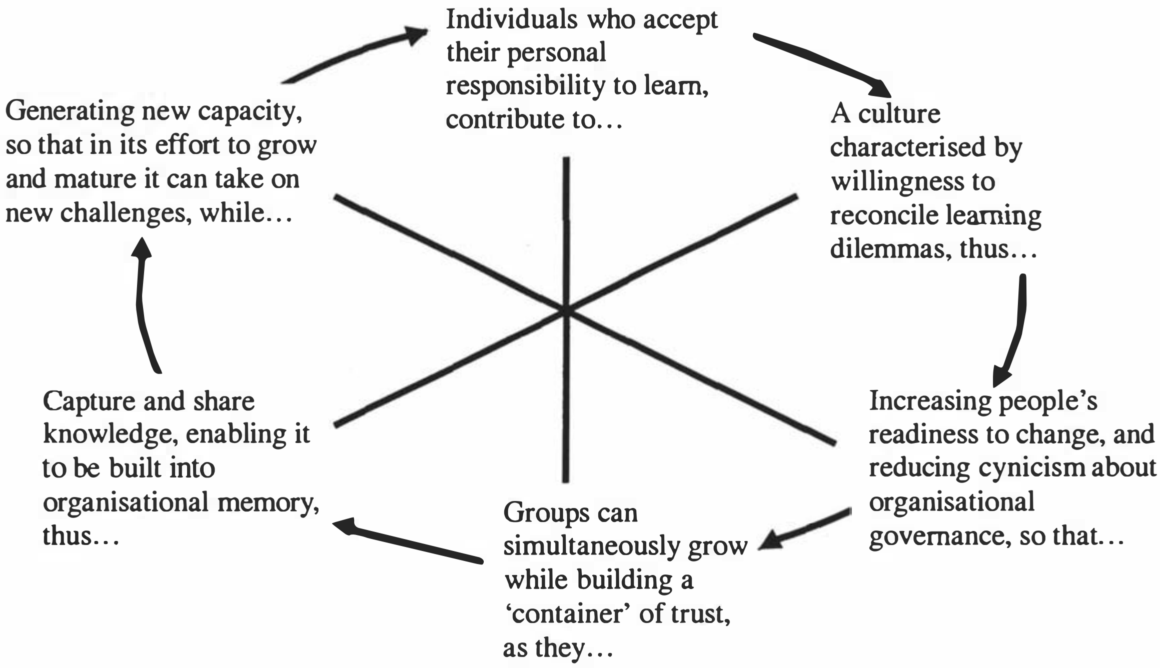
'Continuous Individual Learning' and 'Teams Learning Together' can be reconciled where individuals seek personal growth through their contribution to high performing teams. Individuals can continuously grow in their technical competence while also building the social bonds within the team that enable them to share what they know.

Thus, the continuous individual learning also represents learning that is available to the whole team.

Being 'Conscious About Learning' can be reconciled with the 'New Workplace' by building a learning culture that is supported by well-designed and carefully engineered systems. These systems enable companies to build organisational memory with knowledge management techniques people want to use. Thus the 'new workplace' culture encourages organisation members to share knowledge with others, and to pull knowledge they need from organisational memory systems. In essence these are systems designed for people, rather than simply for knowledge.

'Capacity Building' can be reconciled with 'Experimentation and Change' where leaders take on the role of organisation builders or, as Collins and Porras (1994) would say, 'clock builders.' As such they enable the organisation to grow toward maturity, and ensure that the balance between stability and change is maintained. Thus, reconciliation involves leaders directing change toward maturity.

Figure 6.8 Virtuous Cycle of Learning


Individuals who accept their personal responsibility to learn, contribute to...
A culture characterised by willingness to reconcile learning dilemmas, thus...
Increasing people's readiness to change, and reducing cynicism about organisational governance, so that...
Groups can simultaneously grow while building a 'container' of trust, as they...
Capture and share knowledge, enabling it to be built into organisational memory, thus...
Generating new capacity, so that in its effort to grow and mature it can take on new challenges, while...

This virtuous cycle of learning in Figure 6.8 suggests one way that we can reconcile the perspectives discussed into a definition of learning organisations.

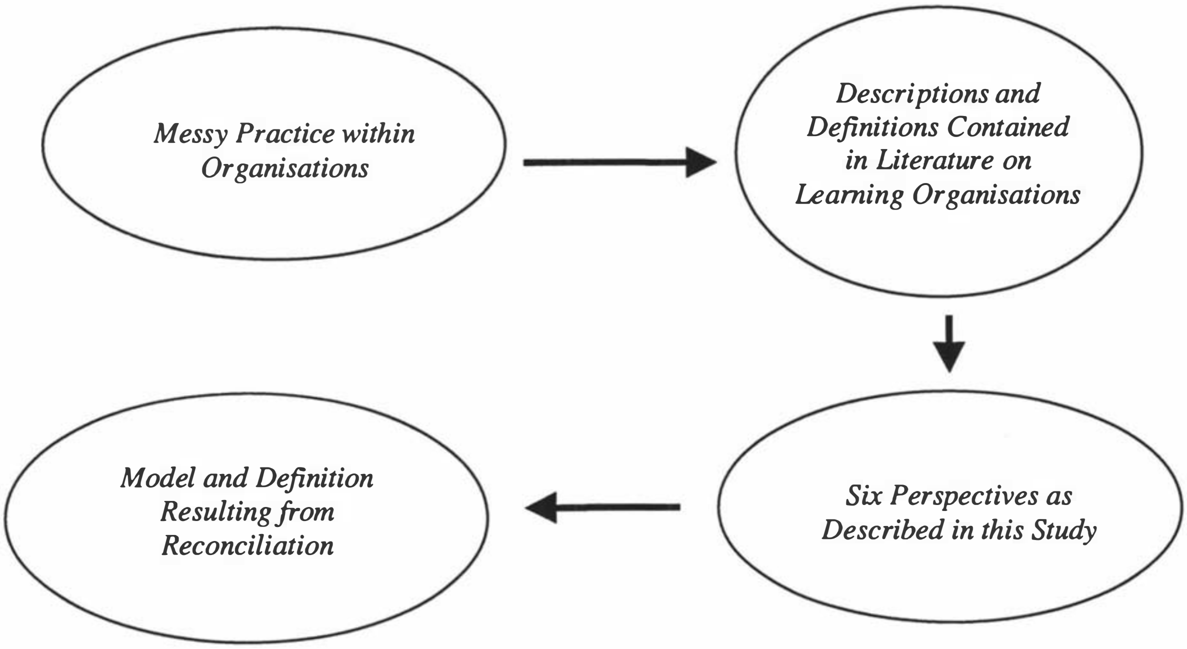
Learning Organisation Definition #1:

An organisation that seeks to build high performing teams, design knowledge management systems to suit people, and utilise transformational leadership in directing its growth toward maturity, in order to:

- ***Create opportunities for personal development***
- ***Build and maintain a culture that supports learning and encourages the reconciliation of learning dilemmas***
- ***Generate strong social bonds within groups within the organisation***
- ***Build and manage organisational memory***
- ***Increase readiness to change***
- ***Create a community with a coherent identity and robust capacity.***

This represents an advance on many of the definitions presented in literature on learning organisations, in that it reconciles some of the dilemmas concerning people in the field. As a definition, however, it does have some key weaknesses. To understand these weaknesses, consider the stages of its development, as outlined in Figure 6.9.

Figure 6.9 Stages of Definition Development


Messy Practice within Organisations
Descriptions and Definitions Contained in Literature on Learning Organisations
Six Perspectives as Described in this Study
Model and Definition Resulting from Reconciliation

Working backward from the definition, we see that it is derived by reconciling the six perspectives outlined earlier in the study. The reconciliation suggested is one of a number of possible ways in which the perspectives might be brought together. So while it is useful in showing members of a community how they might avoid conflict in the pursuit of learning organisations, it is such by design. Other definitions might be designed that similarly permit reconciliation. Design is an expansive approach to thinking, rather than one that will converge on a single approach (DeBono, 1991). Consequently, it would be wrong to suggest that the definition was 'definitive.'

Similarly, there are problems inherent in the previous stage, where perspectives are derived from the literature. These perspectives are a construction intended to give coherence to the body of work making up the literature surveyed, rather than a representation of real distinctions. The challenge in creating a set of classifications is to ensure that it is coherent and consistent, and that it performs a useful function, while remembering that the distinctions have been made arbitrarily (Kim, 1999).

The perspectives outlined in this study are coherent and consistent in that they are all viewed through the same 'lens'—that is, they are all alternative meanings by which people might explain the otherwise confusing term 'learning organisation'—and each perspective is distinct from the others. The perspectives are also useful, in that they allow us to understand the nature of conflicts that may arise within the community of practice interested in learning organisations. It cannot be argued, however, that this is the only reasonable classification of perspectives. Indeed the six perspectives represent one person's view: a view that would be affected by a wide range of variables, including the order in which I encountered various pieces of writing.

The first stage of the process involves articulation of the nature of learning organisations by those contributing to the literature. These writers face the challenge of expressing explicitly the tacit knowledge contained within the 'messy' practice they have observed. Furthermore, descriptions in the literature are often based on 'inductive' models of what constitutes a learning organisation.

Inductive models or descriptions are those derived by thinking about data and allowing that thought to lead to hypotheses (Bateson, 1974). A common inductive pattern in literature on learning organisations is to identify 'successful' organisations and deem these to be learning organisations. These are then studied to find what practices enable them to be successful, and these practices become the basis for descriptions of what constitutes a learning organisation. Inductive thinking starts with uninterpreted data from which explanatory notions are drawn. Over time, the explanatory power of some notions proves to be so great that they are established as scientific fundamentals.

As Bateson (1974) says, it is possible for scientific research to start from two beginnings. Induction represents an approach that starts with uninterpreted data: observations that cannot be denied. The other approach is to start with already established fundamental principles of science or philosophy and to deductively derive knowledge from these.

Hawken (1993) provides an example of the difference between inductive and deductive science when he discusses Swedish biologist Karl-Henrik Robert's work on the dangers of the chemical dioxin. Numerous studies and experiments have been carried out in an inductive attempt to establish how much dioxin is poisonous to various animals over various times, in an effort to assess the risk to humans. Robert takes a deductive approach based on fundamental knowledge of the nature of human cells and of dioxin. Hawken explains:

> "...Robert [asks] systemic questions that are not only easier to respond to, but that elicit surprisingly consensual agreement...In the case of dioxin or any persistent toxin Robert believes there are six questions to be asked: *Is dioxin natural? No. Is dioxin stable? Yes. Does it degrade into harmless substances? No. Does it accumulate in bodily tissues? Yes. Is it possible to predict the acceptable tolerances? No. Can we continue to place dioxin into the environment?* No, not if we want to survive." (p. 53)

Deductive thinking, in this instance allows conclusions that are difficult to access inductively. These conclusions still need to conform to observable data, of course, yet it is reasonable to accept the conclusions until they are disconfirmed by new data. While this example deals with the action of cells and chemicals, we can similarly apply deductive thought to what the nature of learning organisations *needs to be*, based on our understanding of organisations as living systems.

According to Bateson, the culture of science over-emphasises processes of induction and neglects processes of deduction. Complementarity suggests there is a need for models of learning organisations deduced from fundamental knowledge of organisational systems.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter examined how the six perspectives developed in Chapter 5 have the potential to cause conflict amongst the community of practice made up of people interested in learning organisations. Each perspective is based on values that have complementary opposites, so the potential exists for conflict between people holding different perspectives. This conflict can produce a schismogenetic process—a vicious cycle—where an organisation that intends to encourage learning from one perspective undermines its true ability to do so by neglect of other perspectives.

A virtuous cycle of learning and a subsequent definition of learning organisations were developed, which suggest how differences between perspectives may be reconciled. The virtuous cycle and the definition of learning organisations presented in this chapter were derived from an inductive approach to the subject. The need exists for a model deduced from fundamental principles associated with organisational systems. The model presented in this chapter falls short of what is required, so the next chapter will consider what would need to be incorporated into a model of Learning Organisations to meet this need.

Chapter 7: Sustainable Learning

As we discussed in Chapter 4 culture can be understood as a pattern of dilemma resolution within a community. In Chapters 5 and 6 we examined literature relating to learning organisations, seeking to identify dilemmas relating to learning. Those chapters dealt with dilemmas that are explicitly evident in the literature. But cultures do not necessarily make explicit all the dilemmas that shape the behaviour of their members. Rather like the Sherlock Holmes' case of the dog that did not bark in the night, a dilemma can be evident by what is not said.

Cultural assumptions are held unconsciously by members of a community. Assumptions become apparent in the way people resolve dilemmas. Over time a community may give such support for one of the values involved in a particular dilemma so that the opposite, interdependent value becomes invisible to the community. The neglected value becomes unconsciously suppressed. However, as we discussed in Chapter 4, the interdependent nature of opposing values means that the need for the suppressed value grows.

One way that suppressed values become apparent to those inquiring into cultures is through paradox (Schein, 1999); contradiction between what the community espouses and what it does. Where does such paradox exist in the learning organisation literature?

7.1 The Inner/Outer Paradox

Work on learning organisations might reasonably be expected to have an 'outer' orientation. Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars (2000) contrast inner and outer directedness. They say that inner-directedness conceives of virtue as *inside* each of us—in our souls, wills, convictions, principles and core beliefs. Outer-directedness, on the other hand, conceives of virtue as *outside* of each of us in natural rhythms, in the beauties and power of nature, in aesthetic environments and relationships.

Thus, an outer-directed system looks for meaning beyond its own boundaries where an inner-directed system tends to create its own meaning. An outer-directed person is more likely to listen to others, inquiring into their views and be willing to be influenced by them. An inner-directed person is more comfortable boldly advocating their own inner thoughts, seeking to influence others and leave their mark on the outer world.

Throughout the world there is growing concern with what could be framed as the inner-directedness of business. After reviewing the impact of the way humans have chosen to conduct commerce, Paul Hawken (1993) concluded:

> "We have operated our world for the past few centuries on the basis that we could manage it, if not dominate it, without respect for living systems. We have sacrificed the harmonious development of our own cultures for enormous short-term gains, and now we face the invoice for that kind of thinking: an ecological and social crisis whose origins lie deep within the assumptions of our commercial and economic systems." (p. 201)

A wide variety of commentators have expressed their concern at the impact world commerce is having on the environment, society, individual health and the planet's capacity to accommodate waste (Korten, 1995; Klein, 2000). Concern is also expressed by significant protests against free trade and the activity of multinational corporations and institutions such as the World Trade Organisation and the World Bank. Growing interest in corporate environmental management indicates that a variety of organisations are also concerned with the impact of commerce on life on earth (Welford, 1996).

This interest in the 'ecology of commerce' signals public concern that organisations are mismanaging the balance between the values of inner-directedness and outer-directedness. Organisations are focusing attention on improving their internal results and stamping their mark on the world. Correspondingly, they are not giving sufficient attention to the needs of the system of life around them. Why might we expect that these issues would feature prominently in literature on learning organisations? Consider six reasons.

As we discussed in Chapter 4 work on learning organisations represents an effort to address values that have been neglected by organisations, particularly by those operating in English-speaking democracies. Senge's five disciplines represent a response to neglected values (Ramsey, 2001). Outer-directedness is similarly a neglected value that we might expect to find a home amongst those addressed by Senge's disciplines.

Systems thinking is accepted as one of the key disciplines of learning organisations. Systems thinking is a form of inquiry that seeks synthesis rather than analysis. Ackoff (1997) describes synthesis as having a more outward focus than analysis. Where analysis inquires into an entity and its components seeking to explain *how* it works, synthesis looks out from the entity into its environment to explain *why* it works. As discussed in Chapter 5, many of the perspectives on learning organisations encourage people to think of organisations as organic, living systems. We might reasonably expect, then, that a systems thinking approach to understanding organisations as living systems would naturally tend to be outer-directed, understanding the organisations within their environment or ecology. Systems thinking has been used in this way, notably by Meadows (1972).

Other techniques central to learning organisations are outward looking. Conversation, which encourages the balancing of inner-directed advocacy with outer-directed inquiry features throughout the literature, as was discussed in Chapter 5. Similarly, scenario-building is a technique that encourages planners to look broadly at driving forces outside the organisation (Schwartz, 1991).

Writers in the area indicate that they are open to exploring the broader purpose of business, accepting that commercial organisations as existing to do more than maximise profits (Smith & Kleiner, 1995). In particular, writers often express concern regarding the current impact of organisational life on the human spirit and a desire to change the nature of organisations to reverse the damage they are causing (Gallwey, 2000; Osterberg, 1993).

A final reason we might expect an outward focus is the need for those interested in learning organisations to establish the credibility of this area of interest. As Hamel (2000) has pointed out, pursuing the goal of being a ‘living company’ (a term roughly synonymous with being a learning organisation, as discussed in Chapter 5) is a relatively slow way of generating business success in a fast-paced world. Command and control organisations capable of speedy business concept innovations, even though they have limited lives, are more likely to succeed in a highly competitive environment. A reasonable answer to Hamel’s viewpoint is that the kinds of organisations he is advocating are not just unsustainable at an organisational level: they act in ways that are destructive to the planetary system of life itself.

So, there are good reasons why issues to do with environmental and social sustainability could be expected to feature in the literature’s definitions of learning organisations. What do we find when we review the literature with this in mind?

While a number of organisations that advocate learning are also engaged in efforts to become environmentally sustainable or to pursue wider objectives using learning organisation techniques (Anderson, 1998), writers in this area do not make sustainability a precondition for learning organisations. The literature on learning organisations discussed in Chapter 5 is overwhelmingly concerned with inward-looking issues. So, writers discuss the need to create an organisational community without discussing the impact the organisation's activity has on the community in which it exists (Zlevor, 1994). They discuss the creation of an organisational ecology without considering the impact of their work on the broader planetary ecology (Stamps, 1998). They discuss the impact of an organisation's activity on the spirit of people working *within* the organisation, but not what the organisation's products and activity do to the spirit of people outside the organisation (Gallwey, 2000).

The conclusion many would reach reading the literature is that any organisation can pursue the goal of being a learning organisation by changing its internal processes. This is emphasised, at times, in the choice of case studies used in the literature. Collins and Porras (1994) explore what is needed to create a 'visionary' organisation that is 'built to last.' Included in their list of exemplary companies is US tobacco company Philip Morris. It seems paradoxical that the authors could describe a company that systematically undermines the health of its customers as 'built to last.' Yet they comment positively on organisation-building practices such as the following:

> "…it's the little things that make a big impression, that send powerful signals…Little things like Philip Morris sending employees home with a box of cigarettes along with their paycheck to send the signal "We're *proud* of our product, no matter what the Surgeon General says." (p 213-214)

Where broader issues are discussed they tend to be considered as an aside. For instance, when Senge et al. (1994) discuss reasons organisations should bother with the effort to be learning organisations they initially discuss internal reasons: superior performance, improved quality, satisfied customers, competitive advantage and a committed workforce. The eighth of nine reasons given—'because we recognise our interdependence'—comes closest to addressing outward focused concerns. They say:

> "Today, the most critical threats [to mankind] are slow, gradual process to which we have contributed ourselves: environmental destruction, the global arms race…and the decay of educational, family, and community structures. These types of problems

> cannot be understood, given our conventional ways of thinking...*If* we are going to address these conditions in any significant way, it will have to be at the level of collective thinking and understanding—at the level of organisations, communities, and society." (Italics ours). (p. 12)

Significantly, this was the only reason in which the authors included an 'if'-based statement. This suggests that the authors desire to see broader environmental and ecological issues addressed within organisations but are reluctant to advocate it directly.

7.2 Why the Inner-Orientation?

Much of the literature reviewed in this research originates in the US, New Zealand or Britain. There are a number of assumptions common to people from Western cultures, and particularly from English-speaking democracies, that make this inner-orientation deep rooted and difficult to shift even within a discipline that challenges other cultural values.

Along with the fundamental assumption, discussed earlier, that truth can be found within the individual rather than outside, other values incline us to neglect the ecology of organisations. Determining whether a company is a learning organisation based on its impact on its ecology appears to members of Western cultures to be moralistic. Imagine a researcher tasked with identifying learning organisations, who dismissed otherwise successful companies because they encouraged behaviours considered to be destructive to society, such as gambling or the use of tobacco. Many would consider the exclusion of these companies values-based and unjustifiable.

Why are people unwilling to make decisions on the basis of apparently moralistic criteria? Partly this stems from the analytical thinking central to Western culture since the Renaissance. Analysis divides systems into their separate elements and deals with these elements independently. This has included the division of people's lives into those things that have to do with the mind and those that have to do with the body. This mind/body split encourages people to link values with the 'realm of the soul' and, therefore, consider them best dealt with as a religious issue. Science has concerned itself more with directly observable behaviour that can be associated with the body. Judgements based on values, therefore, are quickly considered to be religious judgements and not the concern of objective scientists.

Analytical cultures also tend to encourage specific measures rather than diffuse intuition. Determining the worth of an organisation on the easily measurable criterion of profitability is more appealing to people in an analytical culture than the more diffuse feeling that it is not contributing to hard-to-gauge social bonds. Analytical cultures struggle to deal with diffuse concepts, such as the inherent value of nature and social connectedness. The effort required to deal with these concepts is seen in attempts to apply the language of economics to them; with discussion of human capital, social capital and natural capital (Hawken, Lovins & Lovins, 1999). These efforts reflect the nature of analytical cultures, where the value of something is assumed to be best determined by its economic value. The assumption at work is that, by attaching a specific number to something, you are able to fully represent the thing itself, as long as you get the correct number.

Judgements regarding the worth of a particular activity also involve *ascribing* status to some things, where many Western cultures prefer to award status on the basis of achievement. Cultures that favour achievement tend to concern themselves with winning and losing rather than determining whether the race was an appropriate one for the contestant to enter. So, a tobacco company in an achievement-oriented culture is likely to be given status as long as it is successful. A company, struggling to survive while carrying out some noble work intended to build a better society would not be given the same status.

Members of an achievement-oriented culture are also likely to feel that judgements about the worth of an activity are values-based while their own judgements are values-free. As Hampden-Turner (1993) points out, this feeling is based on ignorance of the true nature of values. Awarding status on the basis of achievement indicates that the person doing so values achievement.

Furthermore, reluctance to look outward may result from the tension between the desire to act on a philosophical principle and the need to be practical.[1] People working with learning organisations are conscious of the need to generate practical business results in order to establish the credibility of the area. Consultants and academics realise that their success depends on the commitment of business practitioners. That commitment may be endangered by the perception that the learning organisation is an abstract and idealistic crusade for a new workplace (Ramsey & Sinha, 2002).

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[1] The effect of this dilemma on consultants was discussed by the author and P. Sinha in the article "Consulting and the Learning Organisation" published in *University of Auckland Business Review*, 4, 1 58-68. See Appendix 1i.

The preference for the practical is both an expression of and a reinforcement for the inductive habit of thought described by Bateson (1974) and discussed in the previous chapter. Based on his work, we could say that researchers into learning organisations face a dilemma when it comes to building models. They can either generate data by observing life in organisations, then inductively build models on the basis of this data. Or they deduce what organisations need to be on the basis of fundamental principles. There appears to be a pattern of preferring inductive rather than deductive models.

For a variety of reasons, then, people in Western cultures may avoid considering 'ecological' views of what constitutes a learning organisation. If we were to generate a deductive model of learning organisations that was outwardly-focused, what might it look like? Before we consider that question, though, we will consider the need for such a model.

7.3 Commercial Inconsistencies

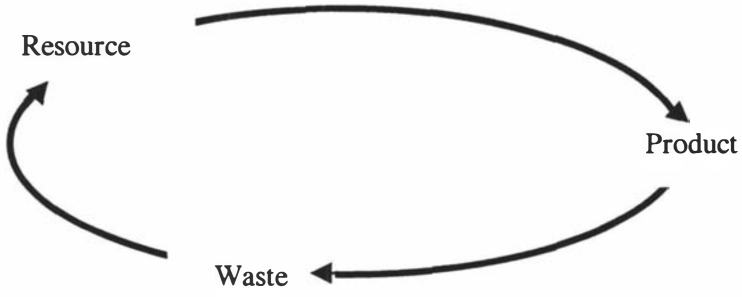
There is widespread agreement that, despite the popular language of commerce, the majority of organisations today are operating on principles that are arbitrary and artificial (Quinn, 1992, 1997; Hawken, 1993; Korten, 1995). People may refer to the business world as the 'real world' yet its principles are unnatural, in the sense that they are not sustainable.

The world of commerce may not appear to be unnatural to those within it, in the same way that a person only realises they have lived in a dysfunctional family once they are exposed to a different way of life. The extant world of commerce is a relatively recent invention; a way that humans are choosing to live, presumably in the belief that it is will generate the best way of life. Yet, it is based on assumptions that undermine the ability of people to create the kind of life they seek. These include assumptions about waste, productivity, growth, and quality.

When they purchase groceries at their local supermarket, many people may give little thought to how much packaging they carry home. It seems a sensible commercial decision to pack products in cheap, plastic containers. It is easy to assume that the convenience provided by the packaging outweighs the difficulties of disposing of the used containers. The assumption behind the decision has been referred to by Hawken (1993) as 'take, make, waste.' That is, we assume that commerce involves a linear process of taking a resource, making it into a product, and finally throwing it out as waste when it is finished.

Natural systems operate on a cyclical rather than linear system, as shown in Figure 7.1. The waste products of natural systems serve as raw material for the recreation of resources. By turning resources into products that do not degrade into waste, the link between Waste and Resource is removed. The unavoidable consequence is that Resources must decline over time while Waste accumulates.

Figure 7.1 Cyclical Natural Systems



Generally, organisations seek to improve productivity: generating more output with less input. Productivity is assumed to be an important goal, in that it increases profitability. Productivity, however, has a destructive impact in its encouragement of greater waste. This is because most organisations think in terms of 'human productivity' rather than 'resource productivity' (Hawkins et al., 1999). That is, because the costs associated with people represent such a significant proportion of total costs in most organisations, managers seek to generate more output with fewer people. Typically, this involves substituting energy resources or products that form waste, for people. This is despite the degree to which the earth's human resources are under-utilised, with hundreds of millions of people unemployed, while natural resources are over-utilised. In effect, this approach to productivity is an example of the 'accounting illiteracy' described by Hawken (1993), where resources are given an artificially low cost because they are assumed to be in unlimited supply when they are not.

Most governments see the need to maintain levels of employment at the same time as organisations are seeking to do more with fewer people. There is a conflict of goals inherent in the situation, and the preferred solution is to encourage economic growth. Economic growth represents more products and services which, in the context of the 'take, make, waste' assumption described above, simply accelerates the degradation of the earth. Current commercial practise ignores the limits to growth of the planet: the limited resources, fixed amount of energy arriving on the earth each day, and the limited capacity of the earth to absorb waste (Meadows, 1972).

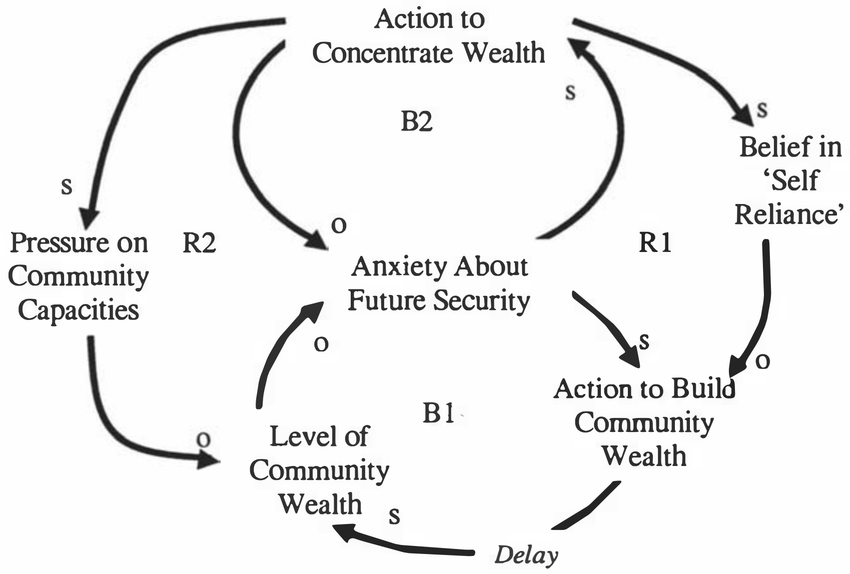
A further assumption that works destructively is that organisations should operate with the highest possible quality at the lowest possible cost. Quinn (1992) suggests that organisations adopt strategies that make them the best in the world at whatever they do. Those business practices at which they are not best in the world represent competitive weaknesses that others can exploit, and should therefore be outsourced.

This approach operates destructively by encouraging the export of wealth from local communities. Where people do as they are encouraged to do—seek the highest quality at the lowest price—they purchase goods and services from companies with global dominance rather than opting for local suppliers. Local communities thus become net exporters of wealth: a few jobs are created in the local community but most of the value of any purchase is exported outside the community. Over time the level of skills in the community is also reduced as the community becomes dependent on products produced by skilled people elsewhere. The community does, however, retain the physical products that eventually become waste that has to be disposed of. Any community that desires to build skills has to be prepared to learn, which involves doing things badly until they can be done well. Building skills thus requires a readiness to accept things of less than world's best quality.

The strategies discussed briefly here act to create a 'Shifting the Burden' structure that undermines the wealth of communities throughout the earth. The word 'wealth' has the same derivation as the word 'well.' Rather than referring simply to financial resources, it can be understood as all those things that contribute to the well-being of a community: social bonds that provide people with security, cleanliness of the environment, freedom from disease, the capacity of environs to provide sustenance and so on.

Figure 7.2 shows how the structure of the Shifting the Burden process can be represented as a CLD. As the level of Community Wealth falls people become anxious about their personal security. This anxiety is a symptom of lower than desirable levels of Community Wealth, and people can deal with their anxiety either by addressing the fundamental issue (loop B1) or by dealing with the symptom only (B2).

Figure 7.2 Economic Shifting the Burden


Action to Concentrate Wealth
B2
s
s
Belief in 'Self Reliance'
s
o
Pressure on Community Capacities
R2
Anxiety About Future Security
R1
o
s
o
Action to Build Community Wealth
B1
Level of Community Wealth
o
s
Delay

The fundamental solution is to establish organisations that build community wealth as they operate. Over time, these generate community wealth, though many will feel that this approach involves too much delay. Their preference is to rely on actions that concentrate wealth in their own hands, using strategies involving productivity, quality and the creation of waste.[2]

The actions to concentrate waste have two side effects. Loop R1 shows an attitudinal effect, where people in the system begin to assume that wealth concentration is the most effective way of dealing with anxiety about the future. Those who have gained from wealth creation may believe that the community would be better off if others did the same. Korten (1995) refers to those in this situation as 'cloud dwellers' whose success distances them from the community-based problems created by wealth concentration. They are able to convince themselves that the system is really working. Others in the system typically aspire to be cloud dwellers to escape the anxiety they feel.

R2 shows the second effect of wealth concentration: it creates problems, as described above, that undermine the community wealth that still remains. Both R1 and R2 generate more anxiety, the symptom that perpetuates the wealth concentration process.

The CLD shown in Figure 7.2 indicates that the fundamental solution to the anxiety people experience is to build organisations that contribute to community wealth as they operate. What would be the nature of an organisation that was capable of operating in this way?

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[2] Creation of waste concentrates wealth in that the person who creates the wealth often derives a benefit, where the costs associated with the waste fall on the community as a whole.

7.4 The Ecological Learning Organisation

Many attempts to deal with environmental challenges involve 'resource efficiency': aiming to waste as few resources as possible, or to use resources as many times as possible before they are turned to waste. Resource efficiency may slow down the linear process of 'take, make and waste' but it does not change it. Recycling products several times before they are added to the earth's stock of non-biodegradable waste simply delays the inevitable point when resources are gone and the earth's capacity to house the waste disappears.

Change requires a fundamental shift in the assumptions described above: in other words, a culture change. Hawken (1993) observed that even if every business on earth adopted the best environmental practices of the companies celebrated as leading the world in social and environmental responsibility, we would still be moving toward collapse.

Authors such as Hawken et al. (1999) and Anderson (1998) have described efforts made by organisations to be sustainable. This involves, for instance, operating without waste or pollution. This research focuses on values and culture, rather than the technical challenges involved in creating products and services. What values are required to create sustainable organisations?

In Chapter 5 we discussed the 'Capacity Building' perspective on learning organisations. This perspective defines a learning organisation as one that builds the capacities it requires for success as it operates, rather than systematically burning out capacities that are available to it. Because Chapter 5 dealt with perspectives extracted from literature on learning organisations, the capacities discussed were ones within the boundaries of the organisation. The same definition, processes and values described can also be applied to external capacities on which an organisation relies.

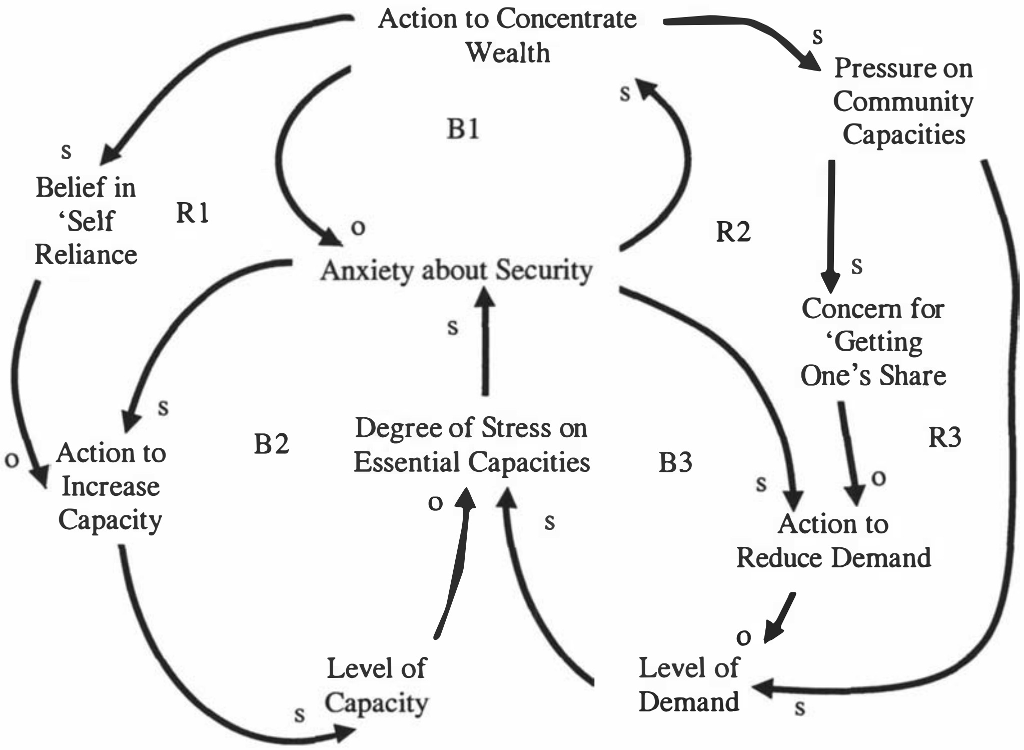
Hawken et al. (1999) summarised the current situation facing humankind regarding the choices we must make about the way commerce is organised:

> "In the past three decades, one-third of the planet's resources, its "natural wealth," has been consumed...There is no longer any serious scientific dispute that the decline in every living system in the world is reaching such levels that an increasing

> number of them are starting to lose, often at a pace accelerated by the interactions of their decline, the ability to sustain the continuity of the life process. We have reached an extraordinary threshold." (p. 4)

It is noteworthy that Hawken comments on the decline in 'every living system.' The universality of the problems caused by the way people undertake commercial activities suggests that commonly held values are shaping the thinking of people in the commercial system. In other words, some aspect of the culture of commerce operates to support this destructive behaviour. Figure 7.2 diagrammed how wealth creation can be dealt with symptomatically, with actions that concentrate wealth rather than actions that truly build community wealth. Figure 7.3 expands on that theme.

Figure 7.3 Stress and Mobility


Action to Concentrate Wealth
Pressure on Community Capacities
Belief in 'Self Reliance
Anxiety about Security
Concern for 'Getting One's Share
Action to Increase Capacity
Degree of Stress on Essential Capacities
Action to Reduce Demand
Level of Capacity
Level of Demand
B1
R1
R2
B2
B3
R3
s
o

The decline that Hawken describes can be understood to be the consequence of a mismatch between the demands the commercial system is placing on the natural system, and the capacity of the natural system to deal with those demands. As discussed in Chapter 5, when demands consistently exceed capacity a system can respond by 'burning out' some of its capacity, and that is what is evidently occurring to all living systems: they are being systematically burned out.

A healthy system needs to balance demand with capacity. Where a system is operating beyond capacity, balance can be achieved either by increasing capacity or decreasing demand. At the centre of Figure 7.3 the symptom 'Anxiety about Security' is the variable that drives change. As community wealth is diminished by the decline of living systems, people become anxious about their security. Security is dependent on essential capacities of the world in which they live. The anxiety is evidence—it is symptomatic—of the perilous condition of those essential capacities. Deductive reasoning indicates that members of the system need to actuate either Loop B2, increasing the capacities that are failing, or Loop B3, reducing the demands on those capacities, or do both.

Instead, the culture of the commercial system encourages people to respond to their anxiety by actuating B1: to escape from their anxiety with the 'wealth concentrating' strategies discussed earlier. This approach generates side effects that make the balancing of demand and capacity even more difficult. That is, cultural assumptions are reinforced that decrease the 'mobility' of people in the system. Mobility refers to the capacity of people to respond to a crisis with a variety of strategies rather than just those strategies that they have used in the past (Gallwey, 2000).

To place this in a context of cultural dynamics, we need to identify interdependent and opposite values involved in these processes. Throughout this thesis we have discussed the values-pairing of 'learning' and 'performing.' This pair of values relates to how people respond to the availability of a capacity. 'Learning' can be defined as action taken to build a capacity. 'Performing' involves exploiting the capacity to meet demands. The decline in living systems noted by Hawken suggests that the culture of commerce unconsciously inclines people to exploit capacities (performing) and to neglect capacity-building activities (learning).

Hawken makes the broad statement that all living systems are suffering decline. What are some specific examples of capacities being exploited to the point of decline as a result of this cultural tendency toward performance?

7.5 Essential Capacities

We have already alluded to capacities of the environment to accommodate business activity. Without human assistance the earth produces products (such as oxygen) and provides services (such as waste disposal) that the best technologies cannot substitute for. The earth's biosphere is, however, limited. There is a limited supply of nonrenewable resources. The biosphere has a limited capacity to absorb waste and no capacity for inorganic waste. Waste absorption is dependent on a wide variety of organisms acting interdependently. Despite these limiting conditions commercial activity is not only generating inorganic waste in massive amounts—164 billion kilograms of organic and inorganic chemicals used for manufacturing and processing are discarded each year (Hawken et al., 1999)—but the biodiversity upon which waste disposal depends is under attack. Morell (1999) reports that earth is undergoing a mass extinction; one of only six identified by scientists in the earth's history. Unlike the other five, this one is driven by human activity. Morell reports scientific concerns that we are experiencing an 'epidemic of extinctions' driven by collective human action.

Much more could be said about specific capacities of earth's biosphere that scientists have identified as under threat due to the demands placed on them by human commercial activity. Instead, consider some social capacities that are also under threat.

7.5.1 Trust and Work Ethic: Fukuyama (1995) has written of the direct link between prosperity and the level of trust in communities. Prosperity requires spontaneous sociability and organisational innovation. Spontaneous sociability is the readiness of people to undertake collective effort. Organisational innovation involves the generation of new forms of organisation designed to suit particular circumstances. These are possible where people have cultivated social virtues that generate high levels of trust: virtues such as honesty, duty, self-sacrifice and politeness.

Western economies tend to seek prosperity through individual work ethic rather than social virtues. Yet Fukuyama argues that social virtues are a prerequisite for individual virtues, as the latter are best cultivated in the context of strong groups such as families. By focusing on individual virtues, Western economies have depleted their stocks of 'social capital': the capacity for exercising the social virtues.

Many organisations routinely take actions that diminish levels of trust in the wider community. Downsizing, for instance, reduces innovation in both an organisation and its community by destroying social networks that make problem solving and entrepreneurial activity possible (Dougherty & Bowman, 1995). While many view the readiness of employees to sacrifice time with their families and the wider community because of their commitment to work highly desirable (Collins & Porras, 1994), this has the immediate effect of being destructive to social capital within a community (Johnson, 2000). It also results in children of employees not receiving the nurturing they require to learn both the individual and social virtues discussed earlier (Wagner, 2001).

Consequently organisations may maximise the activity of current workers at the expense of the next generation of employees.

The approach organisations take to managing change has led to widespread cynicism symptomatic of low levels of trust (Dean, Brandes & Dharwadkar, 1998; Shapiro 1996). Rousseau (1996) has suggested that constant redefinition of employment relationship contracts along with changing forms of organisation has eroded the capacity of people and organisations to create contracts based on voluntary commitment and good faith.

7.5.2 Flow and Autotelic Personality: Earlier we considered the need to balance performance, learning and experience in order for work to be sustainable. Csikszentmihalyi (1997) has described the state of 'flow' that becomes possible when these are in balance, showing that this is linked to the quality of and engagement with everyday life. Flow is associated with what Csikszentmihalyi calls the 'autotelic' personality: one where activities are engaged in for their own sake, because the inner experience is the goal. An activity that is engaged in so as to attain an external goal is 'exotelic.' Teenagers with autotelic personalities are significantly more likely to engage in active leisure, spend time interacting with their families and have higher self-esteem. Lack of concern for oneself gives a person more room (or 'free psychic energy') for creativity, wonder, novelty and curiosity. According to Csikszentmihalyi (1997) an autotelic person, able to generate high quality experiences without external motivation also:

> "needs few material possessions and little entertainment...are less dependent on external rewards...[and] cannot be as easily manipulated with threats or rewards from the outside." (p. 117)

While organisations may view autotelic personalities as highly desirable in employees they are likely to consider them undesirable in consumers, particularly the teenage population mentioned in Csikszentmihalyi's research. Many products and the advertising that accompanies them encourage exotelic personalities. Csikszentmihalyi warns that while leisure-related industries such as sports, music, movies, fashion and television may generate employment and economic activity, they feed a growing addiction to passive entertainment that threatens the health of society. They may give the impression that they provide creative opportunities for young people who aspire to perform actively within them but in reality the industries depend on the vast majority of people being consumers of their services.

Organisations that survive by offering people the opportunity to escape the boredom and meaninglessness of their lives through addictive, passive activities endanger the health of society. These organisations, dependent as they are on creative people who can work effectively with one another, thus endanger their own futures.

7.6 Defining Learning Organisations

We can summarise the discussion in this chapter as follows: Learning organisations can be defined as those which build capacities essential to their survival whilst meeting the demands that confront them day to day. Much of the literature on learning organisations, however, arbitrarily considers only those capacities that are internal to the organisation. This internal focus represents a destructive cultural bias that flies in the face of principles of systems thinking. True capacity building must address capacities represented in an organisation's wider ecology such as those present in nature and society.

No attempt has been made to provide a definitive list of the capacities necessary for sustainable organisational life. Instead, several examples have been given to show the link between capacity building and sustainability. The reason for this is the danger in any attempt to be definitive.

One perspective on learning organisations presented in Chapter 5 involved an 'open-systems' view. This perspective encourages people to think of an organisation as a 'work in process' and the object of learning being to progressively discover how it might be improved. This approach seems appropriate to our discussion. Sustainable work depends on mature and healthy organisations operating within a mature and healthy ecology. The capacities necessary for the maturity and health of both organisations and the ecology of commerce are not fully understood. Rather we discover them as we journey through a process of learning.

The discussion enables us to put forward an alternative definition of learning organisations to that presented in Chapter 6. It is:

Learning Organisation Definition #2:
An organisation that seeks to build the capacities it needs for the future while meeting the demands of the present. Some essential capacities are internal, such as

organisational memory, readiness to change and strong social bonds. Others are external such as the environment's capacity to absorb waste and the level of trust in the community.

The discussion that led to this definition has been based around two dilemmas not previously considered. People engaged in a learning journey face a dilemma as to where they should direct their attention: on capacities that are internal to the organisation, or external capacities that provide the organisation with a healthy ecology. A polarity map of this dilemma is shown in Figure 7.4.

Figure 7.4 Inner Focus—Outer Focus Polarity Map

+	Learning efforts generate a healthy organisation capable of meeting the demands of a challenging world	Learning efforts enable the organisation to act restoratively, contributing to the health and stability of the wider community.	+
Inner Focus			Outer Focus
-	Actions designed to advance the interests of the organisation undermine the community. The organisation is a healthy member of a crumbling system.	Attention given to wider community interests blinds the organisation to its own needs. It is sacrificing its own future to perpetuate the wider community.	-

True sustainability involves healthy organisations operating in a healthy ecology, a situation far removed from the present state of commerce. Addressing this need requires organisations to achieve a balance between an Inner focus and an Outer focus. Both are required. Organisations that neglect the Inner capacities face an early demise as they are overwhelmed by the demands of the competitive world in which they operate. Those that neglect the Outer focus face a slow demise, having to work harder and harder to be successful in a community that is falling apart. The need described gives rise to a further dilemma shown in Figure 7.5.

Figure 7.5 Performing—Learning Polarity Map

+	The organisation and its members work at the limit of its capacity, generating challenge, excitement and sustainable high performance.	The organisation consciously and systematically builds essential capacities it will need in the future. Capacity building is considered a natural part of the organisation's work.	+
	Performing	Learning	
-	The organisation works beyond its capacity, getting things done but burning out essential capacities in the process. Stress and anxiety are endemic.	Capacity building becomes an excuse for ignoring current demands. People feel apathetic, bored. The overly relaxed attitude prevents things from getting done.	-

Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars (1993) outline seven generic dilemmas from which other cultural contrasts can be derived. With the exception of Figure 7.5 the polarity maps presented so far are all derivations on those seven generic dilemmas. The Performing—Learning dilemma, however, appears to be a distinct generic dilemma not discussed by Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars.

The nature of the Performing—Learning dilemma relates to a decision that any community will face when presented with useful, valuable capacities. The decision is whether it is more appropriate to exploit the capacity (performing) or to build the capacity (learning). As has been discussed, this dilemma forms the basis for achieving the 'flow' state described by Csikszentmihalyi (1997) and has been articulated by Fritz (1991) as a critical distinction related to processes of learning. Quinn (1992; 1997) uses the terms 'takers' and 'leavers' to refer to people with culturally derived preferences for how they deal with essential capacities. Takers exploit capacities, focusing on performance. Leavers ensure that the demands they place upon capacities do not diminish the capacities over time.

The dilemmas shown in Figures 7.4 and 7.5 can be added to those presented in Chapter 6 to give a more complete picture of the issues that will present themselves to any group or community engaged in a journey of learning. How a community responds to these dilemmas will shape the culture of the community: the pattern of unconsciously held assumptions regarding how they should act. Of particular interest to this research, these dilemmas will shape the pattern of unconsciously held assumptions about how learning should be undertaken.

7.7 Summary

This chapter has concluded a review of literature designed to identify dilemmas that face any organisation or community wanting to become a learning organisation. Earlier chapters considered dilemmas that could be drawn directly from the literature on learning organisations. This chapter identified two dilemmas influencing the literature but which, paradoxically, are not clearly explicated. The dilemmas related to (1) whether the focus of the community was on internal capacities or external capacities, and (2) whether the community responded to the presence of valuable capacities by exploiting them or building them.

The discussion in this chapter led to a revision of our definition of Learning Organisations. The definition presented is explicit in referring to both inner and outer capacities of organisations.

7.8 A Turning Point

The dilemmas identified to this point in the thesis provide a basis for investigating the influence of culture on learning in organisations. They can enable us to establish the pattern of unconsciously held assumptions that shape the meaning people give to the term ‘learning organisation’ and the learning strategies they adopt. We could say that any organisation embarking on a journey of learning will establish a ‘learning culture’ based around the dilemmas that confront them.

So far, we have only considered dilemmas found, either explicitly or implicitly, in literature on learning organisations. This literature, however, primarily represents the views and understanding of only one part of the community of people interested in learning organisations: academics or researchers choosing to write about the area. Senge and Kim (1997) have described how the community concerned with learning organisations includes two further groups: consultants and practitioners. Consultants take the research generated by academics and act in ways that enable it to be put to use in organisations. Practitioners are those who seek to apply knowledge on learning—knowledge generated by researchers and taught by consultants—so that their organisations are healthier.

If we were to explore learning cultures based solely on dilemmas identified through the literature we would be in danger of ignoring dilemmas that arise more particularly for consultants and practitioners. For that reason this research also explores the experiences of each of these groups. A separate research methodology was adopted for each of these groups.

Before describing the research undertaken with these two groups it is appropriate to discuss the research philosophy adopted. Chapter 8 considers the philosophical issues underpinning the investigations reported in the remaining chapters of the thesis.

Chapter 8: Research Philosophy

This thesis has reached a point where it is necessary to go beyond reviews of the literature. A variety of research activities involving different methodologies will be undertaken from this point. While there will be significant differences in the research activities, they are all guided by the research philosophy of the author. It is therefore appropriate at this point to discuss issue of philosophy and look ahead to how these will shape the nature of the inquiry from this point on.

Dilemma methodology has acted as a guiding concept in this research. According to Hampden-Turner (2001) dilemma methodology is a meta-concept: a concept about concepts, and useful for generating insight into any issues under investigation. We can, therefore, use dilemmas to explore philosophies of research and to explain the approaches taken in this project.

The chapter considers some of the dilemmas that present themselves to any researcher. We then discuss how the inter-play of researcher, subject and methods involved in this work shape how the dilemmas are resolved. Firstly, in order to provide a context for the discussion of philosophy, the chapter provides an overview of the study and shows how the various research activities contribute to its overall purpose.

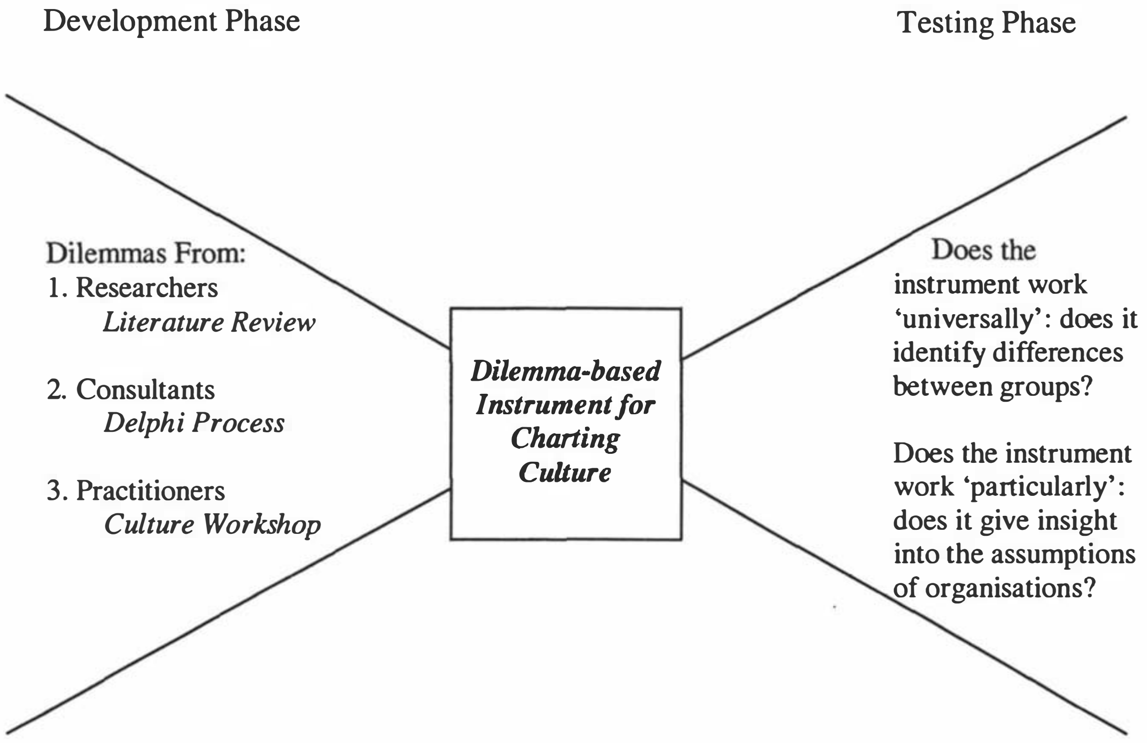
8.1 Overview of the Study

The purpose of the thesis is to explore the effect that culture has on efforts to build learning organisations, culture being the pattern of assumptions that characterise a particular community. Two research questions provide direction for the thesis is: Can Dilemma Theory be used to:

a. Generate an holistic model of what a Learning Organisation is and how it develops? and
b. Develop a measurement system that can act as a basis for empirical research into Learning Organisations?

Dilemma methodology has been adopted to provide the means of understanding and describing differences that exist between groups within the community of people interested in Learning Organisations. Dilemma methodology can therefore enable us to develop an holistic model of Learning Organisations. If we can identify the dilemmas that present themselves to any community embarking on a journey of organisational learning, we also have a basis for describing the assumptions a community has regarding learning. A significant part of the thesis is therefore based around the development and testing of a measurement system that can be used to describe and compare Learning Organisations. Figure 8.1 illustrates the various parts of this research in relation to this overall purpose.

Figure 8.1 Research Overview


Development Phase
Testing Phase
Dilemmas From:
1. Researchers
Literature Review
2. Consultants
Delphi Process
3. Practitioners
Culture Workshop
Dilemma-based Instrument for Charting Culture
Does the instrument work 'universally': does it identify differences between groups?
Does the instrument work 'particularly': does it give insight into the assumptions of organisations?

As Figure 8.1 shows, the study centres on a Dilemma-based Instrument, the means used to chart culture in relation to learning. The Development phase involves a broad exploration of learning-based dilemmas that might be included in this instrument. These dilemmas can be identified from three parts of the community of interest surrounding learning organisations: researchers, consultants and practitioners. In later chapters we will see how a Delphi process was used to explore the dilemmas apparent to consultants, and how Culture Workshops were used to explore dilemmas apparent to practitioners.

With learning-based dilemmas identified, the instrument can be developed. It then needs to be tested. This will be done in two ways: universally and particularly. Universal testing considers whether it fits within the body of knowledge already existing about cultural values. That body of knowledge, as outlined in Chapter 4, enables us to make distinctions between different cultures and subcultures. We would expect the instrument to allow us to make the same distinctions. For example, we would expect there to be differences between women's responses and men's, between executives' responses and operators' and so forth.

Particular testing considers whether the instrument is of value to organisations that seek to use it to guide their learning efforts. When we apply the instrument to charting the culture of a particular organisation we would expect to find that it highlights values that members of the organisation agree are present and provides insight into how these values are shaping the organisation's learning efforts.

Figure 8.1 indicates there are a variety of research activities involved in the project, some to do with generating dilemmas and others to do with testing the instrument. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, there are dilemmas in research that will have a bearing on how these research activities are undertaken. What are some of these dilemmas?

8.2 Research Dilemmas

A researcher undertaking an investigation into organisational phenomena is typically confronted with the 'Quantitative—Qualitative' dilemma. Will the research be based on objective measures of the issue under consideration—that is, a quantitative approach? Or, will it be based on the subjective impressions of people connected with the issue—a qualitative approach? Clearly, 'Objectivity—Subjectivity' is a related dilemma. Objectivity requires efforts to apply scientifically rigorous methods in order to produce findings that can be applied generally (Clarke, 1997). Subjectivity assumes that research that deals with the experience of people and groups requires that the subjective experience of particular individuals be acknowledged and understood. The need to generalise produces results that are banal and trivial and of little value to people who need to act on the research (Cohen & Manion, 1989).

This dilemma has also be framed in terms of competing research philosophies, often represented as 'Positivism—Interpretivism.' The Positivist philosophy holds that all genuine knowledge is based on sense experience, and knowledge can be advanced by means of observation and experimentation (Cohen, 1989). Observations of people's actual behaviour are trustworthy where their personal accounts of why they have behaved in certain ways are not. The interpretations of behaviour made by researchers are a potential source of bias preventing the identification of universal principles, so

Positivist philosophy seeks to keep a clear separation between the researcher and the subject.

The Interpretivist philosophy holds that in order to understand social systems researchers need to accept that they are working with subjects who are making their own interpretations of the world around them. So, when investigating the culture of social systems, as this thesis does, the researcher must deal with the fact that individual participants are members of the social systems under consideration. As such, they have their own thoughts regarding the culture of their social system, the researcher and the appropriateness of being participants in research.

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) make a distinction between living systems and non-livings systems that is pertinent to the need for different forms of inquiry. A leather football is an example of a non-living system: the leather came from a bull that was once living, but now it is not. If I want the ball to go in a particular direction and I have sufficient skill, I can kick the ball to make it go where I want. If I am dealing with a living system, such as a live bull, and I try kicking it in a particular direction I could end up somewhere quite different. The bull has its own will, purposes and preferences. Similarly, Interpretivists believe one should seek to understand the interior world of participants before one starts 'kicking' them with research techniques.

Wolcott (1995) discusses similar issues in terms of the 'Science—Art' dilemma, acknowledging that these are complementary ways of knowing the physical world. While science is commonly associated with research, research can also be carried out artistically. According to Wolcott, art is achieved when the addition of idiosyncratic human touch in a production is recognised by a discriminating audience as achieving an aesthetic quality that exceeds what would be expected by the exercise of craft skill alone.

A key difference between artistic and scientific endeavour relates to issues of method. According to Wolcott scientific endeavours are characterised by a preference for 'tight research designs'; that is, the researcher decides in advance an appropriate course of inquiry and follows as closely as possible the protocols associated with that course. Artistic endeavour is designed as the artist carries it out. An artistic approach to research, therefore, concentrates on results rather than methods, with the researcher adopting whatever investigative approach seems most appropriate.

Wolcott discusses a range of issues that are important to researchers who are operating 'scientifically': these include bias, reliability, validity and generalisation.

Each issue receives a different treatment when considered from an artistic, qualitative perspective. An issue like bias is reframed as a potentially positive attribute: interest. Reliability has little relevance to artistic endeavours. Validity and generalisation must be treated with caution by the artistic researcher because of the need for context in drawing conclusions.

Evered & Louis (1981) summarise these dichotomies associated with research as 'Inquiry from the Inside' and 'Inquiry from the Outside.' Inquiry from the inside involves knowing the reality of a system by becoming immersed in it so that knowledge gained is validated experientially on the basis of a rich understanding of context. Inquiry from the outside involves viewing the system from a position of detachment, using measurement and logic to validate observations of fact. Evered & Louis list 11 different dichotomies from cultural literature they consider synonymous with the 'Inside—Outside' research dilemma.

The dichotomous nature of the approaches discussed suggests that these represent culturally-derived positions, and that the cultural dynamics discussed throughout this thesis are applicable to the treatment of opposing views on methodology. The development of research philosophies requiring an either/or choice between them suggests schismogenetic processes are well established in research communities. Commentators such as Wolcott (1995) and Evered & Louis (1981) suggest that the apparently opposite philosophies are alternative and complementary ways of understanding a system. And accounts of outstanding research activities typically involve a mixture of scientific rigour and artistic flair. That is, researchers concern themselves both with the question of whether they are applying appropriate methods to answer their research questions while engaging in the 'double-loop learning' process of reflecting on whether they have asked the right questions in the first place.

Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars (1997) have discussed the need to reconcile the research dilemmas we have discussed. They explain the dilemma as stemming from the Western preference for analytical thought:

> "Early on in Western scientific history there arose a schism between mind and body. The mind did the seeing. The body or bodies were seen. The result of the schism was that Western science set out on a long journey to accumulate facts, of which our bodies were examples but our minds were not." (p. 13)

Reconciliation involves, in part, recognising that the desire for generalisation from research is an expression of a cultural preference for universalism. The need to account for exceptional findings (an expression of a preference for particularism) is the basis for changes of paradigm that generate the greatest advances in knowledge (Kuhn, 1970).

What will shape the approach taken to the research activities in this study? Checkland & Scholes (1999) have described how a research project involves a rich interplay between the researcher, the subject and the methods adopted. Factors to do with the personality and history of the researcher determine which subject is of interest and provides the researcher with a preference for certain methods. The nature of the subject also guides the choice of method. The method adopted then casts light on the subject. Increased understanding informs the researcher as to how the subject can be better understood and how the methods can be adapted to provide further insights. Once this process is underway, all three elements are subject to change.

We can get an insight into how the research activities of this project emerged by considering the initial positions of the three elements described by Checkland: the researcher, 'learning organisations' as a subject, and 'dilemma methodology' as the method.

8.3 The Researcher

Personal Mastery is one of the disciplines associated with learning organisations. Building one's knowledge of the disciplines of learning organisations lends itself to gaining insight into one's personal capacities and values. Exploring cultural values likewise operates to stimulate reflection on one's own values. My interest in the culture of learning organisations has served to bring to light a number of personal preferences that shape the decisions I make when undertaking research.

Seagal & Horne (1996) have described how the personality dynamics of people shape the way they process information and give rise to preferences for different ways of acting. It appears that I have a relatively uncommon personality dynamic, termed 'Mental-Emotional' in Human Dynamics parlance.

This personality dynamic is 'mentally-centred,' meaning that I view the world from a consistently detached position. I am also predisposed to take a long-term focus on issues and prefer linear, logical and sequential thinking and planning. I seek clarity and am highly selective of input; I give relatively little attention to details, concentrating on 'essentials' in order to generate a clearer picture.

The Mental-Emotional dynamic is characterised by a deep, though detached and objective, interest in the interior functioning of people. It seems that my interest in issues of learning, culture and values is a natural expression of this dynamic. Mental-Emotional people are not as interested as some others in moving groups forward. Rather, the personality dynamic inclines me to focus on where the group is going and why; on understanding the group's functioning rather than seeking to direct it.

Preferences and values are likely to be shaped both by factors of personality that are inherent and cultural values that are learned. However these factors have combined, I have a clear preference for detachment and objectivity; dealing with the interior world of people, rather than focusing on external behaviour; emergent rather than structured processes; complementarity processes rather than conflict; integrating a wide variety of issues rather than knowing any particular issues in depth; creative design of elegant solutions rather than construction of robust, detailed works; and idealistic rather than politically astute thinking.

These preferences incline me toward qualitative, artistic research that involves designing creative solutions to enable groups to achieve their long-term goals. However, my qualitative leaning is modified by (1) a detached, objective perspective that limits my ability to become truly immersed in other people's worlds, and (2) a desire for complementarity, so that I am quickly convinced of the need to include quantitative elements into my work.

The subject chosen for this research appeals directly to the personality dynamic described above. It has to do with the internal functioning of individuals and communities. It lends itself to systems thinking, a technique that suits my desire for integration. And it looks both at the way different perspectives shape the actions of people interested in learning organisations and how different perspectives can be reconciled.

The principle methodology adopted for the research likewise appeals to the Mental-Emotional personality dynamic. It is an elegant approach to understanding the complexities of people's lives. It is based more on the dynamic interaction of values than on a detailed understanding of any particular values. Furthermore, it is highly teachable, which appeals to my interest in the development of others.

8.4 The Subject

Choices of methodology are also shaped by the nature of the subject area, learning organisations. In particular, choices will by necessity reflect the emergent nature of the field. Garavan (1997) reports that a great deal of confusion is evident in the literature concerning the concept of learning organisations. Garavan notes that this confusion extends to whether the learning organisation is treated as a variable—something that can be designed into an organisation—or a metaphor for an organisation with a particular kind of culture. The range of metaphors present in the literature was discussed in Chapter 5.

Shakeshaft, Bowman and Sanson-Fisher (1997) have discussed the value of examining the gap between research activities one might expect in any particular field of inquiry and the research activities that actually take place. They suggest that there is a logical sequence of activities we could expect to find. They describe a sequence of four categories of activity: measurement, description, interventions and dissemination.

Measurement: During this phase researchers seek to define the scope of the field. Models of the field of inquiry can be hypothesised and tested, with a view to developing models (preferably, one unified model) that can encompass the complete scope of relevant issues. Models developed form the basis for the development of instruments for measuring the reality to be found in the field. The research activity in this phase could be expected to be primarily qualitative, with researchers immersing themselves in the field to explore its full scope.

Description: Having developed measurement instruments, researchers can then turn their attention to using these instruments to provide descriptions of the current state of the field under consideration. The outcome of this phase of inquiry is the identification of areas where action needs to be taken. The research activity in this phase could be expected to be primarily quantitative.

Interventions: Having generated quantitative descriptions that can act diagnostically, enabling researchers to establish priorities for change, researchers can turn their attention to establishing which interventions are most beneficial for producing desired changes to the field. Measurement instruments and descriptions produced by earlier phases can be used to evaluate the impact of interventions. The outcome from these research activities will be recommendations of interventions and techniques that can be used by practitioners in the field under consideration. A variety of activities will be involved in this phase: both qualitative efforts to generate creative interventions and quantitative efforts to evaluate their effectiveness.

Dissemination: Having established what interventions are most effective, researchers need to turn their attention to how this knowledge can best be shared with practitioners. Again, this would involve both qualitative and quantitative activities.

If researchers concerned with the field of inquiry represented a community acting logically and coherently, we could expect that early studies would primarily fall into the Measurement category. Over time the other categories would be represented, though we would also expect a 'double loop' process to occur, with knowledge gained from work on description and interventions suggesting where changes need to be made to models and measurements.

Shakeshaft and his colleagues have applied these categories to analysis of research in fields of health, such as treatment of smoking and other addictions. Some would argue that these categories reflect a medical model of research. It is significant, however, that their categories parallel processes of change suggested by Blake and Mouton (1970) and Fritz (1991).

In the literature reviewed by Shakeshaft et al, descriptive studies were over-represented, suggesting that the academic communities involved were inclined toward quantifying problems rather than exploring solutions. What does the literature on learning organisations indicate as to research preferences in this field?

To explore this question I reviewed abstracts of 167 articles published in the journal *The Learning Organisation: An International Journal*, from Volume 1 Number 1 (1994) through to Volume 9 Number 2 (2002). The articles were classified according to Shakeshaft's four categories.

In the Measurement and Intervention categories, subcategories were used, as indicated in Table 8.1. Measurement included subcategories for articles that (a) discussed the need for research; (b) proposed, defined or extended models of the field; and (c) put forward and/or tested measurement instruments. Intervention included sub-categories for articles that discussed (a) use of a particular organisational learning technique; (b) how a particular organisation applied techniques holistically in an effort to become a 'learning organisation'; and (c) the ethics of intervention.

Table 8.1 Types of Research Activity

Category	Number of Articles	Percentage of Total Articles
Measurement		
Need for Research	7	4.2
Models	47	28.1
Measurement Instruments	4	2.4
Total Measurement articles	**58**	**34.7**
Description	**19**	**11.4**
Intervention		
Particular Organisational Learning Technique	66	39.5
Holistic Application to Become 'Learning Organisation'	18	10.8
Ethics of Intervention	2	1.2
Total Intervention Articles	**86**	**51.5**
Dissemination	**4**	**2.4**

The distribution of articles indicates that research into learning organisations has not proceeded according to the logical sequence described by Shakeshaft et al (1997). Literature has concentrated on theoretical discussion of models and pragmatic attempts at intervention. This accords with the observation of Heraty & Morley (1995) that theory in the area of learning organisations tends to be a mixture of intuition and experience. The consequence is that:

> "Despite a burgeoning, prescriptive literature, the transition to [the learning organisation] is one that is not well researched and may well be under threat because of poor conceptualisation and a lack of systematic empirical evidence." (p. 27)

Lahteenmaki, Toivonen & Mattila (2001), on the basis of an extensive literature review, also concluded that the field lacks the valid measures of Organisational Learning that would allow empirical research to take place, and that the field is characterised by scattered concepts which are only vaguely linked. They observe:

> "Despite vivid discussion and the development of consultation tools for turning companies into learning organisations, one cannot avoid the feeling that little has

> been done to develop valid measures for organisational learning. This might be due to, but also the reason for, a striking lack of comprehensive empirical research in this area. Another reason for the shortage of methodological discussion and the underdevelopment of measures of organisational learning is the fact that the very concept itself still is vague. It is of course impossible to measure the phenomenon without knowing what it is." (p. 114)

There are further reasons why empirical, descriptive research into learning organisations is being neglected. The field is clearly new, without an accepted paradigm or model. The academic community is also new, and therefore acts as a loosely bound collection of individuals rather than a coherent community (Hampden-Turner, 2001). Organisations and practitioners that are willing to participate in research are more interested in trying interventions than in being described and may push researchers to skip the description phase. The turbulent, highly competitive business environment may not allow for the delays generated by undertaking all four phases of research: organisations are more likely to progress through a process of "trying lots of stuff and keeping what works" (Collins & Porras, 1994). Finally, those concerned with learning organisations may be disillusioned with highly analytical, measurement-based approaches to change (Ramsey, 2001).

For these reasons academics concerned with learning organisations may find themselves neglecting the need for quantitative description. As work on model building and interventions increases the need for descriptive work that is capable of grounding and evaluating intuitive efforts also increases. This need provides the context for the current study.

This study is designed to provide the groundwork for future description. As Table 8.1 shows relatively few articles (2.4%) focus on the development and/or testing of measurement instruments that can be used in descriptive work. The fast moving nature of the subject area makes the development of such instruments difficult. The experimentation of practitioners could easily make measurement criteria redundant well before they have produced a useful description of the field. This research aims to generate a measurement system based on values and culture. Values are recognised as enduring elements of underlying organisational structure. Processes and techniques may be transient, but they are often expressions or artifacts of enduring, underlying values.

So, the subject area has a critical bearing on the nature of research activities adopted. It has been argued that there is a growing need for quantitative work to provide useful descriptions of the learning organisation field. As Figure 8.1 shows, before this quantitative work can take place, more qualitative work needs to be done to generate useful measurement instruments.

Consider, also, how methodology shapes choices of research activity.

8.5 Methodology

Earlier chapters have discussed the nature of values and culture, and explored cultural processes on the basis of interdependent opposite values. For the reasons outlined in these chapters, Dilemma Methodology is being adopted as the principle methodology guiding this research project. Dilemmas have already been used to explain cultural dynamics, to provide the context for interest in learning organisations and to suggest how different perspectives on the nature of learning organisations can be integrated into a unified model. Later chapters will discuss in greater detail the application of Dilemma Methodology. How, though, does this choice of method shape the choice of research activity?

Dilemma Methodology provides a highly quantifiable way of describing the values present in a community and of comparing the cultures of different communities. It is for this reason that Dilemma Methodology was selected as a highly appropriate way of addressing the need described above.

While a dilemma-based instrument will provide the basis for quantitative descriptive research, before it can be used it must be developed. That is, before we can quantify the differences we find in the ways people respond to dilemmas associated with learning we must first establish what dilemmas ought to be used. This requires a more qualitative immersion in lives of people who have engaged in learning. We need to explore their experiences in order to identify the dilemmas they have encountered.

As discussed earlier, dilemmas for this project will be sought in three parts of the community of practice interested in learning organisations: researchers (academics), capacity-builders (consultants) and practitioners. Literature on learning organisations presented in earlier chapters, particularly Chapter 5, is intended to represent the experience of researchers. Chapters 9 and 10 deal with research activities aimed at finding dilemmas experienced by capacity-builders and practitioners respectively.

The nature of values and the nature of culture shape the way dilemmas can be identified. Quantitative methods are limited in their effectiveness because values are *unconsciously* held. That is, people are typically unable to respond directly to questions about values they hold because they are unaware of how values influence their decisions. Qualitative approaches are required in order to bring unconsciously held values and assumptions to the surface.

Because the groups making up the Learning Organisation community are very different, it would be inappropriate to use the same method for each group. As a function of their role as researchers, academics produce literature from which dilemmas can be obtained. While consultants make use of this body of literature they do not necessarily contribute to it—their primary role is capacity building within organisations. Some other method of surfacing dilemmas is required. Like consultants, practitioners are able to report their direct experiences in building learning organisations. They differ from consultants, however, in that this is often a shared experience: people within an organisation go through the experience together, forming a collective memory of what was involved.

Dilemma Methodology has a further influence on choices made by a researcher: it encourages the researcher to search for ways to reconcile apparent dilemmas between arts and science, quantitative and qualitative and 'inside' and 'outside' inquiry.

8.6 Making Choices

This chapter began by considering the potential for schismogenesis amongst researchers on the basis of philosophy. If the approaches outlined are complementary, as I believe they are, then such schismogenesis represents a danger to any research community. Treating the competing philosophies as irreconcilable will lead researchers to neglect particular forms of research when they are most needed.

A recurring principle in the literature on learning organisations is that the question of 'how' something should be done ought not to supersede questions of 'what' and 'why'. The driving force in any process of creating is the vision of those involved, not their beliefs about the methods they would prefer to use (Fritz, 1989). A focus on 'how' is often evidence of defensiveness amongst people; a barrier that will prevent them from attaining what is truly important to them (Block, 2001). Over-emphasis of process—even process that is highly engaging and rewarding—can lead to 'performance momentum' that carries people into areas that are undesirable (Gallwey, 2000).

What then should guide a researcher in the choices they make regarding method? Both 'inside' and 'outside' perspectives on research are ways of inquiring into a system. The choice of how one inquires depends primarily on what one seeks to find out; the research question guides the choices of the researcher. While factors such as personality dynamics and training may influence researchers toward particular types of research, a willingness to use both scientific and artistic approaches gives researchers greater mobility in responding to important questions.

The research activities involved in this thesis have provided an array of opportunities for exercising artistic intuition and creativity. For example, the workshops described in Chapter 10 are idiosyncratic. The design of the workshops provided opportunity for me to gather data in a way that built on my strengths as a teacher, my interest in story-telling and my desire for participants to find activities engaging and enjoyable. I have endeavoured to ground such artistic elements of the research in careful application of 'scientific' principles, for example the recording of participant's own responses and the testing of conclusions by feeding them back to participants.

One outcome of the research will be a system of measurement that can enable meaningful empirical research to take place with regard to Learning Organisations. Once again, the highly artistic endeavour of creating a measurement system needs to be grounded in some way. In this case, it is important to establish criteria for a measurement system that can serve as a basis for assessing the quality of the system. Any such criteria would need to accommodate the concerns of the research community interested in the area; concerns that have contributed to the current lack of universally accepted approaches to measurement. What criteria are suggested in the literature on Learning Organisations?

8.7 Criteria for Measurement Systems

A number of criteria are suggested throughout the organisational learning literature. Some are explicitly stated by academics concerned with the lack of empirical research. Others are implicit in the contributions people have made regarding the nature of Organisational Learning or the place of measurement within the field.

The measurement system must have the capacity to synthesise the wide range of perspectives people have about Learning Organisations. Lahteenmaki et al. (2001) have expressed their concern that there has been a lack of conceptualisation of the true nature of organisational learning, and those measurement systems that exist represent the particular perspective of their creators. A measurement system needs to be based on a meta-concept of Learning Organisations that draws the fragmented field together.

The measurement system must emphasise the learning of organisations. Lahteenmaki et al. (2001) describe how the discussion of learning in organisations often espouses the need to give attention to organisations while actually focusing attention on individuals. Similarly, valid measures of organisational learning need to be clearly linked to organisational processes.

The measurement system must provide the basis for empirical research. Existing descriptions are typically based on anecdotes (Heraty & Morley, 1995) or consultants tools for change (Lahteenmaki et al., 2001). As such they do not allow for comparison of organisations or other learning communities, or the assessment of change generated by interventions.

The measurement system must go beyond actions to chart the mental models involved in learning. Kim (1993) has discussed the central role that mental models play in learning. Actions taken by individuals or organisations are an expression of mental models. Such actions may change while the mental models remain. A measurement system based on rating or evaluating actions may encourage people to make surface level changes: where visible actions make it appear that the organisation has changed for the better, while potentially destructive mental models are either unchanged or more deeply embedded in the organisational system.

The measurement systems must contribute to change processes within organisations. A difficulty with empirical research is access to organisations. Any measurement system must be beneficial to both the researcher and the organisations involved. For that to happen, the measurement system must generate information that helps the organisation. Senge et al. (1999) indicate that measurement that truly helps an organisation to change needs to take an appreciative approach, valuing what exists rather than being used as the basis for subjective—and often capricious—judgements of what is and is not worthy. A measurement system must also make allowance for the significant time delays involved in real change.

The measurement system must reflect real or natural learning. Many of the assessment techniques used in organisations do not reflect authentic change (Senge et al., 1999); instead they limit learning to change within a pre-determined world defined by the measures (Wheatley & Kellner-Rogers, 1996). According to Johnson (1999) systems of measurement need to be aligned to how nature works, without the objective standards that lead to reductionist thinking and mechanistic activity.

Table 8.2 provides a summary of the criteria described above. We can use these criteria to assess the quality of measurement systems generated by the research. Of course, there is a danger of creating internal contradiction in their use. Over-rigorous application of the criteria (perhaps through elaborate rating scales associated with each dimension) could generate some of the behaviours the criteria themselves warn against. Application of the criteria aims to contribute to the healthy management of the research polarities this chapter has discussed. That is, there is a danger that the research could become an overly artistic, intuitive and idiosyncratic exercise. The criteria can enable me to carry out an informed assessment of outputs produced by the research, thus contributing to a greater degree of balance than would otherwise be possible.

Table 8.2 Measurement System Criteria

A high quality measurement system for Learning Organisations must:

- have the capacity to synthesise the wide range of perspectives people have about Learning Organisations
- emphasise the learning of organisations
- provide the basis for empirical research
- go beyond actions to chart the mental models involved in learning
- contribute to change processes within organisations
- reflect real or natural learning

8.8 Summary

Research is an inquiry into how a particular system operates. Assumptions the researcher holds about the nature of research have a large bearing on the quality of the inquiry. This chapter has endeavoured to express my assumptions about the research process.

Some of the literature on research encourages a choice between competing philosophies. This has been argued to represent a force pushing toward unhealthy schismogenesis in the academic community. This research aims to reconcile the need for both quantitative and qualitative elements in an inquiry. The nature of the reconciliation, however, is also influenced by the personality of the researcher, the state of the field of inquiry and the demands of the research methodology adopted.

The state of the Organisational Learning field suggests that there is a need for quantitative measures of Learning Organisations that can be used in empirical research. A set of criteria was presented for assessing the quality of measurement systems. These criteria will be used to assess measurement systems and instruments generated by this research.

In discussing these issues, this chapter serves as a context for discussion of research activities in subsequent chapters. These will discuss efforts to surface learning dilemmas from consultants (Chapter 9) and practitioners (Chapter 10), the development and testing of a dilemma-based instrument for charting the culture of learning organisations (Chapters 11 and 12), and use of the instrument in exploring the cultures of particular organisations (Chapter 13). Chapter 14 will discuss the instrument in relation to the criteria presented in Table 8.2.

Chapter 9: Consultants and the Learning Organisation

We have discussed how Dilemma Methodology provides a means of understanding culture and can therefore act as the basis for exploring the link between organisational culture and learning organisations. Culture can be understood as a pattern of dilemma resolution within a community. This research project aims to create and test an instrument for charting patterns of dilemma-resolution in organisations that are relevant to learning.

In order to create an instrument we must first identify dilemmas that organisations encounter as they pursue the goal of becoming learning organisations. In earlier chapters we have identified a number of these dilemmas on the basis of academic literature. In this chapter we consider dilemmas that can be identified through another source, the experience of consultants working in the area of learning organisations.

The chapter will describe a study in which the Delphi Technique was used to identify dilemmas consultants find to be pertinent to Learning Organisations. The study also aimed to identify organisations that could be included in later phases of the research.

9.1 Consultants and the Learning Organisation

Senge and Kim (1997) have discussed the part consultants play in the community of people interested in learning organisations. Where academics are involved with the generation of new knowledge through research and in disseminating this knowledge in their work of educating students and publishing, consultants are more directly interested in using knowledge to build the capacity of organisations.

The challenge for consultants in working directly with business practitioners is to help them put into use processes and techniques associated with learning organisations. This gives them a valuable perspective on processes of learning. Where academics may be willing to work at a conceptual level, consultants must be concerned with issues of relevance, of what is teachable, and of implementation in the workplace. Consultants must be concerned about what is deliverable.

Consultants working in the area of learning organisations face a further dilemma. As with academics, they may be drawn to learning organisation work because they are attracted to the concepts and philosophy associated with the 'new workplace.' Unlike academics, they are often compelled to work with people who have no interest in this philosophy. Rather, clients are likely to expect consultants to act in ways that are contradictory to new workplace ideals: to be competitive, problem-focused and driven by contractual outcomes rather than relationships. Clients may expect consultants to act as technical experts, where the consultants' preference is to act as capacity builders.[1]

Operating in this context gives consultants a unique perspective on the dilemmas confronting organisations that seek to become learning organisations.

9.2 The Study

The purpose of the study was to (1) surface learning dilemmas from consultants, and (2) identify organisations appropriate for inclusion in other studies making up this research.

As we have already discussed, values are held unconsciously by members of a community. Dilemmas do not appear to be dilemmas when people have deeply embedded assumptions about how they ought to be resolved. For this reason, dilemmas relating to learning need to be 'surfaced': rather than directly asking consultants about the dilemmas that affect organisations, we need to undertake a process that helps them become conscious about what would otherwise be unconscious. Once surfaced, these dilemmas will further inform us of what to include in an instrument for describing learning organisations.

The process of developing and testing an instrument requires that we identify examples of learning organisations. Identifying exemplar organisations will enable us to surface dilemmas from another source: the experience of business practitioners engaged in their own learning journeys. Once an instrument is developed we can also pilot it with exemplar organisations.

9.3 Method

A decision-making process known as the Delphi Technique was adopted for the study. The Delphi Technique was developed by the Rand Corporation in the 1950s as a systematic method for collecting and organising the opinions of a group of experts (Baron & Greenberg, 1990). The Delphi Technique has since been successfully applied in a wide range of organisational settings and to a variety of problems (Luthans, 1977).

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[1] A full discussion of the dilemma facing consultants and how it is handled by New Zealand consultants is included in the article Ramsey, P. & Sinha, P. (2002). How Consultants Operate. *University of Auckland Business Review,* 4, 1, 58-69. See Appendix 1i.

The key feature of the Delphi Technique is the anonymity of the experts taking part. Experts are enlisted in the process and presented with a problem. They provide the researcher with their individual responses. The researcher then compiles the responses and feeds the compiled responses back to the individual members of the expert group. The experts are then able to modify their original positions on the basis of the thinking of the group as a whole. The researcher continues to elicit individual responses from the group, compile answers and feed compiled responses back to the group until the problem has been resolved with a answer that represents the consensus of the group.

When used by the Rand Corporation the Delphi Technique was conducted via mail. For this study email was used. Email messages from the process are presented in Appendix 2. The Delphi Technique progressed through the following seven stages:

1. A message was sent to participants inviting them to take part in the study. If they chose to participate, they were asked to nominate organisations that they thought were outstanding examples of New Zealand learning organisations, and to explain the reasoning behind their nominations.
2. I reviewed the messages identifying common themes. Each of these was summarised in a short statement. These statements were compiled into a list of criteria summarising the consultants' reasons for nominations.
3. The list of criteria was fed back to the participants, who were asked to indicate what other criteria ought to be added to the list.
4. I reviewed the responses and identified new themes. Again, themes were summarised into short statements. These were added to the original criteria to produce an expanded list.
5. The expanded list of criteria was fed back to participants who were asked to describe any qualms they held regarding the criteria.
6. Participants' messages regarding qualms were reviewed and common themes were identified. Again, statements summarising themes were constructed and compiled into a list of qualms. Along with the criteria established earlier a Behaviourally Anchored Rating Scale (a BARS instrument) was developed that provided participants with a method of using the criteria to assess nominated organisations.
7. Participants were invited to use the BARS instrument to assess the organisations they had nominated in the first stage of the Delphi process. They were then asked to submit their ratings, along with their comments on the BARS instrument.

This process was designed to surface dilemmas through the process of making criteria explicit and in considering participants' qualms.

Asking people to make their criteria explicit is a means of gaining insight into their mental models. According to Ross (1994) mental models—our deep beliefs about the world—determine what we give our attention to. Asking people about criteria enables us to explore where their attention is being directed. It addresses the 'mental models' question posed by Kofman (1994): "To what should we be paying attention?"

Criteria enable dilemmas to be surfaced in two ways. One criterion (A) may be in opposition to another, (B), so that the better one performs on Criterion A the worse one performs on Criterion B (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2002). Secondly, dilemmas are suggested by asking, "What would be the downside if I was to put too great an emphasis on pursuit of this criterion?" (Johnson, 1993).

Hampden-Turner (1990) has discussed how dilemmas naturally lead people to experience qualms. Uncertainty over the way in which dilemmas are being handled and the possible neglect of critical values is a cause for anxiety. The unconscious nature of values, however, may mean that people are reluctant to put their vague feelings of unease into words. By inviting experts to express their qualms regarding the listed criteria they were able to provide a critique of what had been generated by earlier rounds with the reassurance that 'it's OK to be anxious' about aspects of the listed criteria that may seem trivial.

A criterion or a qualm could be included in further stages of the process on the basis of comments by one expert. The Delphi process initially accepts all suggestions participants make, then seeks endorsement from the group as a whole. For this reason, no distinction is made between a criterion suggested by one expert and a criterion suggested by several.

9.4 The Sample

Sixteen people were identified as potential participants in the study. Inclusion in the group was on the basis of their involvement in capacity building work in New Zealand, in one or more of Senge's five disciplines. Twelve individuals had published work or presented at conferences in areas relating to these disciplines. The remaining four people were known to the researcher for their work on learning organisations. All were sent a message requesting their participation in the Delphi process (see Appendix 2a).

Eight of the sixteen originally contacted agreed to take part in the Delphi process. A ninth person declined but nominated a colleague who agreed to take part. One person (referred to as E2 in Appendix 2) initially accepted, took part in the early stages of the process, but subsequently withdrew. In Appendix 2 the experts are referred to as E1 to E9 ('E' standing for 'expert') so that their individual responses can be tracked.

Following the withdrawal of E2, the Expert Group (as they were referred to) consisted of four males and four females. Four were principals in consulting companies, one acted in a capacity-building function within a private organisation, one had an executive role in an organisation whose business was primarily capacity-building and two worked within academic institutions.

9.5 Results

The study produced a variety of results during the course of the Delphi Process. The Expert group generated a set of ten criteria for assessing the extent to which an organisation was an example of a Learning Organisation, and a set of five qualms regarding the criteria. The process produced a Behaviourally Anchored Rating Scale that could be used in an assessment process. Finally, eight dilemmas were surfaced, suitable for inclusion in a dilemma-based instrument.

9.5.1 Criteria: The first message to the Expert group (Appendix 2a) asked them to nominate exemplary New Zealand learning organisations and to give the reasons behind their nominations. Experts' responses produced six criteria. This set of six criteria were fed back to the Expert group in a second message (Appendix 2d) which invited them to suggest what other criteria might be added to make the list complete. The first six criteria were generated in the first round (see Appendix 2b and 2c), and the remaining four in the second round (see Appendix 2d and 2e).

9.5.1.1 Fundamental Change: When nominating exemplary companies, four experts discussed the importance of learning that was directed at fundamental change. That is, they indicated that it was important that learning be directed toward changing the very core of an organisation's design. Comments were:

> *The whole business project is itself about designing the business as an emergent learning system, intended to jump through several scale iterations.*
>
> *[Learning efforts in the organisation focus on] their core design and development value creation processes.*
>
> *[The organisation is] highly innovative in the types of products it produces.*

> *[The organisation has shown] a readiness to address external challenges that required change to the business focus.*
>
> *[The organisation] is getting out of the 'grievance' mode.*
>
> *Every effort is made to put into practice current thinking in terms of manufacturing management and systems.*

These comments were summarised with the statement: **Engaged in learning processes that focus on change to the organisation's fundamental business concept**.

9.5.1.2 Senior Management Commitment: Two experts mentioned that individuals in executive positions were committed to, or champions of organisational learning. One nominated organisation had an "Org Learning person". Other comments were:

> *[There should be] someone dedicated to operationalising organisational learning.*
>
> *[A named individual is] the inspiring light there.*
>
> *[In a non-nominated organisation the consultants] backed out fast when there was no [senior management] commitment to change anything.*
>
> *They have talented people actively promoting and encouraging a learning orientation.*

These comments were summarised with the statement: **Senior management commitment to learning efforts, including an executive level champion.**

9.5.1.3 Empowerment: Four experts indicated that it was important for organisations to have cultures in which people were empowered to make change. This might involve them taking action outside of traditionally defined roles. Experts made comments related to team-based activity, which blurs boundaries between particular jobs, and people throughout the organisation being able to make changes more commonly associated with managerial roles. Comments were:

> *[The organisation has] team based learning systems...[and]...a culture which values people and their on-going development.*
>
> *[The organisation] operates a team based approach to manufacturing...teams are self managing...*
>
> *[There is] wide-ranging trust, empowerment and synergy throughout the organisation [with] certainly no "us and them" attitudes.*
>
> *[They have] come from a fear based culture to an 'empowered' one.*

These comments were summarised with the statement: **An empowered culture that blurs traditional organisation roles and boundaries.**

9.5.1.4 Staff Engagement: Experts indicated they felt it was important that staff throughout an organisation were engaged in the conversation and experimentation associated with learning. Comments were:

> *[There is] a focus by everyone on design and quality.*
>
> *[There has been] an internal transformation, with staff moving from largely clerical to a professional...workforce.*
>
> *They have undertaken a team based process incorporating reflection, that has transformed the way service is delivered throughout the organisation.*
>
> *Information [on the organisation's] operations [is] openly discussed.*

These comments were summarised with the statement: **Engagement of staff throughout the organisation in conversation and experimentation with products and services.**

9.5.1.5 An Intentional, Sustained Process: Six experts made comments that indicated it was important for organisations to be involved in learning processes for the long-term. It was evident that experts had experienced working with organisations where commitment to learning waned after a short burst of effort, and effective learning involved effort over "relatively long periods of time." Comments were:

> *[They have been working on] team based learning systems for quite a few years.*
>
> *[The organisation] intentionally set off on a process of learning, they call the "Learning Journey".*
>
> *[They aim] to ultimately function...*
>
> *[A non-nominated organisation is an example of] 'what not to do' and lots of lessons on stop start learning.*
>
> *[The organisation has had] structured initiatives over a period of years.*
>
> *They're not even off the starting blocks.*
>
> *They're just at the beginning of their journey.*

These comments were summarised with the statement: **Intentional process of organisational learning sustained over the long haul.**

9.5.1.6 Resource Availability: Two experts directly mentioned the effort nominated organisations had made to make learning resources and opportunities available to a wide range of staff. Comments included:

> *Throughout [the organisation] there is an appreciation of LO concepts and challenges, based on structured initiatives...*
>
> *[The company] has an extensive library of books and journals that are available to all staff to use.*

These comments were summarised with the statement: **Developmental resources and opportunities available to a wide range of staff.**

9.5.1.7 Knowledge Management: In the second round of the Delphi process two experts commented that there should be explicit mention of processes of knowledge creation and knowledge management. Comments included:

> *[Learning organisations engage in] processes that enable tacit learning...to become explicit and be accessed by others involved in related contexts.*
>
> *The whole idea is to intentionally generate knowledge within the organisation.*

These comments were summarised with the statement: **Efforts made to generate new knowledge, make it explicit and share it throughout the organisation.**

9.5.1.8 Recognition for Learning: In the second round one expert mentioned the need for:

> *formal and/or informal recognition for those people contributing to learning processes.*

These comments were summarised with the statement: **Recognition, both formal and informal, is given to those contributing to learning processes.**

9.5.1.9 Systems View of Learning: In the second round one expert commented on the need for organisations to consider the consequences of learning, both strategically and systemically. Consequences could be both “spatial”—impacting on functions other than the one initiating the learning—or “time-dependent”—changing factors such as attitude to risk and business outlook in ways that become critical over time. The expert commented:

> *There is little point in an organisation working intensively on learning and development in one area without thinking about the impact that such initiatives have on other areas in the organisation and how these change over time.*

These comments were summarised with the statement: **Effort is made to consider in advance the likely consequences of learning initiatives on the organisation as a whole, e.g. on other parts of the organisation, culture, attitude to innovation.**

9.5.1.10 Self Reliance: In the second round one expert discussed the need for learning organisations to become self reliant in building their own capacity to facilitate learning. The expert commented:

> *Learning should be systematic and...this includes the organisational competencies to keep on facilitating learning from WITHIN the organisation. Many 'LO' organisations seem to actually mean that individuals have lots of training and they often rely on outsiders to 'train' or educate members.*

These comments were summarised with the statement: **The organisation seeks to build its own capacity to facilitate future learning.**

Table 9.1 shows the complete list of criteria produced by the Expert group. The criteria are shown in the form in which they were fed back to the group in later stages of the Delphi process.

Table 9.1 Learning Organisation Criteria

Criterion 1:	Engaged in learning processes that focus on change to the organisation's fundamental business concept.
Criterion 2:	Senior management commitment to learning efforts, including an executive level champion.
Criterion 3:	An empowered culture that blurs traditional organisation roles and boundaries.
Criterion 4:	Engagement of staff throughout the organisation in conversation and experimentation with products and services.
Criterion 5:	Intentional process of organisational learning sustained over the long haul.
Criterion 6:	Developmental resources and opportunities available to a wide range of staff.

Criterion 7: Efforts made to generate new knowledge, make it explicit and share it throughout the organisation.

Criterion 8: Recognition, both formal and informal, is given to those contributing to learning processes.

Criterion 9: Effort is made to consider in advance the likely consequences of learning initiatives on the organisation as a whole, e.g. on other parts of the organisation, culture, attitude to innovation.

Criterion 10: The organisation seeks to build its own capacity to facilitate future learning.

9.5.2 ***Qualms:*** The third round of the Delphi process invited experts to engage in 'qualming': outlining whatever qualms they might feel regarding the criteria produced in earlier rounds. The message to experts is shown in Appendix 2g and their responses in Appendix 2h.

Qualm 1 related to problems of wording that were created by the format of the criteria. Having relatively short, generalised descriptions designed to cover a range of comments by the expert group resulted in concern that the particular intent of some statements may have been missed. This reflected the dilemma I faced when distilling criteria from a variety of sources: whether to:

(a) *generalise* and fall into the trap of having criteria that do not represent the full range of meaning intended, or

(b) *particularise*—list each possible meaning separately—and fall into the trap of producing an unworkably long set of criteria. How this dilemma could be reconciled became apparent as further qualms and dilemmas were considered.

Qualm 2 was that some criteria may be misleading because of their instrumental nature. For instance, recognition given for learning efforts (Criterion 8, Table 9.1) is a means of encouraging learning and an indication that the organisation values learning. Recognition and reward are not, however, the same as learning. Managers seeking to use this means of encouraging learning may unintentionally distract from the organisation's vision. This qualm highlights that individual criterion may be complementary and opposite to others, so that effort to meet one criterion may hamper efforts to meet another. This is, of course, an expression of the fundamental nature of dilemmas.

Qualm 3 expressed the concern that each criterion described only an end point, so that it was difficult for someone reading the criteria to apply them to an organisation where that end point was not fully being achieved. People wanted a more complete picture of the process an organisation might go through to reach that end point, particularly in view of the long-term nature of organisational efforts to become learning organisations.

Qualm 4 was a particular concern of expert E7, who pointed out that the language used to express the criteria was emotionally neutral, while the motivation behind effort to become learning organisations was much more emotionally engaged. The emotional neutrality of statements is a consequence of generalisation. The risk of generalised, neutral statements is that people using the criteria may experience a disconnection between the statements and their experience of life in a learning organisation. The criteria may thus have little appeal to the communities they are designed to serve.

Qualm 5 expressed a concern that was not directly stated in the responses to Round 3 but had been mentioned in earlier comments. Many consider that becoming a learning organisation is an on-going process. A list of criteria may give executives the misleading impression that, criteria having been met, the status of 'learning organisation' had been achieved and that learning efforts were no longer a priority. Publishing a set of criteria could have the unintended consequence of generating short-term efforts to 'measure up' rather than any serious commitment to learning.

The qualms of the Expert group are summarised in Table 9.2.

9.2 Qualms Expressed by the Expert Group

Qualm 1:	Wording of Criteria
Qualm 2:	Criterion gives misleading impression of the nature of learning
Qualm 3:	Criteria too short to give a full picture of what is meant, or the stages that an organisation would go through in the journey to being a learning organisation
Qualm 4:	Criteria are discussed in an emotionally neutral manner, giving a misleading impression about the nature of learning organisations.
Qualm 5:	Using criteria may give people the misleading impression that it is

possible to attain the status of being a 'learning organisation'. It is preferable to think of the 'learning organisation' as an ideal to be constantly striven for, where the journey is more important that the destination.

9.5.3 The BARS Instrument: In order to reconcile the dilemmas posed by the qualms of the expert group a modified Behaviourally Anchored Rating Scale (BARS) was developed (see Appendix 3) and provided to the Expert group for their comments.

9.5.3.1 BARS Development: The BARS technique allows for a more complete description of criteria in that it provides several behavioural descriptions against which people can anchor their numerical ratings. When used in assessing individual performance there might be descriptions of performance that is Outstanding, Above Requirements, Competent and Unacceptable.

Having four descriptive statements alongside each criterion allowed for more particular examples of behaviour rather than a short, generalised statement. Longer descriptions also allowed more emotionally engaged language to be included.

An innovative feature of this application of BARS is the nature of the descriptions associated with the highest scores. Typically the highest level of description and the highest ratings are associated with the most outstanding and, therefore, most desirable behaviour. In order to accommodate Qualm 2—concern that criteria could be taken too far—the fourth box on each dimension described the outcome of taking concern with that particular criterion too far.

The BARS Instrument in shown in Figure 9.1, and in Appendix 3.

Figure 9.1 The BARS Instrument (Part One)

	0 1 2	3 4 5	6 7 8	9 10
1. Pervasive Learning	Learning efforts restricted to a small number of "tame" issues.	Learning is able to affect products and services. More fundamental issues are not affected.	Learning efforts able to address fundamental issues shaping the organisation: the business concept, culture, etc.	Constant questioning of everything generates chaos and confusion. Loss of organisational identity and coherence.
2. Executive Commitment	Learning efforts championed by lower level enthusiasts. Little or no evidence of commitment from senior managers.	Senior management commitment evidenced by regular consideration or learning issues.	Senior management commitment to learning efforts evidenced by executive or board level champion and vigorous executive consideration.	Organisation treats learning as abstract, executive-driven process. Managers attempt to engineer and control learning.
3. Empowerment	People restricted to change within their own roles. Initiatives subject to managerial approval.	Efforts made to empower people; encouraging them to make changes to own role with minimal managerial control.	People throughout the organisation act with power; contributing with gusto to learning, both within their own roles and across organisational boundaries.	'Empowered' staff are so busy attending to other people's work they neglect their own roles. Opportunities for improvement are missed.
4. Engagement of Staff	Experimentation and innovation with products and services carried out by designated experts.	Staff involved with learning activities related to product and service innovation. Involvement focused on implementation issues.	Staff throughout the organisation engaged in conversation and experimentation. Evidenced through regular breakthroughs and failures.	Staff learning efforts immobilised by inclusion in areas beyond their ability or interest.
5. Permanence	Learning efforts fluctuate over time.	Medium term commitment to learning; commitment provisional on direct contribution to organisational results.	Deep commitment to on-going learning. Learning understood to be a crucial means of pursuing shared vision.	Dogmatic insistence on the priority of learning undermines ability to respond to day to day demands and challenges of the vision.

Figure 9.1 The BARS Instrument (Part Two)

	0 1 2	3 4 5	6 7 8	9 10
6. Resourcing	Few resources available to support learning, or available only to select individuals or groups.	Developmental resources and opportunities available to staff identified as likely stars.	Developmental resources and opportunities available and accessed by a wide range of staff.	Resourcing not able to keep pace with escalating demands of staff determined to maximise own learning.
7. Knowledge Management	Knowledge gained through learning stays in the head of the original learner; little done to make it accessible or shared.	People encouraged to share knowledge, though efforts result in others gaining only a surface understanding.	Systematic efforts to manage knowledge; includes work to generate, share and store knowledge throughout the organisation.	Efforts to document and share all knowledge overwhelm and immobilise staff, undermining self-reliance.
8. Recognition and Reward	Little or no recognition of those contributing to learning processes.	Occasional recognition of outstanding contributions to learning processes.	Recognition, both formal and informal, given to those contributing to learning processes. Rewards reflect the organisation's valuing of learning	Chasing rewards and applause, staff direct their efforts to short term projects with visible pay-offs. Rewards turn learning into a game.
9. Systematic Awareness	Learning tends to be event-based with little thought given to consequences of change.	Consideration given to impact of learning-based change on other parts of the organisation.	Consideration given to impact of learning-based change on the organisational system. Impact on attitudes, culture and relationships included.	Learning initiatives paralysed by attempts to predict unforeseeable consequences. Units unwilling to advocate their own interests.
10. Self Reliance	Reliance on external experts to facilitate learning processes.	Internal capacity to facilitate learning resides in central group of experts, providing service to the rest of the organisation.	Capacity to facilitate learning developed throughout organisation; efforts made to build capacity within all units.	Self-reliance of units leads to rejection of knowledge generated outside the unit; units becoming insular and blinkered.

This approach created the unusual situation of a rating system where the most desirable score was 7/10 and higher scores suggested that too much attention was being given to the criterion in question. A score of 8 or more on one dimension suggested that the organisation's efforts were negatively impacting on other dimensions. This harmonises with the dynamics of culture as we have discussed earlier. Over-emphasis in one area leads to neglect of others and puts an organisation at risk.

The undesirability of high scores also allowed for the reconciliation of Qualm 5. The BARS contains the implicit message that dimensions can be over-emphasised and that efforts to become a learning organisation involve the balancing of dimensions over time. There is a built-in limit to what might be a sustainable score using the scale.

9.5.3.2 Consultants Reaction to the BARS Instrument: In keeping with the Delphi Technique methodology, members of the Expert Group were invited to apply the BARS instrument to an organisation or organisations they were familiar with and to comment on its value. The message sent to the Expert Group is shown in Appendix 2j and their responses in Appendix 2k.

Five of the Expert Group responded to the message. Three of the five had applied it to an organisation. All made comments that indicated positive views of the BARS instrument as a tool. Two in the group mentioned that they felt confused by the fourth column, where the description deals with the downside of over-extending the organisation in pursuit of a criterion. Two others specifically mentioned the fourth column as an innovative and useful feature of the tool.

The two comments about the confusing aspect of the BARS instrument were both related to the cultural processes that have been discussed throughout this thesis. Expert E5 commented on the 'non-linearity' of the BARS instrument. That is, the high scores on one criterion were linked with descriptions that involved the undermining of other criteria. Similarly, E7 did not know how to provide a theoretical explanation for the negative consequence of putting too much effort into pursuit of each criterion.

The responses indicated that the group were prepared to endorse the set of criteria established through the Delphi process. If the BARS instrument had been constructed using a conventional linear progression of descriptions—for instance, if only the first three columns had been used-—each person responding would have been prepared to endorse it as a fair representation of their contributions. Use of the fourth column was an example of what Wolcott (1995) describes as 'artistic' research: the addition of the researcher's own intuitively based insights. This artistry was welcomed by some and caused confusion for others.

9.5.4 Dilemmas From Consultants: The process of developing the instrument was valuable in surfacing dilemmas pertinent to the experience of consultants. Dilemmas became evident when consultants expressed their qualms about the criteria and in the construction of the fourth column descriptions for the instrument.

Dilemmas became apparent in four different ways: qualms about the items generally; qualms about specific items; opposing relationships between items; and intuitive extensions of items by the researcher. Table 9.3 shows the dilemmas identified in each of these ways.

Table 9.3 Consultant Dilemmas by Means of Identification

Qualms Regarding Items In General:

Emotionally Neutral—Emotionally Engaged

Qualms Regarding Specific Items:

Learning as Instrumental—Learning as End in its Own Right
Learning as Autotelic—Learning as Exotelic

Opposing Relationships Between Items:

Knowledge Sharing—Self Reliance

Intuitive Extension of Items:

Empowerment—Control
Individual—Social
Change—Stability
Focused Effort—Whole System

When asked to express qualms about the criteria, one consultant mentioned that all were expressed in an emotionally neutral way that did not represent the passion felt by individuals and groups engaged in the learning process.

This is a cultural dilemma discussed by Schein (1985), and can be represented on a Polarity Map as shown in Figure 9.2.

Figure 9.2 Emotionally Neutral—Emotionally Engaged Polarity Map

+	Learning is planned and systematic. Careful thought is given to ensure that effort goes into the right areas and processes are properly designed and implemented	People are passionate about learning—they love to learn. Curiosity and aspiration are aroused through the joy of discovery.	+
Emotionally Neutral			Emotionally Engaged
-	Learning is a sterile process, devoid of emotion. People treat it as a 'necessary evil': one more imposition on their work lives.	Overly excited enthusiasts waste resources pursuing learning whims. Learning efforts are confused, fragmented and lacking substance.	-

While the Emotionally Neutral—Emotionally Engaged dilemma was discussed by Schein, it had not been mapped in earlier chapters. Those chapters focused on dilemmas that the researcher identified in literature on learning organisations. Other dilemmas coming from the consultant process can be viewed as derived from, or variations on literature-based dilemmas already mapped.

A qualm expressed by one consultant was that the 'Permanence' criterion may encourage people to treat learning as an end in its own right, rather than a means of enabling the organisation to achieve its vision. This is shown in Table 9.4 as Learning as Instrumental—Learning as End in its Own Right. Viewing learning as instrumental (a means to the end defined by the organisation's vision) is an expression of analysis as a value, in that it separates the means from the end. Learning as an end in its own right expresses the value of integration, with learning integrated into an organisation's way of life. In this way the dilemma involves the same values as the Learning as a System (analysis)—Learning as a Culture (integration) dilemma shown in Figure 6.3.

The Learning as Autotelic—Learning as Exotelic dilemma is similar. It is the result of a qualm expressed by one consultant, that the criterion relating to rewards and recognition may encourage the pursuit of rewards rather than the valuing of learning. Csikszentmihalyi (1997) uses the term 'autotelic' to describe the personality of people inclined to seek goals because they value them, and 'exotelic' to describe personalities of people inclined to seek goals for the rewards that can be attained. This dilemma is derived from the Leader Driven—Community Based dilemma mapped in Figure 6.5. Exotelic behaviour is associated with Transactional Leadership, where leaders encourage the behaviours they believe to be important to the organisation by linking them to rewards the leader can control. Bass (1985) encourages the use of Transformational leadership based on autotelic behaviour. Transformational leadership, however, must involve the reconciliation of the dilemma. Exotelic behaviour is the downside of leadership-driven learning, where the valuing of learning no longer features in the motivation of the learner.

One dilemma was evident because it involved an opposing relationship between two criteria: the Knowledge Sharing—Self Reliance Dilemma. Knowledge Sharing emphasises learning by ensuring that people within an organisation are strongly connected with one another, with the organisation benefiting through their interdependence. Self Reliance encourages people in an organisation to act as independent learners, responsible for building their own capacity. If either one of these approaches is taken to an extreme it will clash with the other. This dilemma is a derivation of the Individual Learning—Social Learning dilemma outlined in Figure 6.2: self reliance is associated with individual learning while knowledge sharing involves social learning.

Four dilemmas were generated by considering the likely negative consequences of over-emphasis of consultants' criteria. Because this was an intuitive process carried out by the researcher, the dilemmas generated are directly linked to dilemmas identified in the earlier literature-based work.

The danger identified in over-emphasising the criterion 'Executive Commitment' was that learning could become an exotelic, executive-controlled process as described above. Because the criterion is framed as executive *commitment*, as opposed to learning being executive *driven,* the dilemma involves a variation of that mapped in Figure 6.5. Rather than 'who is in charge' the dilemma deals with 'where does energy for learning come from'; the opposing pole is therefore learning that is 'Community-Based'.

As consultants commented on the Resourcing criterion, it became apparent that they were concerned with ensuring access to resources. An over-emphasis on access may result in a 'Tragedy of the Commons' situation, with people acting independently in ways that destroy the resource upon which the community depends (Senge, 1990). This is an Individual Learning—Social Learning dilemma, derived from the same values that generated the dilemma mapped in Figure 6.2.

When discussing the criterion Pervasive Learning, consultants were concerned that fundamental issues connected with the organisation were open to learning and change. The dilemma identified by extending this criterion is that discussed by Collins and

Porras (1994) where they concluded that organisations needed to stimulate progress while preserving the core of the community. If everything in an organisation is changing there may not be enough stable elements to ensure that there is a coherent organisational community; thus there is a Change—Stability dilemma involved in learning. This dilemma is a variation on the Experimentation—Capacity Building dilemma mapped in Figure 6.6.

Finally, several of the criteria indicated a need to balance concern for the whole organisational system with a focus on a person's particular role. Systematic Awareness dealt with whether people making change to a role would consider potential consequences to the wider system. Engagement and Empowerment of Staff both contained elements of involving staff in learning beyond their particular role. In combination, therefore, these suggested a Focused Effort—Whole System dilemma. This dilemma appears to be of mixed parentage. The skills involved in role-oriented learning are individual where whole system skills require social activity. The values involved are analysis, where the role is seen as cut off from the rest of the system, and integration, where the role is connected to all other roles. Thus the dilemma is related to both Individual Learning—Social Learning (Figure 6.2) and Learning as a System—Learning as a Culture (Figure 6.3).

The process of identifying dilemmas from the interactions with consultants generated eight dilemmas, as shown in Table 9.3. Of these, one had not been mapped in the literature-based process. The remaining seven were variations on or derivations from dilemmas mapped in Chapter 6.

Undertaking this process added value to the study in several ways. Firstly it identified a dilemma that had not previously been considered important to an organisation's learning culture. Secondly, to some extent the dilemmas derived from interactions with consultants supported the literature-based work presented earlier. Of course, this is only qualified support because some dilemmas were identified using intuition that had been informed by the literature-based process. A final benefit, stemming from finding variations on the literature-based dilemmas, is that the process suggests ways that dilemmas are experienced by people in organisations. Thus they suggest ways in which dilemmas may be expressed in a dilemma-based instrument.

9.6 Assessing the BARS Instrument

In part, this thesis aims to develop an instrument that could be used in empirical research into Learning Organisations. Could the BARS instrument that resulted from the Delphi process fill this need?

The inclusion of artistic elements, as discussed earlier, would represent a substantial problem if we were to use the BARS instrument as an empirical tool purporting to represent the views of consultants on the nature of learning organisations. Other problems are also evident: the selection of the participants and the ability of the BARS rating system to provide an objective measure.

As discussed earlier, the Expert group included two academics. The purpose of the study was originally only to identify exemplary organisations, and was later extended to identifying dilemmas as experienced by consultants. Those initially invited included some who had expertise as academics rather than consultants. One of the academics, E7, has had significant consulting experience so could reasonably be included in the group. If the invitations had been directed at consultants from the start, however, E8 would not have been included in the Expert group. What effect did E8 have on group processes?

The proceedings, shown in Appendix 2, have been reviewed to assess the impact of E8's contributions. It is noteworthy that E8's main contribution was in Round 2 of the process, where the original criteria were reviewed and extended. E8's contribution included a discussion of issues surrounding efforts to generate new knowledge, and the need for organisations to be self-reliant. These points contributed to the inclusion of Criterion 7 and Criterion 10 in the extended list and ultimately in the BARS instrument.

The need to generate new knowledge was discussed by El also. Thus the inclusion of Criterion 7 was not solely on the basis of E8's contribution. Criterion 10, however, was only mentioned by E8. Because the Delphi process necessarily involved feeding Criterion 10 back to the Expert Group and receiving the endorsement of each participant, it was decided to continue to include it as a dimension in the BARS instrument. The group as a whole endorsed the full list of criteria developed through the process, so removing Criterion 10 would misrepresent the process. Still, its inclusion is problematic if the instrument is to be viewed as representing the experience of consultants.

The small sample of consultants used in the Delphi process also prevents us from treating the process as one that could produce a perspective that is representative of the views of consultants generally. Thus the BARS instrument can not be viewed as such. As we will discuss shortly, the instrument has value for other reasons.

A secondary problem with using the BARS instrument as a basis for empirical studies is the subjectivity that is inherent in its use. In the final round of the Delphi process experts were asked to use the instrument in rating the learning activity of an organisation. The ratings given suggest that they were not 'objective.' That is, a particular expert might use the instrument to compare relative strengths of organisations he or she is familiar with. However, the ratings given to an organisation by one expert could not be used in comparison with ratings given to an organisation by another expert.

Three of the Expert Group provided ratings of organisations. Two of the experts provided ratings of three separate organisations. E1 rated three organisations giving average ratings of 5.6, 5.1 and 3.4. E1's ratings ranged from 2 to 8. E3 rated one organisation, giving an average rating of 7.0, with ratings ranging from 5 to 7. E5 rated three organisations, with average ratings of 6.9, 6.8 and 6.8, with ratings that ranged from 6 to 8.

The difference in range—and in particular E3 and E5's consistent use of the third column—suggested that ratings given were a reflection of the personality of the expert and the expert's relationship with the organisation, rather than a true indication of the quality of each organisation's learning activities.

It might be that the objectivity of the BARS instrument could be increased through a variety of methods. Training could be given to people who intend to use the instrument. Work could be done to establish a procedure designed to generate more objective ratings. Ratings might be determined by averaging scores from a variety of people. Such actions would require substantial work in establishing whether ratings on the instrument are directly linked to organisational results.

Research designed to validate the instrument would face the problems discussed in Chapter 8. In particular, the delay involved in establishing the validity of the instrument may mean that the dimensions considered critical change as the study of learning organisations develops.

Using the criteria for assessing measurement systems outlined in Chapter 8 (see Table 8.2) we could say that the BARS instrument:

- Synthesises the views of this group of consultants, but does not attempt to synthesise perspectives on Learning Organisations beyond their experience or learning,
- Summarises individual learning efforts in an organisation rather than representing *organisational* learning; no attempt is made to base the descriptions on a clear conception of what constitutes a learning organisation,
- Could be used as a basis for empirical research, subject to validation. Concerns regarding validation have been discussed above.
- Focuses on activity rather than mental models,
- Is oriented toward change processes within organisations, in that it allows for the diagnosis of learning issues, and
- Does not fully align itself with real or natural learning. There is a tendency to see a rating of eight as an objective standard to be striven for, and learning is limited to the dimensions contained in the instrument.

In summary, the instrument contains some of the problematic elements of measurement that were described in Chapter 8. Its usefulness as a basis for empirical research is therefore questionable.

9.7 Nominated Organisations

A secondary purpose of the study was to identify organisations that could be used in subsequent studies making up the thesis. In their responses to the first message, Experts mentioned 14 New Zealand organisations. Only three of these organisations agreed to take part in studies reported in this thesis, and only these are named in the thesis. Table 9.4 summarises the organisations nominated in the Delphi process and, where appropriate, reasons why they were not included in subsequent studies.

Not all of these were identified as exemplary. One organisation (Org 13) was mentioned as an example of “what not to do” and another (Org 14) as having recently “turned away from LO efforts”. Two other organisations (Org 10 and Org 11) were mentioned as having potential but being at the start of their learning journey. Two organisations (Org 3 and Org 12) were engaged in learning processes that were limited to a particular group, such as executives or policy makers, while one organisation was thought by the nominating Expert to be to small to commit to participation in research activities (Org 1).

Table 9.4 Nominated Organisations

Identified As (Appendix 2)	Involvement in Thesis
Org 1	Considered by nominator to be too small for research purposes.
Org 2	Approached by researcher but unable to take part.
Org 3	Learning efforts limited to one group within organisation.
Org 4	Unable to take part—committed to other research projects.
Org 5	South Waikato District Council. Participated in studies.
Org 6	Skill New Zealand. Participated in studies.
Org 7	Approached by researcher but unable to take part.
Org 8	Formway Furniture. Able to participate to a limited degree.
Org 9	Approached by researcher but unable to take part.
Org 10	Beginning their Learning Journey.
Org 11	Beginning their Learning Journey.
Org 12	Learning efforts limited to one group within organisation.
Org 13	Not nominated as exemplary.
Org 14	Not nominated as exemplary.

While the other organisations were considered suitable for inclusion in subsequent studies, several were unable to do. These organisations were either already committed to other research activities, or had significant work commitments that prevented them from taking part.

The Delphi process thus identified three organisations that were able to take part in subsequent studies: South Waikato District Council, Skill New Zealand and Formway Furniture.

9.8 Summary

This chapter has considered the meaning given to the term 'learning organisation' from the point of view of New Zealand consultants working in the area. The Delphi Technique was employed to identify the criteria consultants used for judging whether or not an organisation was a learning organisation.

One outcome of the process was a Behaviourally Anchored Rating Scale: an instrument that could be used to measure the extent to which an organisation was meeting the criteria identified by consultants. For a variety of reasons the instrument was considered inappropriate for use in descriptive studies of organisational learning.

A second outcome of the process was the identification of eight dilemmas that could be used to chart learning-related values in an organisation. One of these, the Emotionally Neutral—Emotionally Engaged dilemma, had not been mapped in earlier processes. The other seven dilemmas were variations on those identified in literature-based processes discussed in earlier chapters.

The Delphi process identified three organisations suitable for inclusion in subsequent studies in this thesis: South Waikato District Council, Skill New Zealand and Formway Furniture.

According to Dilemma Theory, as outlined in Chapter 4, these dilemmas can provide a sound basis for values-based descriptive studies of learning organisations. At this point, however, dilemmas have been identified from only two of the three core elements Senge and Kim describe as making up the community of people interested in learning organisations. Literature-based dilemmas represent the experiences and perspectives of academics/researchers. The dilemmas identified in this chapter represent the experience of consultants/capacity builders. The next chapter seeks to identify dilemmas based on the experiences of business practitioners.

Chapter 10: Practitioners and the Learning Organisation

In order to create a tool for charting the culture that develops around learning activities in an organisation we have been identifying dilemmas associated with learning efforts. So far we have considered dilemmas that are apparent in the literature on learning organisations and dilemmas that can be derived from the experience of consultants working in the area. In this chapter we explore the dilemmas that are experienced by business practitioners: people working in organisations that are seeking to become learning organisations.

Practitioners have a perspective on Learning Organisations that differs from that of academics or consultants. For practitioners, the source of their thinking is their own experience, rather than concepts about the experiences of others (Senge, 1997). The dilemmas they have experienced while seeking to build learning organisations may well be different from those identified in earlier parts of this thesis.

In order to identify practitioner dilemmas a series of workshops were run with groups from organisations identified as working toward becoming learning organisations. This chapter will describe the design of the workshops, report on the outcomes of each workshop and discuss dilemmas that were identified through this process.

10.1 Sample

In order to achieve a range of perspectives, workshops were conducted in three organisations: Skill New Zealand, a government agency operating throughout New Zealand; South Waikato District Council, a local government organisation; and Pan Pacific Forest Industries (Pan Pac), a private manufacturing company. Skill New Zealand and South Waikato District Council were organisations nominated by consultants in the Delphi process described in Chapter 9.[1] Several private companies were nominated in that process and were subsequently invited to take part in the workshop process; however, work commitments meant that these companies declined. To ensure that a private company perspective was included in this part of the research, I approached Pan Pac, a company that I had worked with previously and knew personally to have expressed a commitment to learning activities over a period of years.

At each organisation a liaison person was asked to bring together a diverse group of people to take part in the workshop. The liaison person was not asked to make the group representative or to conform to any particular measure of diversity. What was a desired was a group that provided diverse perspectives on events that had taken place within the organisation.

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[1] In Appendix 2 Skill New Zealand is referred to as Org 6 and South Waikato District Council as Org 5.

Representativeness was not considered to be important given the purpose of the workshop. The workshop process was designed to surface dilemmas pertinent to the learning culture of the organisation. At a later stage of the research, the organisation's learning culture could be mapped on the basis of these dilemmas. Dilemma Theory assumes that everyone in an organisation or community will experience pertinent dilemmas, though individuals may develop a preference for one value over another. So, for the workshop—designed to identify the dilemmas—representativeness was not important: anyone in the organisation could provide the needed information. Even staff new to the organisation can surface a dilemma by telling the stories they have heard about events they did not personally experience. Representativeness becomes an issue when the research seeks to chart the culture of the organisation using the dilemma. At that point the researcher needs to be able to quantify who subscribes to each of the values represented by the dilemma.

The remainder of this chapter is a discussion of dilemmas emerging from the workshops, and is based on the material produced by workshop participants, the dilemmas noted at the time and impressions recorded by me (the facilitator) following each workshop.

10.2 Method

The purpose of this study was to identify the dilemmas that people in organisations encounter when they engage in efforts to become learning organisations.

10.2.1 Background to Workshop Design Decisions: Working with organisations creates a challenge for the researcher that was discussed in Chapter 8: organisations expect a benefit from the research that justifies costs associated with the participation of staff. Research may not provide an organisation with information that is directly useful, or there may be significant delays between gathering data and providing useful information to the organisation.

Some organisations will have been influenced to participate in the study as a result of their existing relationship with me, the researcher. Where such relationships exist I feel an obligation to ensure that there is an immediate benefit to the organisation.

Specifically, I can provide benefit to participating organisations by making the research process one that is developmental—providing useful learning—for staff taking part.

A workshop format was adopted for this part of the research because it would allow a number of outcomes to be achieved. It would be developmental for participants, providing an opportunity to understand concepts involved in the research. Workshops are an established methodology in research on organisational culture, so a workshop design would build on existing practice. Workshops also provide an opportunity for a diverse group of people to contribute their experiences, and allow the researcher to test conclusions in conversation with these diverse parties. Finally, the workshop format is relatively efficient, enabling a great deal of data to be generated in a short period.

Schein (1992) advocates the use of workshops as part of a wider process for enabling organisations to understand their own cultures. The entire process outlined by Schein involves four stages: (1) gaining leader commitment; (2) conducting a Large Group Meeting to explore the nature of the organisation's culture; (3) Working with subgroups within the organisation to identify cultural aids and hindrances to their work; and (4) reporting assumptions and joint analysis of the culture.

Schein provides the following outline for conducting a Large Group Workshop. The meeting begins with a short lecture on how to think about culture. Then an artifact is presented and descriptions of the artifact are elicited from the group. The facilitator then works with the group to identify espoused values represented by the artifact. Finally, the group makes a first cut at describing the shared underlying assumptions held by members of the organisation. This process is designed to sensitise group to the values embedded in artifacts, and then to draw out from the group their understanding of what those values are. The group's understanding is informed by the expertise of the facilitator. However, the need to generate the group's own description at each stage prevents the facilitator from imposing a perception that the group does not hold.

Schein's process involves presenting an artifact to the group as the basis for uncovering values and assumptions. Trice (1993) describes 6 types of artifacts produced within organisational cultures: myths and fictions; stories and songs; language or work vocabularies; rituals and taboos; and rites and ceremonies.

I chose to design the workshop process using stories as the values-carrying artifact. There were a number of reasons for the choice of stories. Firstly, I have for many years incorporated stories in my personal teaching efforts with success. Story-telling provides teachers with a tool that connects with values that are often neglected in Western cultures: it allows for indirect influence, relationship building and exploration of tacit knowledge.[2]

A second reason for using stories was the focus of the research. Schein's procedure is designed to enable the exploration of an organisation's culture. This research project is concerned more specifically with the culture that arises around an organisation's learning activities. This learning focus requires that artifacts used in the workshops are also closely associated with learning, rather than with other aspects of organisational life. Stories can also be generated during the workshop; they do not have to be collected beforehand. Use of stories, therefore, enables workshops to be conducted without in-depth preparation by the facilitator.

A third reason for using stories is the close association between story-telling and the subjects under investigation in this research: culture and learning organisations. Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars (2000) consistently use stories to illustrate and apply Dilemma Theory in relation to culture. Stories lend themselves to identifying dilemmas because they generally feature a protagonist and an antagonist in conflict over values, or a protagonist torn between two courses of action. Roth and Kleiner (1998) incorporate story-telling into their work of creating 'learning histories': accounts of organisational experience designed to develop organisational memory. Their reasons for using stories are pertinent to this research. They have found that people respond to opportunities to use stories because organisations are 'mythically deprived.' Organisational documents and processes are typically sterile, so people's desire to use stories and myths are channelled into anti-organisational activity. Stories also allow for issues such as personality and relationships to feature in accounts of why things have happened in a particular way.

Roth and Kleiner's work highlights a final reason for using stories: stories are linked to other cultural artifacts such as myth and taboo. Many stories in an organisation are mythological: based on unverified events. Stories also create a safe environment in which people can share knowledge of subjects that are otherwise considered taboo within the organisation. For the reasons outlined above, stories were adopted as the artifacts that could fit within Schein's process for exploring culture.

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[2] Use of story-telling in learning has been discussed in greater depth by the author in the chapter 'Stories and Learning' in *On the Job Learning* by Ramsey, P., Franklin, T. & Ramsey, D. (Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 2000, 163-169). See Appendix 1j.

10.2.2 Workshop Procedure: The purpose of this part of the research was to identify dilemmas that present themselves to business practitioners involved in building learning organisations.

An initial workshop was conducted at Skill New Zealand. Twelve Skill New Zealand staff took part in the workshop, which lasted 3.5 hours. Skill New Zealand is a government agency charged with promoting adult education in New Zealand, thus learning features in the content of their work as well its processes. Many staff are highly educated with qualifications related to adult education. Because of their professional expertise in matters of learning and group facilitation, at the end of the workshop participants were invited to comment on how the workshop process might be improved. In line with their comments I reflected on my experience of workshop and considered where changes could be made. Table 10.1 shows the Workshop Procedure following some modification from the Skill New Zealand pilot. Modifications were designed to simplify the procedure and reduce the amount of time taken.

Table 10.1 Workshop Procedure

Step 1:	Check In. Participants and facilitator are introduced. The purpose of the research is explained. Participant Consent is discussed. 'Ground Rules' for discussion, such as participant's obligations to one another are discussed.
Step 2:	Short lecture on Culture. Background to the research is presented as a story, along with an explanation of how culture and assumptions can be used to understand different views regarding learning. How culture forms, and how assumptions become unconsciously held are explained, along with the reasons for using dilemmas and artifacts in understanding a particular culture.
Step 3	Finding Significant Events. Facilitator explains that the organisation has been on a 'learning journey' in which they encountered various dilemmas. The group as a whole is asked to generate a time line that shows when the journey began and notes significant events on the journey. Facilitator records time line on whiteboard.
Step 4:	Generating Stories. In pairs, participants select one of the events noted on the time line and create a story in the form of a newspaper article. The article must present the event in a dramatic form that exaggerates conflicts experienced during the event. Stories are recorded on flipchart paper and posted on the wall.
Step 5:	Reading Stories. The whole groups walks around the room, reading the posted stories.
Step 6:	Surfacing Dilemmas. Each pair in turn presents their story and the dilemmas they see present. The group as a whole, including the facilitator comment on dilemmas that might also be present. The presenters note on their own story the dilemmas they believe are pertinent.

10.3 Results

The procedure generated a wide range of dilemmas based on the stories that participants told along with, in some instances, the language they used and the mythological elements of their story-telling that became apparent. Participants in the workshops also agreed with assumptions made about representativeness: they agreed that many of the stories shared common dilemmas and these same dilemmas would have surfaced no matter who was participating in the workshop and what events they chose to use as the basis for stories.

10.3.1 Skill New Zealand: Skill New Zealand is a government agency charged with dispersing government funds to support education and training in New Zealand. Over the course of the agency's history this has included 'second-chance education' for disadvantaged groups, and funding to encourage industry-based training. Originally the agency's role was primarily administrative. Increasingly staff have been required to act as experts in adult education and training, using their expertise to improve the quality of education offered by training providers who receive government funding.

The time line produced by the group is shown in Table 10.2.

Table 10.2 Skill New Zealand Time Line

1990: The organisation forms as ETSA (Education and Training Support Agency). Small enthused groups engage in regular dialogue/hui discussing subjects relevant to adult education in New Zealand.

1991: A number of forums and internal sports tournaments provide an opportunity to get together both for learning and getting to know one another.

1992: The Industry Training Act is passed. The need for ETSA to move beyond an administration of training activities becomes apparent.

1993: Effort to increase professionalism of staff through regional learning activities and centrally directed training in subjects such as Adult Learning, Presentation Skills and Negotiation.

1994: The 'Evaluation Model' used to audit Training Providers is introduced, and the agency undergoes restructuring. ETSA determines that it needs to act as a model of learning and improvement for training providers. Research conducted through an external agency suggests that ETSA advisors working with training providers are not sufficiently skilled. The 'Learning Initiative' is introduced, with staff encouraged and funded for self-directed learning.

1995: ETSA works hard to make accreditation of Training Providers work, using the Evaluation Model. A significant effort is made to introduce technology throughout the agency with all staff having access to Windows, Email, etc. The HR Section, charged with organising centralised training within the agency, disappears.

1996: Many staff use their 'Learning Initiative' funding to attend a five day course on Organisational Learning run by the author through Massey University.

1998: The agency undergoes restructuring and becomes Skill New Zealand. There is a restructuring of government funding programmes and Skill New Zealand's role becomes that of a Purchasing agency. Skill New Zealand is required to work with another government agency, Work & Income New Zealand (WINZ), so that unemployed people have a 'one-stop-shop' for dealing with the government over issues relating to employment, benefits and education.

1999: Skill New Zealand introduces a new performance management system known as 'Performance Partnerships.'

The time line illustrated the close link between national politics in New Zealand and learning within the organisation. Many of the significant events identified by the group followed New Zealand's 3-year election cycle, reflecting the tendency of new governments to introduce educational policies that fundamentally change the purpose of the organisation.

Twelve participants in the workshop formed six pairs, and each pair produced a sensational newspaper story about one event on the time line. The stories produced in the Workshop are outlined in Table 10.3, with the headline, the year the story relates to, and a summary of the story.

Table 10.3 Skill New Zealand Stories

1992 "New Act Transforms Industry Training": The story marked the passing of the Act which gave employers a greater voice in industry training and shifted management of the Apprenticeship Training System from ETSA to newly created Industry Training Organisations.

1993 "Max Kerr Spends Money On Flying Staff Down to Wellington For Training

Conference": The story discusses the amount spent by ETSA, authorised by CEO Max Kerr, on staff training in response to the Industry Training Act. The story also discussed the assessment centre process implemented around this time, which involved staff having to reapply for their jobs. Many staff were not retained despite the money spent on their training.

1995 "Never Too Old To Learn": The story records the introduction of the Learning Initiative, outlining details of the programme designed to give "all staff the opportunity to take responsibility for their own learning" enabling ETSA to build a "dynamic, motivated and productive workforce".

1998 "The Great Divide: Government Grows the Generation Gap!": The story describes fears in the community resulting from the restructuring of funding programmes. In particular, concerns were expressed for young school leavers who no longer qualify for government assistance.

1998 "ETSA Plays Political Poker": The story describes the threat posed by the 'one-stop-shop' approach, which the story describes as a 'practically-flawed' political strategy. It also describes how ETSA has "manoeuvred skilfully to position itself for the anticipated failure of the 'one-stop-shop' approach."

1999 "Dramatic New Performance System Fizzles": The story discusses the introduction of the Performance Partnership system. It describes staff as dissatisfied with the previous competency-based performance appraisal system, and growing disillusionment with the new system, particularly regarding awarding of bonuses.

Table 10.4 lists the three dilemmas that surfaced as a result of the stories.

Table 10.4 Dilemmas from Skill New Zealand

1. Trail-blazing—Consolidating
2. Aspiration—Pragmatism
3. Self Directed—Centrally Directed

The Trail-blazing-—Consolidating dilemma was apparent to the facilitator through the language used during the workshop. Stories featured comments such as "ETSA has trail-blazed again" and "a new revolutionary performance management systems was introduced." When these comments were highlighted to the group, one participant commented that when she had moved to SNZ from another government agency the most obvious difference was that SNZ did relatively little record-keeping. No one seemed to want to consolidate what was already known; rather they were constantly moving off into the unknown. Another commented that the years prior to 1995 were in some ways the 'bad years' because the agency was constantly changing; the rate of change after 1995 was probably just the same, but by then the agency was used to it.

The group agreed that the agency operates in a turbulent environment where governments introduce policies that regularly require the overhaul of the education sector. The agency must respond by putting aside whatever systems they had previously developed and, as quickly as possible, establishing a new, workable system for implementing policy. This environment encouraged people to treat learning as a process of experimentation with what was new rather than consolidation and improvement of existing systems.

In the group discussion of the stories people noted that there was a constant conflict between the aspirations of the organisation and the need to pragmatically meet the demands imposed on the agency by external forces, in particular politicians. The organisation regularly engaged in learning efforts designed to build 'community' or a 'feeling of family' only to find itself being restructured, with many members of the 'family' having to leave. Those who remained felt torn between naïve belief in the organisation's noble aspirations and cynicism regarding some of its pragmatic decisions. They could see how the demands of the environment required pragmatic action in order for the agency to survive, yet still felt hurt at the personal costs imposed on themselves and their colleagues.

The Aspiration—Pragmatism dilemma was discussed in connection with the 1998 'Political Poker' story. While the agency is pragmatically required to be a servant to the government, it aspires to be a group of experts, able to foresee the consequences of flawed policies. The 'Political Poker' story was about the reconciliation of this dilemma.

Finally, several stories dealt with a Self Directed-—Centrally Directed dilemma. Over time, the agency had moved from directing learning activities through a centralised HR function, to giving staff the opportunity to direct their own learning. This dilemma features in 1993 and 1994 stories. In discussing the 1999 'Performance System Fizzles' story, participants suggested that much of the negative reaction to the system was due to the attempts made to use the system to direct the learning efforts of self-directed SNZ staff.

The learning culture of Skill New Zealand, along with other organisations participating in the study, will be discussed further in Chapter 13.

10.3.2 South Waikato District Council: South Waikato District Council (SWDC) provides local government services for a region of New Zealand's North Island. The Council is headquartered in Tokoroa and employs around 120 staff. Council employees deal with typical local government concerns: roading, town planning, water supply, dog control, parks, libraries and so on. The District has an elected mayor and councillors. SWDC is managed by a Chief Executive Officer.

The organisation's learning journey has featured significant use of consultants in an effort to generate co-operative effort across organisational boundaries. The group time line is outlined in Table 10.5.

Table 10.5 SWDC Time Line

1993: Chris Hannah appointed as CEO.

1994: Executive group develops 'Corporate Values'.

1995: Management group along with four other groups are given Team Building training at Mt. Pirongia. Those attending training are asked not to talk about it to those yet to attend.

1996: A Competency Model (known as 'Green Books') is developed to support the team training. Staff can get signed off on competencies when their team agrees they have demonstrated required levels of achievement on a team project. Other 'Learning Journey Groups' form and receive Team Building training.

1997: Quality Team established to emphasise and support learning in the area of improved quality. 'Customer Care' training run.

1998: Modular training: staff trained in Negotiation, Stress, Conflict and Customer Care.

1999: CEO Chris Hannah dies.

2000: Dave Kelly becomes CEO. 'Green Books' are linked to the Performance Appraisal and Management System.

2001: "Learning Groups" are officially dissolved.

2002: Modular Leadership Training begins.

Twelve participants in the workshop formed 6 pairs, each of which developed a sensational newspaper story relating to an event on the time line. The stories produced are shown in Table 10.6.

Table 10.6 SWDC Stories

1995 "Council Staff on Bush Beat": Records the start of the Team Building training at Mt. Pirongia. The story notes that staff are 'press-ganged' into attending at that officers within the region are "cautious and sceptical of Management and their methods." The story notes that Green Books have been issues along with an oath that they will not be used as a 'performance appraisal weapon.'

1997 "Council Develops 'Big Brother Culture'": The story records the establishment of the Quality Team, and the 'grave doubts' held by Council staff about how it will operate. Doubts exist despite assurances that it is a positive, self-development process. The Quality Team will set up training modules that are compulsory for all staff.

1998 "Council Wastes Ratepayers Money on Council Staff Training": The story discusses whether it is appropriate in an election year for the Council to be spending 'huge money' on training courses for staff.

2000 "Changing Heads": The story reports that Dave Kelly has taken over as CEO and promises to be a 'breath of fresh air': promised changes include ending the learning journey programme, staff reviews and early retirement seminars.

2000 "Staff Duped Over New Performance Standards": The story records staff uproar at management's decision to use the Green Book for performance appraisal purposes. The story discusses staff resistance to the 'major turnaround by Management'.

2001 "Dave Drops His Bundle: Learning Journey Groups Officially Disbanded": Records that the Learning Journey Groups had lost their focus and were finally being disbanded. They are to be replaced by new groups that are specifically project-based.

Table 10.7 outlines dilemmas identified by SWDC staff at the workshop as pertinent to their learning journey and featuring in their stories.

Table 10.7 Dilemmas from SWDC

1. Change—Stability
2. Aspiration—Pragmatism
3. Technical Skills—Organisational Skills
4. Commitment to the Organisation—Desire for a Balanced Life
5. Control—Freedom

Staff recognised that the 2000 and 2001 stories involving the new CEO featured a Change—Stability dilemma. In particular, Dave Kelly, the new CEO had to decide the degree to which he would act to provide a 'Steady Ship' or operate as a 'Breath of Fresh Air.'

Staff could see that SWDC Managers had to contend with an Aspiration—Pragmatism dilemma. This particularly arose in the stories relating to the Green Books. According to participants, SWDC had spent a significant amount on developing this Competency tool and were struggling to find ways to ensure staff were putting them to use. Management desired, pragmatically, to do what was best for ratepayers by linking the use of the books to the performance appraisal. This way, a potentially useful tool, funded by key stakeholders in the organisation, could get put to use. Linking the Green Books to Appraisal in this way would, however, involve breaking a promise to staff made when the books were introduced. Staff expect Managers to act in accordance with the corporate values they espouse by building trust with staff.

Much of the training involved in SWDC's learning journey was designed to help staff work across organisational barriers. Participants in the workshop reported that there was a Technical Skills—Organisational Skills dilemma involved. They reported that many staff—including some of those present—could understand if the Council was spending money on training that helped them get better at their own jobs: that is, training that helped them develop the technical skills necessary for their positions. They did not see that helping them improve their organisational skills—their ability to work with others in different parts of the Council—was directly relevant or beneficial. It was evident, however, by the willingness of managers to invest in organisational skills, that some thought it was an area of significant need.

The 1995 "Bush Beat" story featured problems that the two-day Mt. Pirongia training created for some staff. The training was compulsory and required people to spend a night away from home. People were expected to accept the night away from home, without regard for problems this might cause, for example, to solo-parents. The organisation assumed staff would do this if they were committed to the organisation. Many staff, however, worked as part of an effort to have a balanced life—one that included being home at night with their children. Hence, staff saw a Commitment to the Organisation—Desire for a Balanced Life dilemma.

The dilemma that featured most strongly during the workshop was Control—Freedom. This issue featured in each of the stories generated. Participants saw SWDC managers acting to control the learning process and force participation through compulsion, rather than giving Council staff freedom to engage in learning voluntarily. This was expressed variously as 'Top Down—Bottom Up', 'Direction—Freedom', 'Directive—Consultative', 'Compulsion—Promotion', and 'Inclusive—Voluntary.'

This dilemma also featured in a myth that surfaced during the workshop. One participant described how Management claimed they would give 'Learning Journey Teams' freedom to choose their own projects and resources to get projects completed, but that in practice Management only resourced teams working on projects they approved or teams that included members of the executive group. The participant used one project as an example of this. Two participants who had been on the Team responsible for that project objected: they did have the freedom and funding that had been promised, and did not have team members with special connections to management. Evidently, their success had been incorporated into mythology designed to highlight Management's desire for control at the expense of staff's freedom.

It is worth noting that the workshop was not designed to convince participants which interpretation of an event was the truth. The myth allowed the dilemma to surface. The workshop facilitator's role was to allow this surfacing to happen and then describe the dilemma contained in a way that all participant's agreed with, rather than to establish what really happened. A non-representative group constituting around 10% of the workforce could not resolve the matter or even provide a measure of what the organisation's culture is. The myth did, however, allow a dilemma to surface that could be used to measure the culture.

10.3.3 Pan Pacific Forest Industries: Pan Pac is a forestry company operating in Hawkes Bay. Its work involves processing timber into wood pulp, which is exported to be used in paper-making. This is an energy-intensive business: pulp is heated to remove moisture prior to packing. It is highly mechanised and increasingly features significant use of information technology in the operation of processing equipment. Around 120 staff are employed in Pan Pac's Pulp Division, which was the focus of this research.

Eight staff took part in the workshop. The time line produced by this group featured increasing use of technology and the move to a more educated workforce. The time line produced by the participants is outlined in Table 10.8

Table 10.8 Pan Pac Time Line

1985: Old General Manger leaves; Management/Union relations start to improve.

1990: The Time Clock goes.

1992: Pan Pac trials 12-hour shifts.

1993: Changes are made to work contracts in the organisation. This includes the move to 5 shifts. There is a move from Seniority to Job Skills. "80 hours of Training Time" is included in the work contract. Pan Pac takes a step toward salarisation with a 'Prepaid Overtime Trial'. The first Distributed Control System is put into operation.

1996: The Training Co-ordinator role is established.

1998: Pan Pac begins flattening its hierarchy by removing the Foreman position. Job responsibilities of operators are expanded. Doug Ducker (GM) drops his 'grenade': a statement of his vision for Pan Pac.

1999: Pan Pac trials 'Out Sales': moving from selling one product in one market to different products in different markets. The factory experiences 'Maxed Out Capacity'.

2001: New Zealand experiences a power crisis with a significant impact on Pan Pac.

Eight workshop participants formed 4 pairs, each of which developed a story based around an event on the learning journey time line. The stories are shown in Table 10.9.

Table 10.9 Pan Pac Stories

1990 "Time's Up For Time Clock": Discusses Pan Pac's decision to remove the Time Clock based on the reactions of various stakeholders. Unions view it as a major step toward recognising workers' rights. Supervisors are concerned about the potential for absenteeism. Workers have mixed feelings, particularly with regard to recording overtime. Chaos is predicted.

1998 "Pan Pac Axes Foremen": Reports the decision to "axe" the role of foreman and discusses implications. Shows the context as being the need to cut costs in order to be internationally competitive. Competitiveness requires restructuring with decisions made at the lowest possible responsibility level. While some staff saw the need for multi-skilling others wanted to retain "job-pegging" where each job has a clearly defined set of skills. The action is linked to 'Doug's grenade': the manager's belief in the need for cost reduction and increased production so that exchange rates have less impact on company success.

2001 "Staff Pay Price For Company's Failure": Discusses difficulties caused by New Zealand's power crisis. Pan Pac management is reported to have purchased insufficient protection against high power prices—a change from traditional practice. Pan Pac has had to trust operators to make decisions traditionally made by managers; in particular, to make decisions on the economics of running their machines. Extra shutdowns have meant increased work for both operational and maintenance staff. These staff have got company management "off the hook."

2002 "Pan Pac Offer Too Stingy" [This story is based on an event that was not recorded on the time line—the pair chose to work on this story when their first choice proved uninspiring]: The story reports how Pan Pac is struggling to secure the services of a Maintenance Engineer because they are unwilling to pay what these highly skilled professionals demand. Leaving the position vacant puts the "whole mill at risk in…a high production year."

Table 10.10 shows the dilemmas identified by the participants as pertinent to their stories.

Table 10.10 Dilemmas from Pan Pac

1. Change—Stability
2. Technical Skills—Social/Organisational Skills
3. Family—Real World
4. Management Control—Operator Responsibility

Several stories featured the Change—Stability dilemma, discussing the likely unintended consequences of change and the potential disruption involved in moving away from traditional practice.

Another dilemma that arose, particularly with the 1998 story, was whether learning should address technical or organisational skills. Some staff saw training as valuable for improving their technical proficiency within a clearly defined role; they wanted jobs to be clearly ‘pegged’ and for training to provide skills within that defined area. There was also value in people having skills beyond their roles: for people to be multi-skilled so that they could contribute across organisational boundaries. Related to this, participants described a dilemma of allowing jobs to become more complex and thus dependent on experts, or simplifying work so that it could be carried out by a range of people; not necessarily experts.

Within the 1998 and 2002 stories, participants felt there was a Family—Real World dilemma, referring to the relationship Pan Pac has with its staff. For a variety of reasons Pan Pac views staff as a community or a family. The company has a history of being a good employer in the region. There is a very stable workforce with minimal turnover. Highly skilled staff stay at Pan Pac despite being able to earn considerably more elsewhere, because they value living in the area and working for the company. However, the value Pan Pac puts on being a community affects its ability to operate in the ‘real world’: that is, they may not be able to attract Mechanical Engineers at the salary they are prepared to pay, and people respond to the redundancy of foremen as if they were losing members of the family.

The most frequently cited dilemma was Management Control—Operator Responsibility. This was evident in relation to the 1990 story on the use of the time clock and Pan Pac’s reliance on operators during the power crisis of 2001. This dilemma was seen by one group as Control—Trust: did managers base their practice on tight controls or on trusting operators. The story of Pan Pac’s learning journey is largely a movement from management control of processes to distributed control in the hands of trusted operators.

Interestingly, there was a strong mythical element to the 2001 power crisis story. This story is based around heroic, trustworthy operators and maintenance staff saving the company after Management's risky decision to run with lower than normal forward protection of electricity supplies. A participant at the workshop who was not involved in creation of the story but directly involved in the purchase of electricity, reported that Pan Pac's forward protection was at the same level as always. The story was based on a myth of management incompetence which created the need for operator's to act heroically.

10.4 Comparing Dilemmas

The three workshops produced very similar dilemmas. In each of the workshops some of the stories dealt with the Change—Stability dilemma, though in the Skill New Zealand workshop this was framed as Trail blazing—Consolidating. These dilemmas are variations on the Experimentation—Maturity dilemma shown in Figure 6.6. It is evident that organisations engaged in a learning journey need to deal with the dilemma of whether their learning efforts should focus on introducing new initiatives and innovations, or on consolidating what is already known.

Each of the workshops also featured stories that dealt with the Management Control—Operator Responsibility dilemma. At SWDC this was expressed as Control—Freedom, while at Skill New Zealand it was expressed as Self Directed—Centrally Directed. These dilemmas are variations on the Leader Driven—Community Based dilemma outlined in Figure 6.5.

Schein (1999) and Marsick and Watkins (1999) have discussed the potential for control in learning activities. While organisational learning is typically discussed as based on generative learning processes, freely chosen by members of an organisation, these authors note the potential for a 'shadow side' to learning involving coercive persuasion. So, while many see a need for executive leadership that provides direction to an organisation's learning journey, there exists the potential for this to be used in ways that are damaging to an organisation's individual members. Likewise, organisations that are not prepared to direct learning are in danger of wasting resources. Participants in the workshops were evidently aware of the dangers and the dilemma.

Both SWDC and Pan Pac workshops generated stories to do with the Technical Skills—Organisational/Social Skills dilemma. In both organisations, the learning journey had required that choices be made about the kinds of skills that were particularly pertinent to the organisation. It was evident from the stories produced that many found it difficult to justify investing in social skills—those that enable people to work across organisational boundaries—even though many would consider this to be the essence of organisational learning. This dilemma is a variation on the Individual—Social dilemma outlined in Figure 6.2.

The workshop process generated one dilemma that had not appeared amongst either the literature-based or consultant-based dilemmas. Each of the three workshops featured stories containing elements of an Aspiration—Pragmatism dilemma. These stories, as we might expect in organisations having to apply learning organisation principles in 'real world' situations, examined how an organisation reacted when principles were in conflict with the demands of key stakeholders.

At Pan Pac this dilemma surfaced in relation to employee's reasons for seeking employment with the company. The organisation was aspiring to be a community where people would choose to work even where other companies were offering better pay. This conflicts with the pragmatic reality that employees often seek work that offers the highest pay, thus a better way of life outside of work.

SWDC had a story with a similar dilemma: should we believe that people will undertake inconvenient training because they are committed to the organisation (aspiration), or is it better to assume that people just want a balanced life (pragmatism). The dilemma also surfaced with regard to the principles of managers: should they honour a promise to employees in keeping with corporate values (aspiration) that might make them appear wasteful to ratepayers who fund the organisation (pragmatism).

Skill New Zealand staff experienced this dilemma in relation to government policy that needed to be implemented (pragmatism) even where it led the organisation into actions that appeared out of harmony with learning organisation principles (aspiration).

Figure 10.1 shows the Polarity Map for the Aspiration—Pragmatism dilemma. The Polarity Map shows the value of each orientation in the description of the 'upside' or positive quadrant. The 'downside' description highlights what happens as the opposite value is neglected or suppressed.

Figure 10.1 Aspiration—Pragmatism Polarity Map[3]

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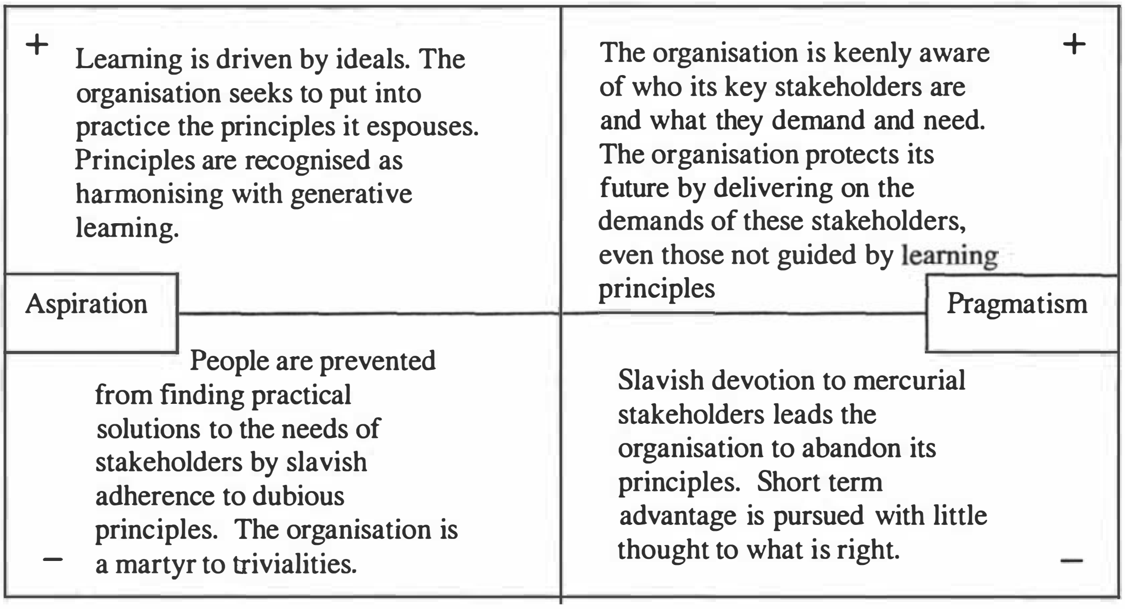
[3] How this dilemma applies to the work of consultants is discussed by the author and Paresha Sinha in the article "How Consultants Operate" *University of Auckland Business Review*, 4, 1, 58-66. See Appendix 1i.



Learning is driven by ideals. The organisation seeks to put into practice the principles it espouses. Principles are recognised as harmonising with generative learning.

The organisation is keenly aware of who its key stakeholders are and what they demand and need. The organisation protects its future by delivering on the demands of these stakeholders, even those not guided by learning principles

People are prevented from finding practical solutions to the needs of stakeholders by slavish adherence to dubious principles. The organisation is a martyr to trivialities.

Slavish devotion to mercurial stakeholders leads the organisation to abandon its principles. Short term advantage is pursued with little thought to what is right.

Figure 10.1 highlights the need to balance learning aspirations and pragmatism. This is a challenge for organisations working with stakeholders who do not hold the same aspirations or are not guided by principles that harmonise with learning activities. Each of the workshops highlighted this dilemma, though for each of the organisations different stakeholders were involved.

10.5 Critique of the Workshop Process

The development of the workshop process used in this part of the research was an innovation that was successful in surfacing dilemmas and helping participants understand the nature of culture and learning in organisations. It is a process that could be used in further research activity, or as an intervention used to help practitioners understand more deeply the dilemmas their organisation has experienced in undertaking its own learning journey. As a facilitator, a number of lessons became apparent during the series of three workshops that were conducted.

Firstly, the workshop process represents a significant investment of time for an organisation. Small to medium size enterprises (SMEs) in particular have difficulty in setting aside a block of time for a relatively large proportion of their workforce to take part in such an activity. Two SMEs were unable to take part in this phase of the research because of this time commitment. To make it possible for Pan Pac to take part the workshop was run over 2 hours (rather than 3.5 at Skill New Zealand) and with 8 participants rather than 12.

From the point of view of the facilitator the shortened version felt somewhat rushed with less time for developmental activity and discussion of issues concerning the participants. Participants reported that the experience was worthwhile and that they had learned valuable lessons in managing polarities. The shorter time was possible because some redundancy had been removed from the original process and fewer participants also meant that fewer stories needed to be worked through. Eight participants, therefore 4 stories, seems a minimum size for the workshop process to generate sufficient material for discussion. While fewer participants could generate more stories by working individually, having people work in pairs contributed to their enjoyment of the process and the quality of the stories.

The process allowed dilemmas to surface because of the environment that it creates. The structure of the workshop process enabled the facilitator to create an environment where it was safe for participants to talk about potentially threatening or embarrassing situations: dilemmas they face, anxieties about their organisations and myths that they have become party to. Using stories as artifacts, where participants were given license to exaggerate contributed to this sense of safety. Also critical to the environment was the use of dilemmas.

Participants in the workshop were asked to identify dilemmas contained in their stories rather than particular assumptions held by people in the organisation. In practice this meant that a participant did not have to say “Managers around here assume it is OK to go back on promises made to staff.” Rather, they could say, “A dilemma the managers have is whether to keep promises to staff or give customers/ratepayers what they require.” Using dilemmas rather than assumptions as the basis for exploration was thus less threatening to participants. It also freed the facilitator to explore artifacts in depth, in that it allowed stories to be discussed in detail in a way that honoured the values of those presenting the story without taking sides in what could be a current conflict.

As with Schein’s original process, this workshop could be used as one part of a more substantial process of exploring an organisation’s culture. As a facilitator, I was given a deeper insight into the nature of organisations than I have ever had running purely developmental processes, or talking with particular members of an organisation. It requires testing by other facilitators to ensure that the process itself is replicable and able to generate similar outcomes for others.

10.6 Summary

This chapter explored the dilemmas pertinent to practitioners endeavouring to build their own organisations into learning organisations. At workshops held in three New Zealand organisations, groups of practitioners generated stories about their learning journeys and identified the dilemmas the stories contained.

Four dilemmas appeared to be common to the experience of these organisations: (1) Change—Stability, (2) Technical Skills—Organisational/Social Skills, (3) Management Control—Operator Responsibility and (4) Aspiration—Pragmatism. Of these, the first 3 appear to be directly related to dilemmas that have been identified in earlier processes and discussed in the preceding chapters. The Aspiration—Pragmatism dilemma had not been identified earlier, though it was experienced by each of the participating organisations.

The workshop process used in this part of the research project was discussed. It was a valuable innovation that succeeded in creating an environment in which practitioners could openly surface and discuss potentially threatening aspects of organisational culture.

Up to this point we have been identifying dilemmas that could be used to chart the 'learning culture' of an organisation. We have identified dilemmas associated with three parts of the community interested in learning organisations: academics, consultants and practitioners. In Chapters 6, 7, 9 and 10 a set of eight dilemmas have been presented using Polarity Maps. A number of variations on these dilemmas have been discussed as they surfaced in different parts of the research process. These eight dilemmas, along with variations, provide us with the basis for a measurement instrument for charting an organisation's learning culture. The design of the instrument will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 11: Designing the Instrument

In part, the purpose of this thesis has been to develop a means of measuring the learning culture of organisations as a basis for descriptive studies of Learning Organisations. The complex and dynamic nature of organisations interested in learning provides a challenge to any effort made to describe them. An organisation's values are more stable and enduring than the particular techniques they may be using at any given time. Therefore, measuring cultural values associated with learning is a practical way of describing learning organisations. Using values as the basis for description also provides a means of dealing with the diverse approaches taken to learning and the differences in meanings attached to the term 'learning organisation.'

In earlier chapters we have explored the dilemmas that organisations encounter when they embark upon a learning journey. Eight learning dilemmas have been mapped. These form the basis for an instrument that can be used to chart an organisation's learning culture. In this chapter we will discuss how the instrument was developed and tested.

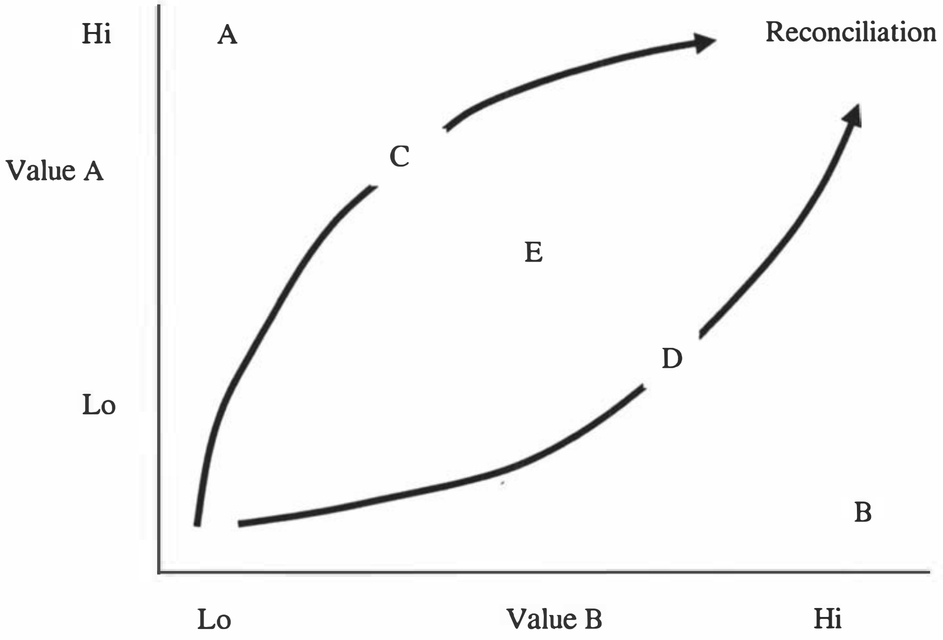
11.1 Presentation of Dilemmas

Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars have pioneered the use of dilemmas for charting organisational culture. Originally, the Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars approach was to ask respondents to choose between the two values under consideration. For example, to chart responses to the Universalism—Paticularism dilemma respondents were presented with a dilemma such as the following:

> You are riding in a car driven by a close friend. He hits a pedestrian. You know he was going at least thirty-five miles per hour in an area of the city where the maximum allowed speed is twenty miles per hour. There are no witnesses other than you. His lawyer says that if you testify under oath that he was driving only twenty miles per hour, you will save him from serious consequences. What right has your friend to expect you to protect him?
>
> a. My friend has a definite right as a friend to expect me to testify to the lower speed.
>
> b. He has no right as a friend to expect me to testify to the lower speed.

More recently, Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars (2000) have changed the range of choices they present to respondents. They have endeavoured to explore the way that respondents reconcile the dilemmas they present along with which 'horn' of the dilemma is ultimately given precedence. Figure 11.1 shows the different ways that a dilemma can be reconciled.

Figure 11.1 Approaches to Dilemma Resolution



Points A and B represent positions taken by people who resolve a dilemma by choosing one value and suppressing its opposite. These points correspond to the options presented to respondents in the original version of Hampden-Turner and Trompenaar's survey. Point E represents the position of compromise, where respondents choose a position where both values are partially represented and yet each is in some way undermined. Points C and D are positions that allow the dilemma to be reconciled through sequencing. Point C is the position of people who emphasise Value A first and then Value B. Point D is the position of those who put Value B first and then A.

Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars (2000) have reconstructed the dilemma that was shown earlier with two choices. Having provided the same description of the situation, respondents are presented with the following options.

a. There is a general obligation to tell the truth as a witness. I will not perjure myself before the court. Nor should any real friend expect this from me.

b. My friend in trouble always comes first. I am not going to desert him before a court of strangers based on some abstract principle.

c. I will testify that my friend was going a little faster than the allowed speed and say that it was difficult to read the speedometer.

d. There is a general obligation to tell the truth in court, and I will do so, but I owe my friend an explanation and all the social and financial support I can organise.

e. My friend in trouble always gets my support, whatever his testimony, yet I would urge him to find in our friendship the strength that allows us both to tell the truth.

For this thesis the original two-choice format has been used. It is clear that the five-choice format represents an advanced method for charting culture, and ultimately a dilemma-based survey for charting learning cultures will adopt this five-choice format. However, using a two-choice format provides a significant benefit for this piece of research.

Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars developed their five-choice format after considerable experience using the two-choice format. This gave them opportunity to learn from respondents how the C, D and E positions might be expressed. This research involves developing an instrument that focuses on learning dilemmas. It is appropriate to start at the same point as Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars, using a two-choice format. A five-choice format would require the researcher to design in advance the C, D and E responses.

For this reason, the instrument used in the thesis presents respondents with two options for each dilemma, and provides opportunity for respondents to comment on their choice. Respondent's comments provide the researcher with examples of how C, D and E options might be constructed in an advanced version of the survey. The instrument used in the research is shown in Appendix 4.

The instrument has three sections: (1) a letter of introduction, (2) a section that asks about the personal details of respondents and (3) the learning dilemmas.

The letter of introduction is ensures that the instrument conforms to Massey University's policy on ethics for research involving human subjects.

The Personal Details section elicits information on factors that might influence choices respondents make with the dilemmas: gender, function, role, age, ethnicity and length of service. Chapter 4 discussed some of the subcultures that have been associated with dilemma resolution. People's choices in regard to dilemmas may be affected by such things as gender, their country of origin, age, the organisational function in which they work, the length of time they have been exposed to the organisation's culture, and the occupational culture in which they work. The Personal Details section seeks information in each of these areas.

11.2 Constructing Dilemmas

In earlier chapters we identified dilemmas associated with learning efforts in organisations. Table 11.1 lists the dilemmas we have identified and act as a basis for the dilemmas presented in the instrument. Eight separate dilemmas were identified. As discussed in earlier chapters seven further dilemmas emerged from the Delphi process and the practitioner workshops. These, however were derivations of the eight primary dilemmas: they appear to be based on the same underlying values.

Table 11.1 shows the eight primary dilemmas, with derivative dilemmas shown beneath. Derivative dilemmas were valuable in constructing the study in that they suggested ways in which the primary dilemma could be presented. In total, 15 dilemmas were identified and included in the instrument.

Table 11.1 Dilemmas Included in Instrument

1. **Individual Learning—Social Learning**
   - Self Reliance—Knowledge Sharing
   - Technical Skills—Social Skills
2. **Focus on Systems—Focus on Culture**
   - Acting—Reflecting
   - Learning as Instrumental—Learning as an End in its Own Right
3. **Leader Driven—Community Based**
   - Inclusive Process—Voluntary Process
4. **Experimentation and Change—Maturity and Stability**
   - Flexibility—Consistency
   - Innovation—Mastery
5. **Focus on Inner Capacity—Focus on Outer Capacity**
6. **Learning—Performing**
7. **Emotionally Neutral—Emotionally Engaged**
8. **Aspiration—Pragmatism**

Learning as an individual process versus learning as a social process was identified as a dilemma apparent in the literature and discussed in Chapter 6. This dilemma also emerged from the Delphi process undertaken with consultants; in Chapter 9 we discussed the dilemma involved in using learning to build self-reliance (an individual focus) or treating it as a process of knowledge sharing (a social process). This formed the basis for one of the items in the survey.

The dilemma was presented in the survey as follows:

Is it more important for people to:

a. **Learn to be self-reliant, building their knowledge and skills so that they have more to offer an organisation?**
b. **Learn to contribute to the success of those around them, freely exchanging knowledge with others?**

The dilemma also emerged from the workshop process, where participants considered whether learning should focus on the technical skills involved in a particular role (an individual focus) or on the social and organisational skills that allow technical experts to work together (a social focus). The dilemma was presented in the survey as follows:

Two managers were discussing how their organisation could get the best from its investment in learning. They disagreed over the types of skills that needed to be developed. Which do you agree with?

a. **"We need to invest in the technical skills of our people. This will help each person do his or her work more effectively."**
b. **"Our investment needs to be in social skills so that people can work together more effectively."**

In Chapter 6 we discussed a dilemma relating to the nature of the change involved in creating a learning organisation. Some of the literature deals with learning using a Systems-based approach, where an organisation learns by making specific changes to its systems and processes. We also find in the literature contributions that deal with learning as a culture: a diffuse influence on the way people think and act. Learning that focuses on changes to systems and processes harmonises with analytical or specific values, where learning that focuses on culture harmonises with integrative, diffuse values. The survey included the following dilemma that explored these values:

How can you judge whether learning is really important to an organisation?

a. You can see people in the organisation making on-going improvements to systems and processes. New learning gets quickly turned into new ways of going about their work.

b. You sense that people are creative a supportive environment that encourages everyone to learn, talk, plan and reflect together.

A related dilemma that emerged from the literature review process involved the preference learners have for either acting or reflecting. Some people associate learning with taking specific actions, while others prefer the more diffuse process of reflection. These preferences are addressed in the dilemma that follows:

Two workers were discussing how to get the most learning from their work. Which do you agree with?

a. "We need to spend more time reflecting on what we do. That means taking time to think about our work and to talk to others about what we are learning."

b. "Learning is about action. We need to experiment more, trying out new ways of getting things done."

In the Delphi process with consultants a further related dilemma emerged: whether learning was a means to an end or an end in itself. 'Means-end' thinking, or 'instrumental' thinking is highly analytical. That is, a person thinking in this way makes a clear distinction between the specific action taken as a means, and the specific outcome achieved as a result. Integrative thinking blurs these distinctions saying, in essence, that because we are constantly acting and constantly experiencing the results of actions it is impossible to find the connections between a means and its end. It is better to ensure that you are acting in a way that harmonises with what you want to see in the world. From an integrative point of view, if learning is important for humans it is an end in itself, whether it can be tied to specific results or not. These alternative ways of thinking gave rise to the following dilemma:

Two managers were discussing the part learning plays in their organisation. Which do you agree with?

a. One said, "Learning is a means to an end. We should invest in learning so long as it helps us move toward our vision."

b. Another said, "Learning is an integral part of what we do. We should try to make sure that learning is built into all aspects of our work."

In all three processes the issue of where the impetus for learning should be situated surfaced as an important dilemma. Should learning be driven and controlled by an organisation's executives? Or, is learning a process that must be driven by the organisational community as a whole? The dilemma was presented as shown below:

Which of the following statements do you agree with?

a. **Learning needs to be driven from the top with executives taking a 'hands-on' approach. They need to lead the process of learning to ensure it addresses issues important to the organisation and that all staff are involved.**

b. **Executives need to trust people to take responsibility for their own learning. Learning is a 'grass-roots' process: people will voluntarily join in if they can see how learning will help a community they care about.**

Because this issue was prominent in the practitioner workshops in particular, a second dilemma focusing on whether participation in learning activities should be voluntary or inclusive was presented in the survey. The dilemma is shown below:

Managers in an organisation find that a few people do not want to take part in learning activities the Chief Executive considers critical for future success. Should managers:

a. **Find ways to ensure that everyone takes part?**

b. **Let people choose for themselves if they take part?**

The literature review process highlighted a difference in the approach people and organisations take to the change involved in learning. In some instances people see learning as an experimental process associated with innovation: a divergent process. In other instances learning is viewed as a process of maturation: a convergent process where one moves toward a complete state, toward mastery. This dilemma was presented using the following dilemma:

Two managers were discussing the sort of learning that was most important for their organisation. Which do you agree with?

a. **One said, "People are really learning when they innovate. We need people to be experimental, trying new things."**

b. **Another said, "Real learning means gaining mastery of something. We need to be assured people are truly capable of doing their work well."**

This distinction also emerged from the practitioner workshops where organisations faced a dilemma of using learning to generate flexibility or consistency. This was examined in the survey using the following dilemma:

Learning is important for our organisation because it helps us to:

a. Be more flexible, taking on new challenges and finding innovative solutions to problems that arise.

b. Be more consistent, getting better at what we do.

In Chapter 7 we considered issues of sustainability with regard to learning. As we discussed, many people view learning as capacity building but focus their attention solely on the essential capacities found within the organisation itself. A capacity-building approach to learning could also focus on the impact an organisation has on external capacities that are critical to its future: its impact on the environment or the society in which it operates. To explore this issue a dilemma was presented that asked whether an organisation should limit its aspirations to avoid having a negative impact on their local community. Because many people espouse concern for the environment while neglecting it in practice, environmental impact of aspirations were not mentioned. The dilemma that was presented is shown below.

Two managers were discussing their organisation's vision. Which do you agree with?

a. One said, "We need to limit what we strive for. We need to make sure that our success isn't at the expense of the community we work in."

b. Another said, "It's a mistake to be constrained by local conditions. We need to set our sights as high as we can, even if we outgrow our community."

The literature review process featured a dilemma that has provided a basis for integrating the rich variety of perspectives involved with learning in organisations: the Learning—Performing dilemma. This dilemma has to do with how capacity is treated within an organisation. For many, capacity is something to be exploited in order to perform. For others, capacity needs to be built; this is what the process of learning is about. As discussed in Chapter 6 viewing a 'learning organisation' as an organisation that seeks to balance capacity against demands enables us to integrate other perspectives or definitions; they serve to help us identify the various capacities needed in organisations.

While many people may espouse the desire to learn, their real concern is performance. Students, for instance, may attend educational institutions apparently desiring to learn. However, their actions may indicate that their real desire is to meet some externally imposed demand. Some will, for instance, cheat on tests, trading off the amount they learn in order to meet the demands of the examiner. The educational institution may collude by placing greater emphasis on the achievement of grades than on the amount of learning taking place. In each case, learning is being espoused while the real emphasis is on performing. A way past espoused values is to explore the way people respond to failure. In a setting where performance is the focus failure is undesirable; it means that demands have not been met. Where learning is the focus failure is natural, even desirable; failure enables us to monitor progress and diagnose where attention should be given. The survey explored this with the following dilemma:

Which is most true of your organisation?

a. **We believe that failure is unacceptable. We operate in an environment where we need to get things right. Performance is paramount.**

b. **We believe that failure is an important part of learning, showing us how we can improve. We try to make the environment one where it is safe to try things, even when they don't work. Learning is the key to success.**

The dilemma above explores the general orientation people have toward learning and performance. The survey also examined this issue in a more focused setting, as shown below:

When someone new joins a work team they need to learn about the team while the team needs to continue to perform. Which of the following do you agree with?

a. **Getting the work out is a priority. Helping the new person learn has to be fitted around the need to maintain team performance.**

b. **Helping new people learn about the team and the part they play is the priority. Sometimes performance has to suffer so new people can learn.**

The Delphi process with consultants surfaced a dilemma that had to do with the motivation for learning. Learning can be seen as a process that is motivated by logic and reason as an organisation seeks to address particular concerns. Learning can also be seen as an emotional process. Should learning be an emotionally neutral or an emotionally engaged process? This was addressed with the following dilemma:

Two managers were discussing the approach they should take to learning in their company. Which approach do you agree with?

a. **"This organisation needs to make sound, objective decisions about learning. People have to learn skills that directly contribute to the organisation. We have to systematically plan what we do, identify the skills needed and carefully design the processes that will make people learn.**

b. **"Learning is about passion! We need people to discover the joy of learning. We want people to aspire to goals they care about. We have to foster curiosity. We have to grow people's love of learning."**

The next dilemma emerged from the practitioner workshops: whether an organisation should be led by its aspirations and principles or whether it should be guided by pragmatism. Aspiration can lead an organisation to take an idealistic view of why people work and learn, which is addressed in the dilemma shown below:

Which of the following statements do you agree with?

a. **The reason people get interested in learning is the personal benefit to them. People want to establish a balanced, comfortable life for themselves and their families.**

b. **People's main reason for learning is a desire to contribute to the organisation. They are committed to the organisation and want to contribute to its long-term health.**

Aspiration—Pragmatism also affects the way an organisation deals with its customers. An organisation may choose, pragmatically, to sacrifice its learning aspirations to meet the demands of customers. Or it could put its aspirations ahead of the demands of customers. This was explored in the following dilemma:

Your organisation is introducing a new product that represents a major move forward from what you have offered in the past. You are still working hard to learn all you can about the product and how customers can get the most from it. An important client is insistent, however, that you supply the previous model—the one the customer is most familiar with. Two managers disagree on the approach you should take. Which do you agree with?

a. **One says, "Our success depends on giving customers what they want. We should supply the old product."**

b. **Another says, "We need to do what we can to get this customer to move on to the new product so we can focus on learning about what is new."**

11.3 Initial Testing of the Instrument

The 15 dilemmas outlined above were developed as a basis for charting an organisation's learning culture. The 15 dilemmas collectively represent an instrument that can be used for descriptive work on learning organisations. Ultimately this instrument was to be tested by applying it to organisations; this application is described in Chapters 12 and 13. Prior to administering the survey in organisations some initial testing was needed. In particular, it was important to test:

a. Whether the items were presented in a form that made each 'horn' of the dilemma attractive to people valuing what it represented, and
b. Whether the language used was appropriate for the people required to complete the survey.

To test the first issue—the relative attractiveness of the horns—a group of six doctoral candidates were asked to discuss each of the dilemmas. The candidates were undertaking their research in Massey University's departments of Human Resource Management and Communication & Journalism. This group was selected to ensure that it contained people with the ability to articulate their values in a group setting and because it contained sufficient diversity to suggest a wide range of values would be represented within the group.

The group included three males and three females. Their doctoral research topics included media studies, teamwork, accident causation in truck-driving, employment issues for older workers and the use of reflection in processes of learning.

All but two of the dilemmas generated a vigorous and rich debate amongst the group, indicating that each horn of these dilemmas was attractive to at least one person in the group. People were able to articulate a justification for their preferred horn, and some suggested ways that dilemmas could be reconciled.

The group process resulted in a change to one dilemma: the Inner—Outer dilemma originally had one option that stated: *One said, "We need to limit what we strive for. We need to make sure that our success isn't at the expense of the environment or the community we work in."* All in the group preferred this option to the alternative. In discussing the dilemma the group agreed that inclusion of concern for the environment biased them toward this option. When the phrase *"...the environment or..."* was removed the group was split between concern for the local community and desire to pursue aspirations.

When the group discussed the Self Reliance—Knowledge Sharing dilemma they were unanimous in their preference for self reliance. In discussing this with the group it was agreed that their unanimity was a function of the values of the community to which they all belonged: the academic community, with its preference for intellectual freedom. It was decided that the dilemma should remain in its original form.

The language used in the survey was assessed by a group of 12 workers in a Palmerston North Pharmacy. Apart from one pharmacist, none in the group had tertiary qualifications. The group ranged in age from late teens to mid-50s.

Each member of the group read through the entire survey identifying any language that could not be easily understood. No problems with language were identified. The only area that was a cause for concern was in the demographic section where respondents were asked to state their age. Most agreed they would prefer to have the question phrased in a different way. It was decided to ask respondents to state their year of birth rather than directly ask for their age.

Further testing of items is needed in order to validate the research design. That is, it is desirable to undertake a statistical analysis of people's responses to dilemmas to see whether they treat the options in each item as opposites. For instance, Multi Dimensional Scaling is a process where responses to the dilemmas are correlated against one another. The result is a 3 dimensional map in the form of a spherical shell, with each of the 30 options (2 options from each of the 15 dilemmas) placed on the shell to indicate its relation to other options. Those that have a strong positive correlation will fall close to one another on the map. Items with a correlation of –1 (that is, those considered opposite) would fall directly opposite one another.

While desirable, it is difficult to carry out this kind of analysis with a dilemma-based instrument. The correlation between two items forming any dilemma is forced to be roughly –1, because respondents reject one option when they choose the other. So, some structure is imposed on the data from the beginning. Multi Dimension Scaling thus cannot provide evidence for or against the validity of the research design.

Evidence for the validity of the research design needs to come from some external source. Some work toward this was undertaken using what is known as the Method of Triads. This work was not completed as part of this study. Results of the work so far are presented in Appendix 7.

11.4 Summary

In this chapter we have discussed the development of items to be included in the instrument. Items were developed in a 2-option format, so respondents would have to respond to a forced choice between two learning related values. Future research may present these dilemmas in a 5-option format that allows respondents to indicate how they believe the dilemmas are best resolved.

On the basis of eight dilemmas identified in earlier processes, 15 items were created. These will form the basis for charting the learning cultures of organisations. The items were presented to two groups for testing, prior to administration of the survey in organisations. The first group discussed whether the items truly represented dilemmas. The second group examined the items to ensure that language was suitable for use in the survey. Minor changes were made to one item and to a question in the demographic section of the survey.

The following chapter will examine the results obtained when the survey was used in five organisations engaged in learning processes.

Chapter 12: Piloting the Instrument

In earlier chapters we discussed the identification of dilemmas associated with learning in organisations. These dilemmas were the basis for developing an instrument for describing learning organisations, as discussed in the previous chapter. In this chapter we discuss the results achieved when the instrument was used to survey a group of organisations.

The survey was an opportunity to pilot the instrument, with a view to assessing its usefulness in describing differences between learning communities. This assessment will involve determining whether the instrument provided insight into learning in organisations, and where improvement could be made to each of the dilemmas used in the instrument.

This chapter describes the sample used in the survey, discusses how the responses were analysed and examines the results obtained from each of the dilemmas. This provides a basis for a review of the instrument in the following chapter.

12.1 The Sample

Five organisations took part in the survey. Three of these organisations, South Waikato District Council, Skill New Zealand and Pan Pac Forest Industries had taken part in an earlier stage of the research: the Workshops described in Chapter 10. Their selection for the study is described in that chapter. Formway Furniture, had been nominated by experts on learning organisations as suitable for inclusion in the research during an earlier stage of the study, but had been unable to take part in the Workshop activity because of work commitments. Formway Furniture chose to have a group of designers included in the survey. The Human Resources Manager of a fifth company was involved in initial testing of the instrument and requested that her organisation, Unichem Palmerston North, be included in the study. Finally, in order to increase the sample size so that demographic factors such as gender and ethnicity could be better explored, a group of extramural university students were invited to take part. Table 12.1 shows the organisational make up of the sample.

A liaison person in each of the organisations distributed surveys to employees along with return envelopes so respondents could return them directly to the researcher. This was necessary both for convenience and for ethical reasons: in several organisations the liaison person had a Human Resources role in the organisation and may have been viewed as having a conflict of interest if handling completed surveys.

Table 12.1: Survey Respondents by Organisation

Organisation	Number of Repondents	Response Rate %	Percentage of Total Responses
South Waikato District Council	70	60	20
Unichem Palmerston North	33	41	9
Skill New Zealand	138	63	39
Pan Pac Forest Industries	61	68	17
Formway Furniture Design Group	17	85	5
Other	36	n/a	10
Total	355		100

The 355 respondents included 199 females (57% of respondents) and 154 males (43%). Respondents ranged in age from 18 to 70 years, with the median age being 44 years. 286 respondents (81%) listed New Zealand as their country of birth, while 35 (10%) were born in Great Britain, with the remaining 31 (9%) from 12 other countries. 273 (77%) indicated that their ethnicity was New Zealand European/Pakeha, 42 (12%) as Maori, 15 (4%) as Pacific Islander and 22 (6%) as other.

Table 12.2 shows the main organisation functions represented in the sample; functions with fewer than 10 respondents have been listed as 'Other'.

The length of time served in their current organisations ranged from 1 month to 42 years, with the median length of service being 6 years. When asked to indicate the nature of their role in the organisation using descriptions of Schein's occupational groupings, 182 (51%) classified themselves as Operators, 142 (40%) as Engineers and 27 (8%) as Executives.

Table 12.2 Functions Represented in the Sample

Function	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Sample
Production/Manufacturing	27	8
Accounting/Finance	32	9
Engineering	36	10
Human Resource Management	19	5
Administration	57	16
Education/Consulting	31	9
Sales/Marketing	23	6
General Management	46	13
Other	84	24

12.2 Method of Analysis

As we have discussed in earlier chapters, culture is the pattern of assumptions operating within a community, shaping the way that dilemmas are resolved. A culture is a collection of differences that contribute to a community's identity. We can describe an organisation's 'learning culture'—the pattern of assumptions about how learning ought to take place—by comparing the proportion resolving a dilemma in a particular way, relative to other organisations or communities. The primary method of analysis, therefore, was to chart the percentage answering 'a' on each of the dilemmas. Initially, this was done to compare the responses from each of the organisations represented in the sample. To establish whether differences are the result of chance occurrence, 95% Confidence Intervals were calculated using the formula:

$$\text{95\% Confidence Interval} = 2 \times \sqrt{\frac{\text{(Proportion answering A)} \times \text{(Proportion Answering B)}}{\text{Number of Respondents}}}$$

The formula provides a method of calculating confidence when dealing with binary choices such as the choice of 'a' or 'b' options with a dilemma. If, for instance, 60% of the members of an organisation answer 'a' on a dilemma, we calculate that the 95% Confidence Interval is 5% we allow 5% either side of the 60% score. We are, therefore, confident at the 95% level that the organisation's score lies between 65% and 55%. In comparing organisations we can then look for instances where there is no overlap in responses to a particular dilemma: where the lowest score indicated by the Confidence Interval is still higher than the highest score indicated by the other organisation.

The same procedure was followed for examining differences between demographic groupings, for example, differences between males and females. Thus we were also able to examine the effects of the subcultures discussed in Chapter 4.

A second method for examining the significance of differences in response was Logistical Regression (Pagano & Gauvreau, 1993). This method of analysis can be used in binary situations, such as where responses to a dilemma can be 'a' or 'b'. The analysis assesses whether selected variables (such as organisational membership, age, gender etc.) predict whether individuals in the sample will provide a 'b' response on the dilemma.

Logistical Regression involves two main stages. Initially a 'saturated model' is created that examines whether there is any relationship between selected variables and the likelihood of individuals answering 'b'. Then, an equation is generated that could be used to predict who in the sample would give a 'b' answer. The equation takes a form based on the following equation:

$$P = a + B_1X_1$$

In the equation P is the probability of respondents choosing 'b' on the dilemma, X_1 represents a variable under consideration (e.g. gender), and B_1 is the regression coefficient—a figure indicating the strength of the relationship between P and X_1. Because we are dealing with an analysis that is dichotomous rather than continuous—that is, respondents choose either 'a' or 'b' rather than some point on a continuum between them—we need to use a variation on the formula. As the name of the analysis suggests (to statisticians) we use a formula based on the natural logarithms of the formula above, thus doing a *logistical* rather than a *linear* regression.

Where categorical variables are included the regression treats one category as fixed and examines whether there is a difference between this and other categories. Table 12.3 shows which categories were used as fixed in our analysis.

Table 12.3 Fixed Categories in the Logistical Regression

Categorical Variable	Fixed Category
Organisation	The organisation with the mid-scoring mean on each dilemma.
Gender	Male
Function	General Management
Ethnicity	New Zealand European/Pakeha
Role	Operator

Choices of fixed categories were made for a variety of reasons. As Table 12.3 indicates, for each dilemma the organisation whose mean fell in the middle of the five organisational scores was treated as fixed. This enabled the analysis to indicate whether the scores falling on either side were significantly different. Given that Gender is binary, either male or female categories could have been treated as fixed. General Management was used as the functional category most likely to be of interest to a diverse group of readers; use of this category allows us to compare the responses of the other functions to those of managers. New Zealand European/Pakeha was treated as the fixed category for ethnicity as it is the predominant ethnic grouping in New Zealand and in this study. Similarly, the Operator role was the predominant category for the Role variable.

Data was gathered on Country of Birth, but the unbalanced distribution within this variable meant that significant differences were not able to be obtained.

A final stage of the analysis involved a Forward Stepwise Logistical Regression. This follows the same process as the Logistical Regression described earlier but with the equation created in steps. With this analysis the variable with the greatest predictive power is placed in the equation first. The second ranked variable is then added to the equation, but only if it makes a significant improvement to the ability of the equation to predict a ‘b’ response. The formula changes from that shown earlier to:

$$P = a + B_1X_1 + B_2X_2$$

Further variables can be added in step as long as they are improving the quality of the equation. This analysis allows us to identify which variables are having the greatest effect on the choices respondents made for each dilemma.

Our analysis of responses to each dilemma proceeded according to the following stages:

1. Charting of confidence intervals for organisations.
2. Logistical Regression to identify significant variables.
3. Forward Logistical Regression to determine the ranking of variables.
4. Charting of confidence intervals for other (non-organisational) significant variables.

Results for each of the dilemmas will be presented using charts showing the Percentages of people in various communities choosing 'a', along with the Confidence Intervals for that community. Initially, this will be a comparison of responses from the different organisations taking part in the study. Where appropriate the differences for other variables, such as gender and function, will be shown.

For each dilemma a table will be used to present the results of the Logistical Regressions. Tables will have columns showing:

1. The significance of each variable in a saturated model. That is, how valuable is the variable in helping to make a robust model for predicting how people will resolve the dilemma. Where categories within a variable are significant these will also be shown.
2. The B value—or Regression Coefficient—for variables when they are used in a Logistical Regression equation. The B value shows the magnitude and the direction of the influence the variable has on the probability of people choosing 'b' for the dilemma. A positive B value indicates a direct relationship between the variable and the likelihood of choosing 'b'. A negative B value indicates that an inverse relationship exists: as the variable increases the result is an increased probability of choosing 'a'. The magnitude of the influence increases as the B value gets further from 0. Regression Coefficients are shown for variables that are significant at the .050 level in the saturated model (the first column). Where a variable is categorical, regression coefficients are shown for significant categories rather than the variable as a whole.
3. The significance of the Regression Coefficient.
4. The ranking of the variable when used in a Forward Regression.

12.3 Technical versus Social Skills

This dilemma was presented as follows:

Two managers were discussing how their organisation could get the best from its investment in learning. They disagreed over the types of skills that needed to be developed. Which do you agree with?

a. "We need to invest in the technical skills of our people. This will help each person do his or her work more effectively."

b. "Our investment needs to be in social skills so that people can work together more effectively."

Figure 12.1 shows the results from the organisations in the study. The confidence intervals for Unichem and Skill New Zealand show no overlap, indicating that members of Unichem are more likely to value investments in technical skills as opposed to social skills, than people at Skill New Zealand.

Figure 12.1: Confidence Intervals for Organisations—Dilemma 1

Percent Answering A: Technical Skills

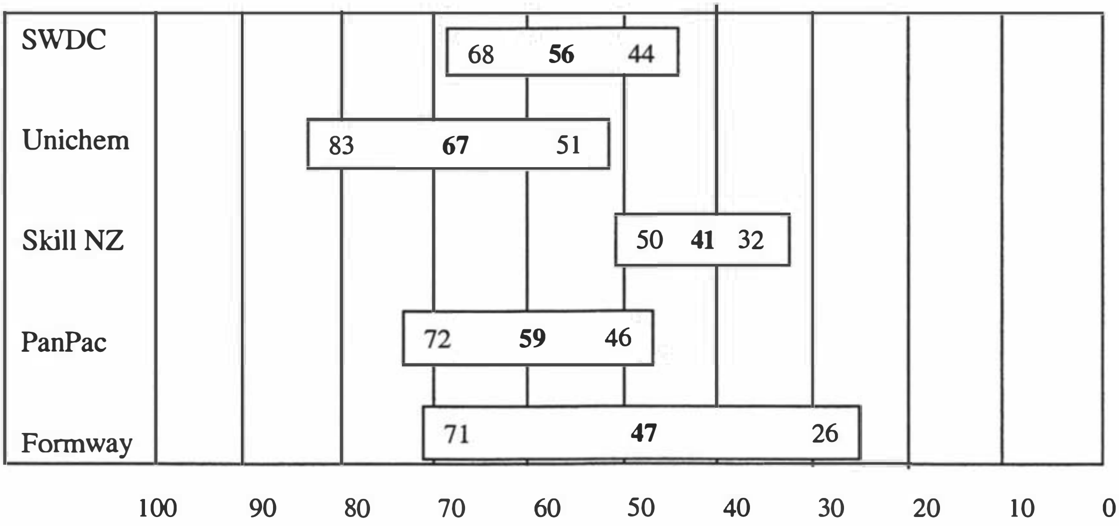


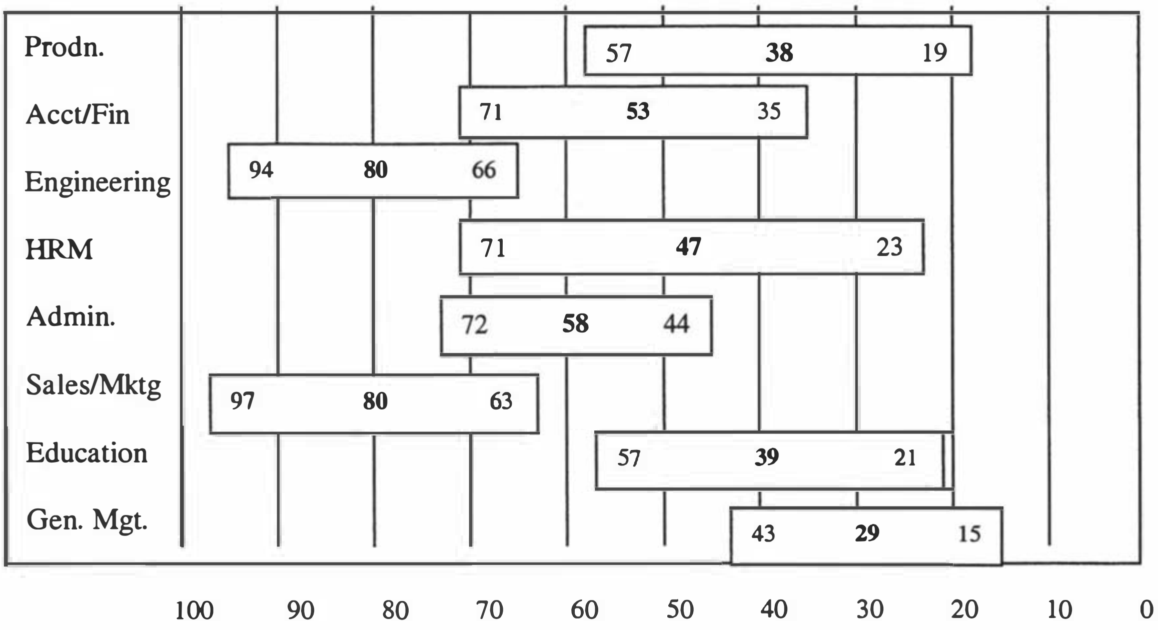
Table 12.4 shows the results of the Logistical Regression for Dilemma 1. The table shows that people in Skill New Zealand are significantly more likely to choose 'b'—that is, to value social skills—than people in the organisation used as the fixed point in the regression, South Waikato District Council (SWDC). Because SWDC is the middle-scoring organisation, this result indicates that Skill New Zealand people are also significantly more likely to value social skills than those at Pan Pac and Unichem, where the percentages of people choosing 'a' were higher than at SWDC.

Table 12.4: Logistical Regression for Dilemma 1

Variable	Significance in Saturated Model	Regression Coefficient (B)	Significance of Regression Coefficient	Ranking in Forward Regression
Organisation	.127			
Unichem	.135			
Skill NZ	.029	.517	.329	
Pan Pac	.185			
Formway	.561			
Gender	.503			
Year of Birth	.443			
Ethnicity	.009			
Maori	.003	1.012	.032	2
Pacific Islander	.104			
Function	.000			
Engineering	.001			1
Sales/Marketing	.035	-2.269	.002	
Years Served	.183	-2.439	.006	
Role	.196			

Figure 12.2: Confidence Intervals for Functions—Dilemma 1

Percent Answering A: Technical



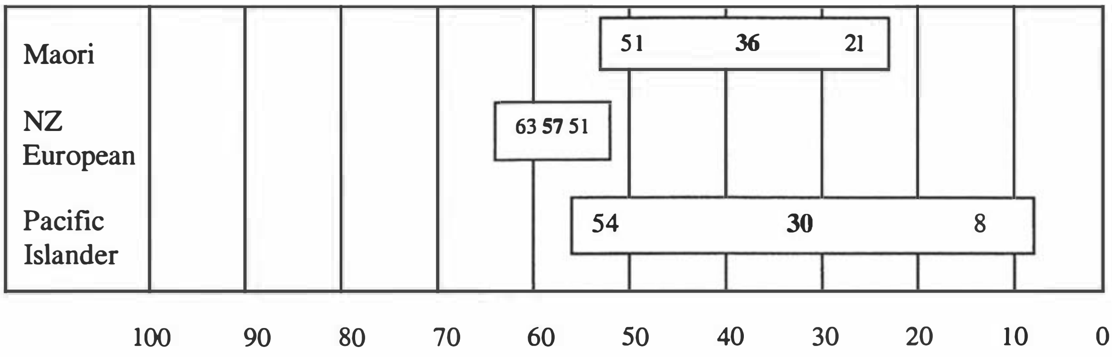
The table also indicates that Function is the variable most likely to predict how people will resolve the dilemma, ranking first in the Forward Regression. In particular, people in the Engineering and Sales/Marketing functions are more likely to value technical skills than are those in General Management. Figure 12.2 compares the responses from people in each of the functions included in the analysis.

Figure12.2 indicates that the Production and Education functions are also different from Engineering and Sales/Marketing with no overlap of the confidence intervals. These differences do not show up in the Logistical Regression, because each functional category is compared against the fixed category 'General Management' and there is minimal difference between Production, Education and General Management.

Ethnicity was also a significant factor in predicting how people would resolve the dilemma, and was the second ranked variable in the Forward Regression. Maori, in particular, were more likely to value social skills ('b' in the dilemma) than New Zealand European. A comparison of responses by Ethnic groups is shown in Figure 12.3. The confidence intervals shown in Figure 12.3 confirm the differences suggested by the Logistical Regression.

Figure 12.3: Confidence Intervals for Ethnic Groups—Dilemma 1

Percent Answering A: Technical



12.4 Balance versus Commitment

This dilemma was presented as follows:

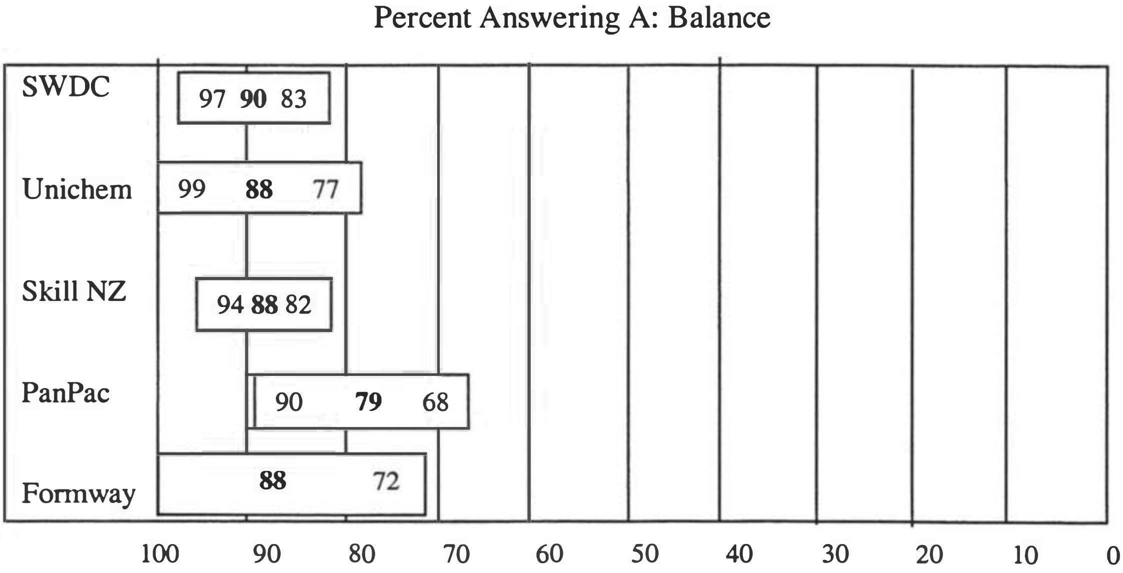
Which of the following statements do you agree with?

a. **The reason people get interested in learning is the personal benefit to them. People want to establish a balanced, comfortable life for themselves and their families.**

b. **People's main reason for learning is a desire to contribute to the organisation. They are committed to the organisation and want to contribute to its long-term health.**

Figure 12.4 shows the results from the organisations in the study. There is a much smaller difference in means than was evident with Dilemma 1, and all confidence intervals overlapped one another. Respondents from all organisations showed a preference for using learning to seek balance rather than to contribute to an organisation, perhaps suggesting that this value is part of the New Zealand macro-culture.

Figure 12.4: Confidence Intervals for Organisations—Dilemma 2



As shown in Table 12.5, no differences were found on this dilemma for any of the variables, with the exception of Year of Birth. The result shows that as Year of Birth increases (that is, the younger people are) the more likely it is that they will resolve the dilemma by choosing 'a': balance. One organisation, Pan Pac, was found to be different from the fixed organisation, Skill New Zealand.

Table 12.5: Logistical Regression for Dilemma 2

Variable	Significance in Saturated Model	Regression Coefficient (B)	Significance of Regression Coefficient	Ranking in Forward Regression
Organisation	.337			
Pan Pac	.030	1.431	.069	
Gender	.856			
Year of Birth	.005	-.066	.003	1
Ethnicity	.101			2
Function	.838			
Years Served	.225			
Role	.563			

Ethnicity, while not reaching the .050 level of significance, was still the second ranked factor in the Forward Regression.

12.5 Systems versus Environment

The dilemma was presented as follows:

How can you judge whether learning is really important to an organisation?

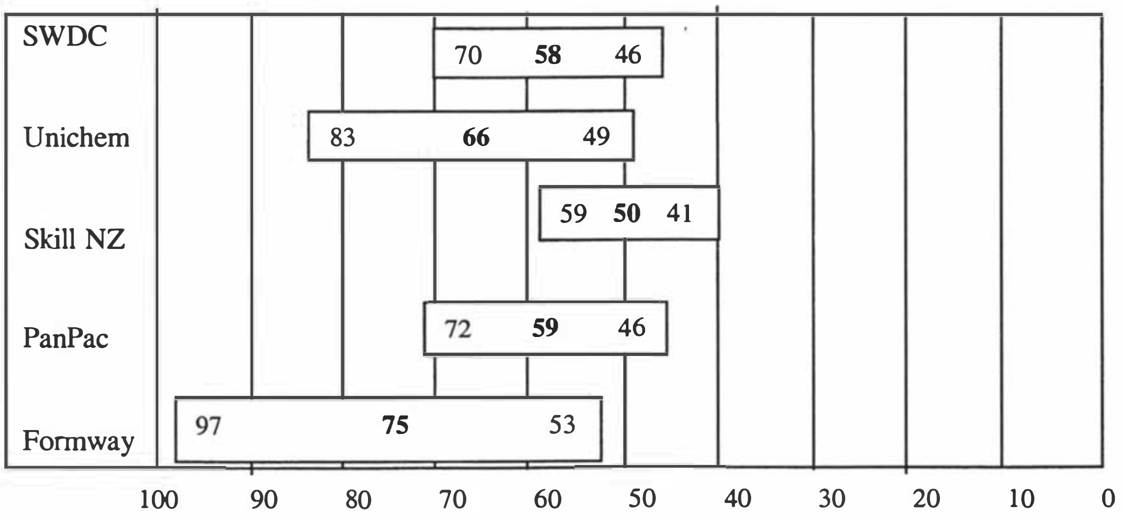
a. You can see people in the organisation making on-going improvements to systems and processes. New learning gets quickly turned into new ways of going about their work.

b. You sense that people are creative a supportive environment that encourages everyone to learn, talk, plan and reflect together.

Table 12.5 shows the differences between responses from organisations. While there was a wider spread of mean scores the confidence intervals all overlapped.

Figure 12.5: Confidence Intervals for Organisations—Dilemma 3

Percent Answering A: Systems



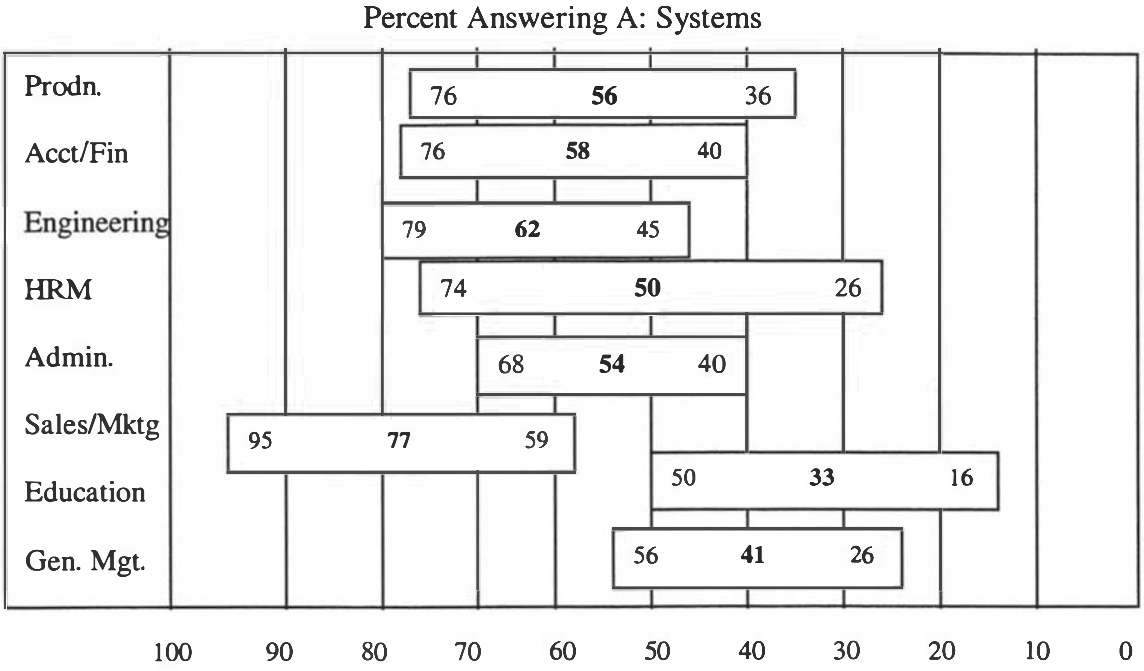
As Table 12.6 shows, Time Served in the organisations was a significant predictor of how people would resolve this dilemma. The longer people had served in their organisation the more likely they were to answer 'a', thus showing a preference for treating learning as embedded in systems.

The Logistical Regression also showed that two functions were significantly different from the fixed functional category General Management. Confidence Intervals for functions are shown in Figure 12.6. Only the General Management and Education functions show a preference for assessing learning on the basis of an abstract 'environment' as opposed to the more practical systems-based approach.

Table 12.3: Logistical Regression for Dilemma 3

Variable	Significance in Saturated Model	Regression Coefficient (B)	Significance of Regression Coefficient	Ranking in Forward Regression
Organisation	.145			
Gender	.490			
Year of Birth	.962			
Ethnicity	.387			
Function	.080			
Sales/Mktg	.025	-1.652	.027	
Education	.009	.201	.718	
Time Served	.043	-.043	.043	1
Role	.655			

Figure 12.6: Confidence Intervals for Functions—Dilemma 3



12.6 Emotionally Neutral versus Emotionally Engaged

The dilemma was presented as follows:

Two managers were discussing the approach they should take to learning in their company. Which approach do you agree with?

a. **“This organisation needs to make sound, objective decisions about learning. People have to learn skills that directly contribute to the organisation. We have to systematically plan what we do, identify the skills needed and carefully design the processes that will make people learn.**

b. "Learning is about passion! We need people to discover the joy of learning. We want people to aspire to goals they care about. We have to foster curiosity. We have to grow people's love of learning."

Figure 12.7 shows Confidence Intervals for the organisations in the study. While all organisations showed a preference for learning that was emotionally engaged, Skill New Zealand was the most likely to value emotional engagement and had a confidence interval that did not overlap with South Waikato District Council.

Figure 12.7: Confidence Intervals for Organisations—Dilemma 4

Percent Answering A: Emotionally Neutral

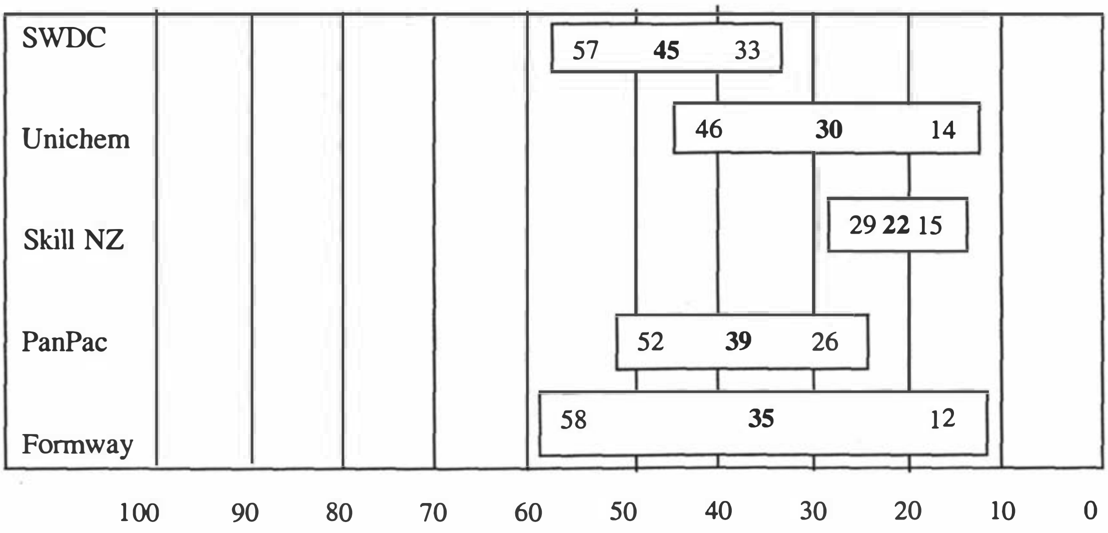


Table 12.7 shows the results of the Logistical Regressions for this dilemma. These confirm that SWDC was more likely to value emotional neutrality and Skill New Zealand more likely to value emotional engagement than the fixed organisation, Formway.

While Organisation is the variable most likely to predict how people would resolve the dilemma, Gender is also significant in the unsaturated model, and Time Served is close to significant. While 38% of males answered 'a' (Emotional Neutrality) compared to 28% of females, the Confidence Intervals for the two groups overlapped.

Table 12.7: Logistical Regression for Dilemma 4

Variable	Significance in Saturated Model	Regression Coefficient (B)	Significance of Regression Coefficient	Ranking in Forward Regression
Organisation	.023			1
SWDC	.007	-1.032	.166	
Unichem	.848			
Skill NZ	.002	.012	.987	
Pan Pac	.291			
Gender	.048	.415	.248	
Year of Birth	.192			
Ethnicity	.255			
Function	.556			
Time Served	.062	.003	.903	
Role	.505			

12.7 Executive Led versus Community Driven

The dilemma was presented as follows:

Which of the following statements do you agree with?

a. **Learning needs to be driven from the top with executives taking a 'hands-on' approach. They need to lead the process of learning to ensure it addresses issues important to the organisation and that all staff are involved.**

b. **Executives need to trust people to take responsibility for their own learning. Learning is a 'grass-roots' process: people will voluntarily join in if they can see how learning will help a community they care about.**

Figure 12.8 shows the Organisational results for the dilemma. Notably, the Skill New Zealand result is different from SWDC, Unichem and Pan Pac.

The difference between Skill NZ and the other organisations is confirmed in the Logistical Regression, as shown in Table 12.8. Skill New Zealand is shown to be different from the fixed organisation Pan Pac at the .000 level. SWDC is also different to Pan Pac, though its people are more likely to value executive leadership rather than community based learning.

Figure 12.8: Confidence Intervals for Organisations—Dilemma 5

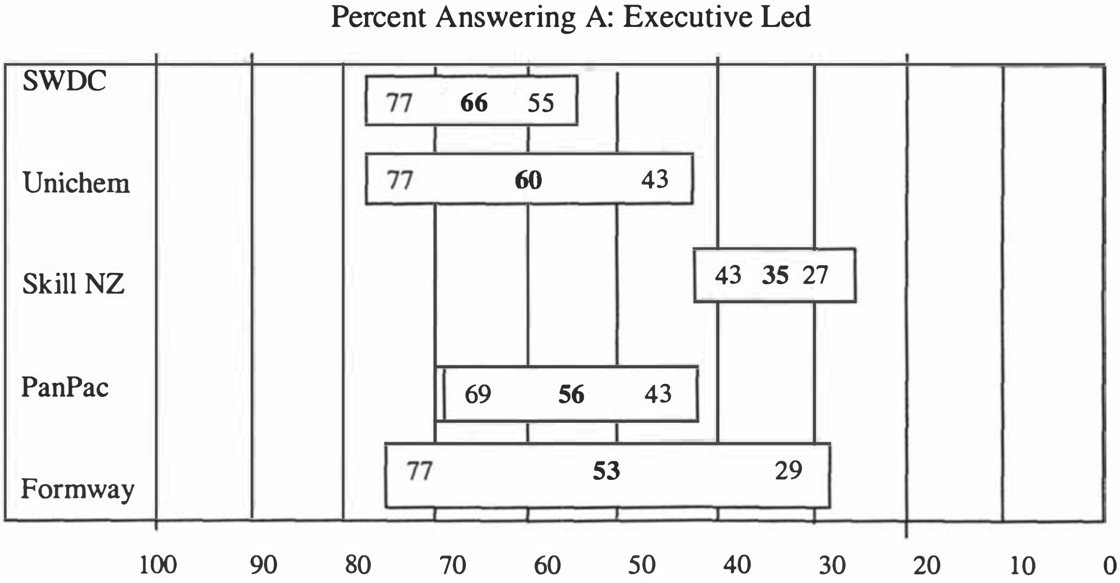


Table 12.8: Logistical Regression for Dilemma 5

Variable	Significance in Saturated Model	Regression Coefficient (B)	Significance of Regression Coefficient	Ranking in Forward Regression
Organisation	.001			1
SWDC	.001	-.381	.479	
Unichem	.376			
Skill NZ	.000	.948	.068	
Formway	.855			
Gender	.981			
Year of Birth	.827			
Ethnicity	.404			
Function	.228			
Accounting/Fin	.022	-1.134	.056	
Time Served	.263			
Role	.217			2

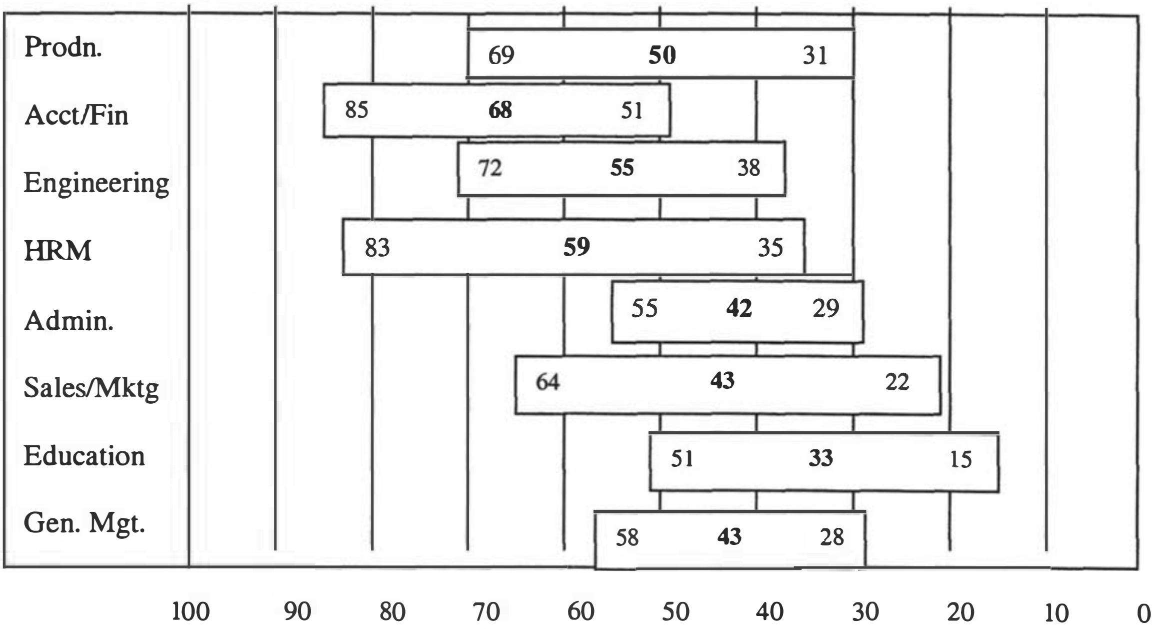
Figure 12.9 shows Confidence Intervals for Functions, and confirm the difference between Accounting/Finance and General Management.

Figure 12.9 also indicates that the Education function also differs from Accounting/Finance with the Accounting Function more likely to value executive leadership.

While there were no significant results for the Role variable it was ranked second in the Forward Regression. This suggests that the influence of function was accounted for largely by the Organisational variable; people in the Education function, for instance, were primarily those working within Skill New Zealand.

Figure 12.9: Confidence Intervals for Functions—Dilemma 5

Percent Answering A: Executive Led



12.8 Reflection versus Action

The dilemma was presented as follows:

Two workers were discussing how to get the most learning from their work. Which do you agree with?

a. **"We need to spend more time reflecting on what we do. That means taking time to think about our work and to talk to others about what we are learning."**

b. **"Learning is about action. We need to experiment more, trying out new ways of getting things done."**

Figure 12.10 shows Confidence Intervals for the Organisational results.

Despite the large standard deviation involved, Formway Furniture has no overlap with SWDC, Unichem or Skill New Zealand, with people at Formway more likely to value Reflection. This difference is also evident in the Logistical Regression results shown in Table 12.9.

Figure 12.10: Confidence Intervals for Organisations—Dilemma 6

Percent Answering A: Reflection

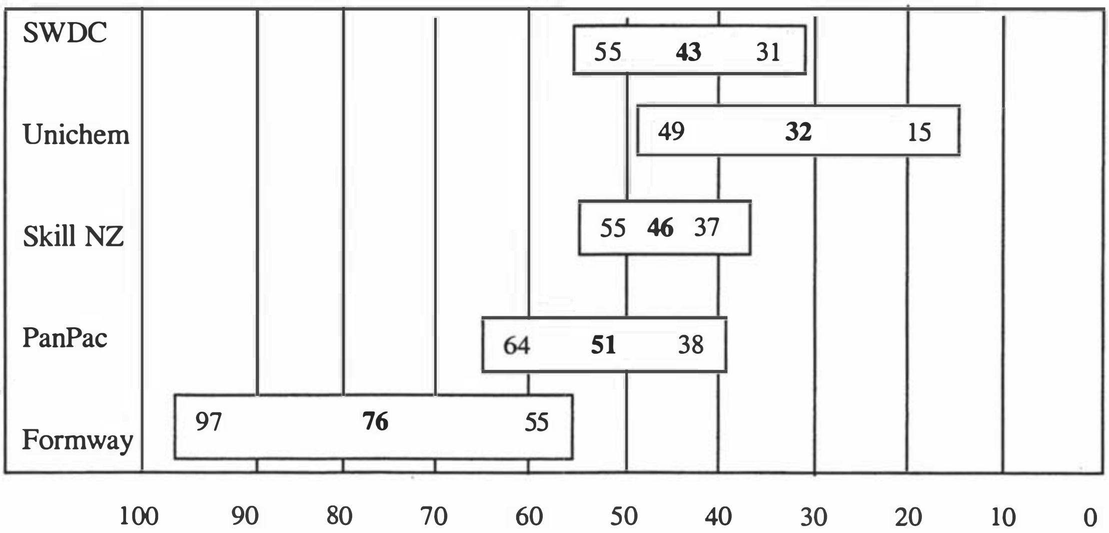


Table 12.9: Logistical Regression for Dilemma 6

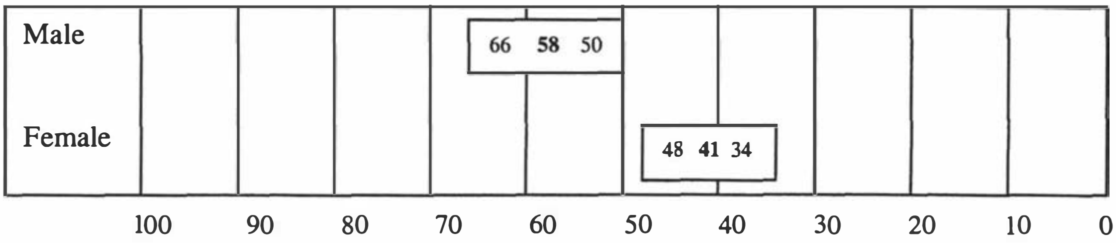
Variable	Significance in Saturated Model	Regression Coefficient (B)	Significance of Regression Coefficient	Ranking in Forward Regression
Organisation	.013			2
SWDC	.517			
Unichem	.052	.425	.503	
Pan Pac	.958			
Formway	.023	-.805	.287	
Gender	.002	.526	.113	1
Year of Birth	.040	.010	.447	
Ethnicity	.222			
Function	.341			
Time Served	.028	-.001	.950	
Role	.233			

A number of differences featured in the regression, though none with regression coefficients that reached the .050 significance level. Both Year of Birth and Time Served were significant predictors of how people would resolve the dilemma. Younger respondents were more likely to answer ‘b’, thus valuing action over reflection. And the longer people had served in an organisation the more likely they were to value ‘a’ reflection. It is likely that Time Served is linked to age in this regard.

Gender was a significant predictor of how people would answer with females more likely to answer ‘b’—Action—than males. Figure 12.11 shows the Confidence Intervals associated with gender, which confirms that the males in our study were more likely to value reflection than the females.

Figure 12.11: Confidence Intervals for Gender—Dilemma 6

Percent Answering A: Reflection



12.9 Inclusion versus Voluntary

The dilemma was presented as follows:

Managers in an organisation find that a few people do not want to take part in learning activities the Chief Executive considers critical for future success. Should managers:

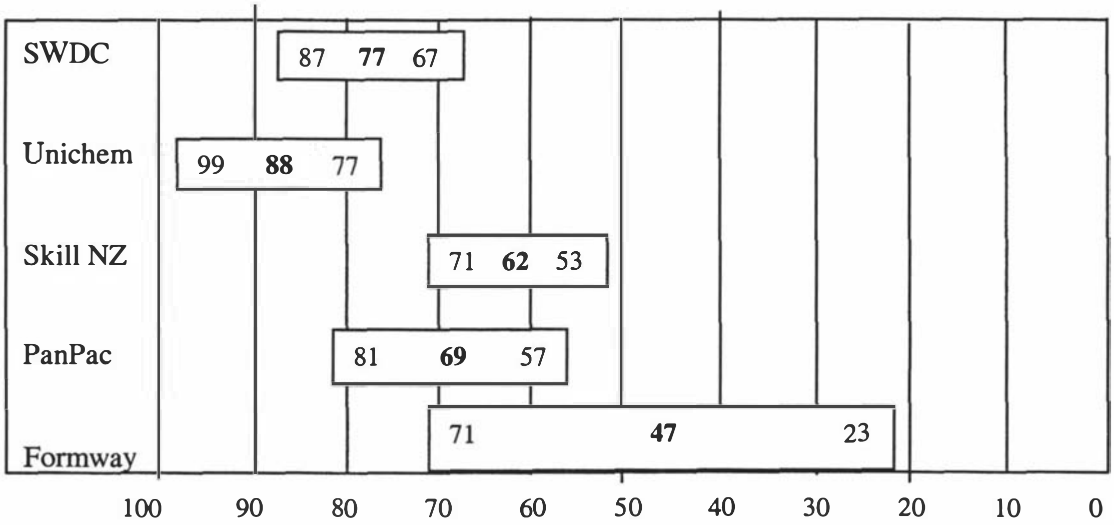
a. Find ways to ensure that everyone takes part?

b. Let people choose for themselves if they take part?

Figure 12.12 shows the Confidence Intervals for the Organisational results on this dilemma. While a majority of people in four of the five organisations valued inclusion, people at Unichem were the most likely to resolve the dilemma this way.

Figure 12.12: Confidence Intervals for Organisations—Dilemma 7

Percent Answering A: Inclusion



The Logistical Regression results shown in Table 12.10 confirm the influence of Organisation membership on responses to this question. The spread of results across the range of organisations meant that there was a significant difference between three organisations and Pan Pac, with SWDC just outside the significance level. None of the other variables achieved the .050 level of significance, though Time Served was approaching significance.

Table 12.10: Logistical Regression for Dilemma 7

Variable	Significance in Saturated Model	Regression Coefficient (B)	Significance of Regression Coefficient	Ranking in Forward Regression
Organisation	.005			1
SWDC	.058	-.875	.150	
Unichem	.012	-1.714	.074	
Skill NZ	.020	.293	.592	
Formway	.035	.636	.286	
Gender	.754			
Year of Birth	.398			
Ethnicity	.363			
Function	.340			
Time Served	.090			
Role	.664			

12.10 Flexibility versus Consistency

The dilemma was presented as follows:

Learning is important for our organisation because it helps us to:

a. Be more flexible, taking on new challenges and finding innovative solutions to problems that arise.

b. Be more consistent, getting better at what we do.

As shown in Figure 12.13 all of the organisations had means of 70% or greater, perhaps indicating that the New Zealand macro-culture values flexibility over consistency. We can also see that there is no overlap between Skill New Zealand and Pan Pac, indicating that Skill New Zealand has a particularly strong preference for flexibility.

Table 12.11 shows the results of the Logistical Regression. Significant differences were found for 3 organisations when compared with Formway Furniture in the saturated model. Organisation was the only variable to be ranked in the Forward Regression.

Gender was also found to be significant in predicting peoples responses, with females more likely to value flexibility. While 87% of females answered 'a' compared with 77% of males, there was a small overlap (2%) of Confidence Intervals.

Figure 12.13: Confidence Intervals for Organisations—Dilemma 8

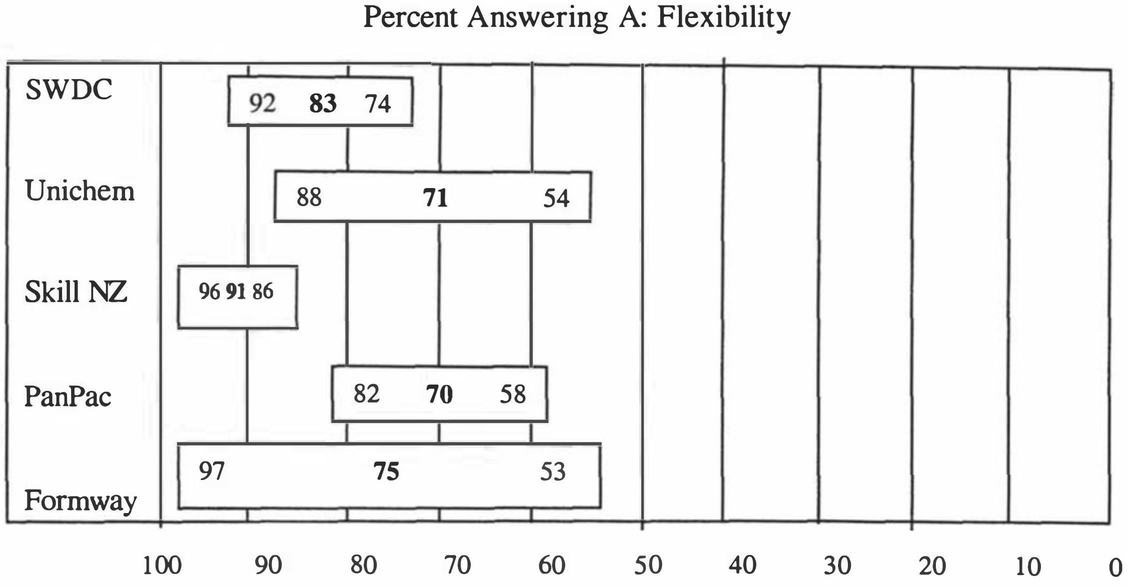


Table 12.11: Logistical Regression for Dilemma 8

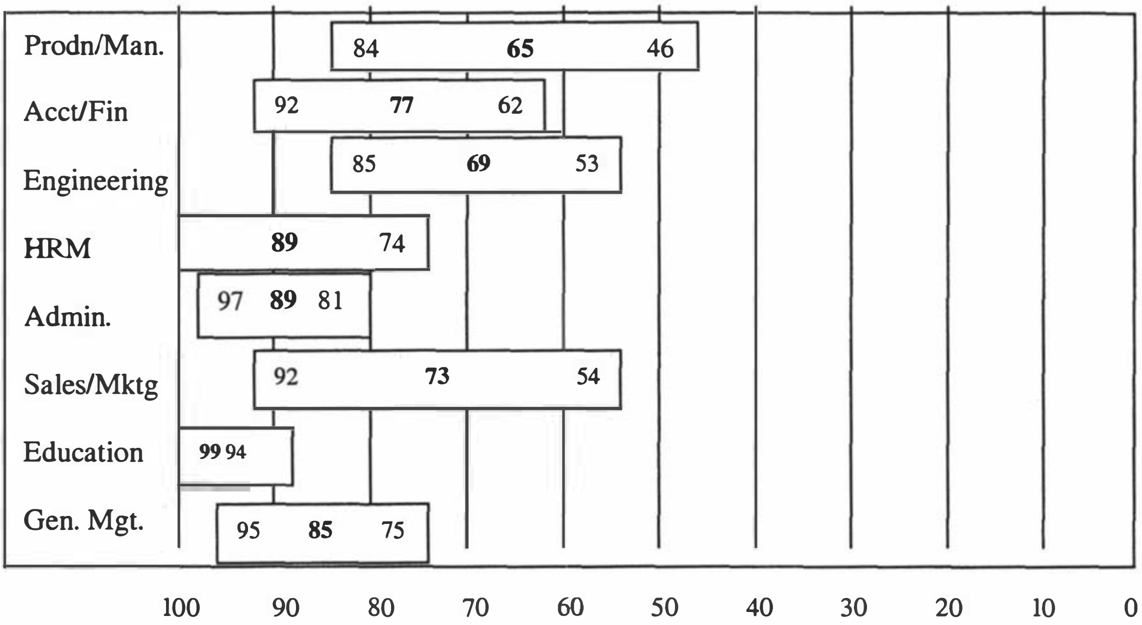
Variable	Significance in Saturated Model	Regression Coefficient (B)	Significance of Regression Coefficient	Ranking in Forward Regression
Organisation	.004			1
SWDC	.627			
Unichem	.036	1.130	.263	
Skill NZ	.004	.265	.774	
Pan Pac	.004	.749	.286	
Gender	.018	-.236	.616	
Year of Birth	.278			
Ethnicity	.125			
Function	.024			
Production/Man.	.008	1.518	.098	
Engineering	.024	1.117	.192	
Time Served	.044	.007	.105	
Role	.633			

Time Served also predicted answers in the saturated model; people serving longer were more likely to value consistency. As with the other variables for this dilemma the regression coefficient for Time Served did not reach a .050 significance level.

Two functions, Production/Manufacturing and Engineering were significantly different from General Management, with people in those functions more likely to value consistency. The Confidence Intervals for Functions are shown in Figure 12.14. While the Confidence Intervals of Production/Manufacturing and Engineering overlap with most other functions, there is no overlap with Education.

Figure 12.14: Confidence Intervals for Functions—Dilemma 8

Percent Answering A: Flexible



12.11 Performance versus Learning

The dilemma was presented as follows:

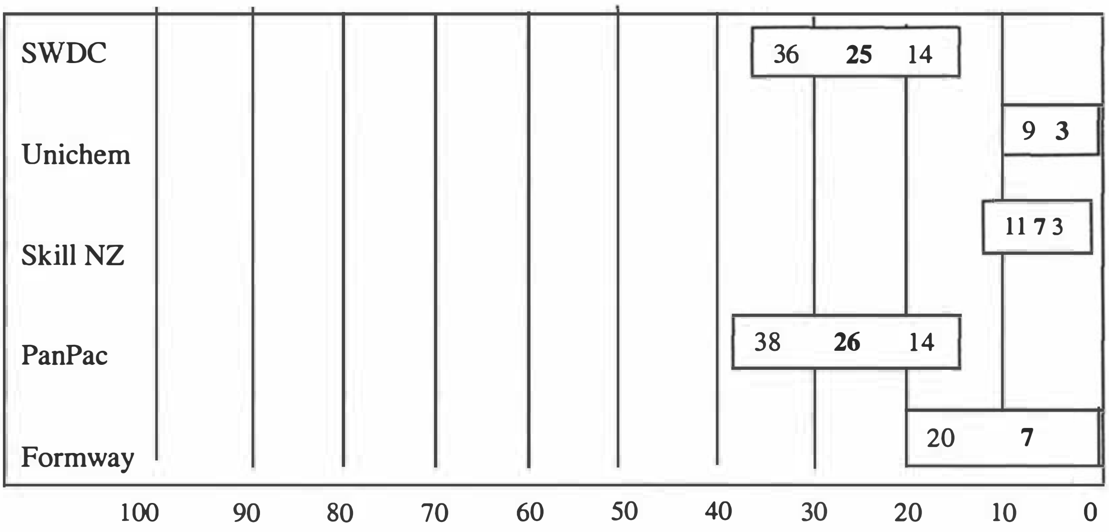
Which is most true of your organisation?

a. **We believe that failure is unacceptable. We operate in an environment where we need to get things right. Performance is paramount.**

b. **We believe that failure is an important part of learning, showing us how we can improve. We try to make the environment one where it is safe to try things, even when they don't work. Learning is the key to success.**

Figure 12.15: Confidence Intervals for Organisations—Dilemma 9

Percent Answering A: Performance



Organisational responses fell within a narrow range of means. Figure 12.15 shows the Confidence Intervals for Organisations. Despite the small range, Confidence Intervals for SWDC and Pan Pac did not overlap with Unichem and Skill New Zealand.

Table 12.12: Logistical Regression for Dilemma 9

Variable	Significance in Saturated Model	Regression Coefficient (B)	Significance of Regression Coefficient	Ranking in Forward Regression
Organisation	.000			1
SWDC	.074	-1.800	.003	
Unichem	.035	6.232	.836	
Pan Pac	.060	-1.545	.036	
Formway	.251			
Gender	.317			
Year of Birth	.644			
Ethnicity	.393			
Function	.372			
Sales/Mktg	.032	7.795	.804	
Time Served	.094	-.044	.147	
Role	.024			
Engineer	.017	-.908	.067	

The results of the Logistical Regression for this dilemma, shown in Table 12.12, also highlighted these differences in the Organisational variable. Both SWDC and Pan Pac, when compared with Skill New Zealand, had regression coefficients that achieved the .050 significance level. Organisation was the only variable to be ranked in the forward regression. Sales/Marketing was the only function useful in predicting how people would resolve the dilemma, with people from this function more likely to answer ‘b’ than people in General Management.

The Logistical Regression identified a difference between responses from people in an Engineering role in their organisation and those in the Operator role (the fixed category). 12% of those identifying themselves as Operators answered ‘a’, compared with 23% of Engineers and 22% of Executives. The Confidence Intervals for the three roles overlapped.

12.12 Customers versus Aspirations

The dilemma was presented as follows:

Your organisation is introducing a new product that represents a major move forward from what you have offered in the past. You are still working hard to learn all you can about the product and how customers can get the most from it.

An important client is insistent, however that you supply the previous model—the one the customer is most familiar with. Two managers disagree on the approach you should take. Which do you agree with?

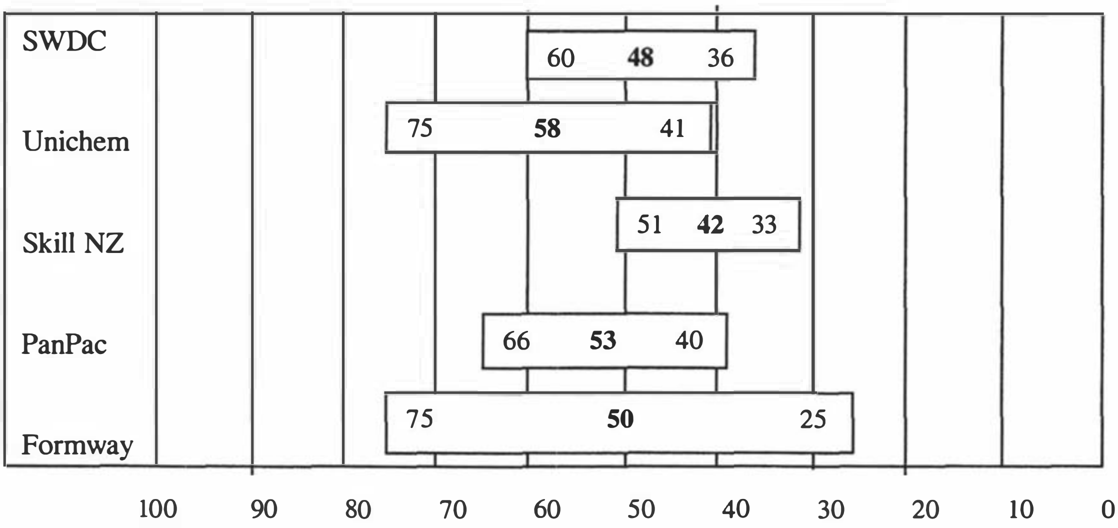
a. One says, "Our success depends on giving customers what they want. We should supply the old product."

b. Another says, "We need to do what we can to get this customer to move on to the new product so we can focus on learning about what is new."

As Figure 12.16 shows, Confidence Intervals for the 5 organisations all overlapped.

Figure 12.16 Confidence Intervals for Organisations—Dilemma 10

Percent Answering A: Customers



The Logistical Regression results, shown in Table 12.13, confirmed that differences between organisations on this dilemma were not significant.

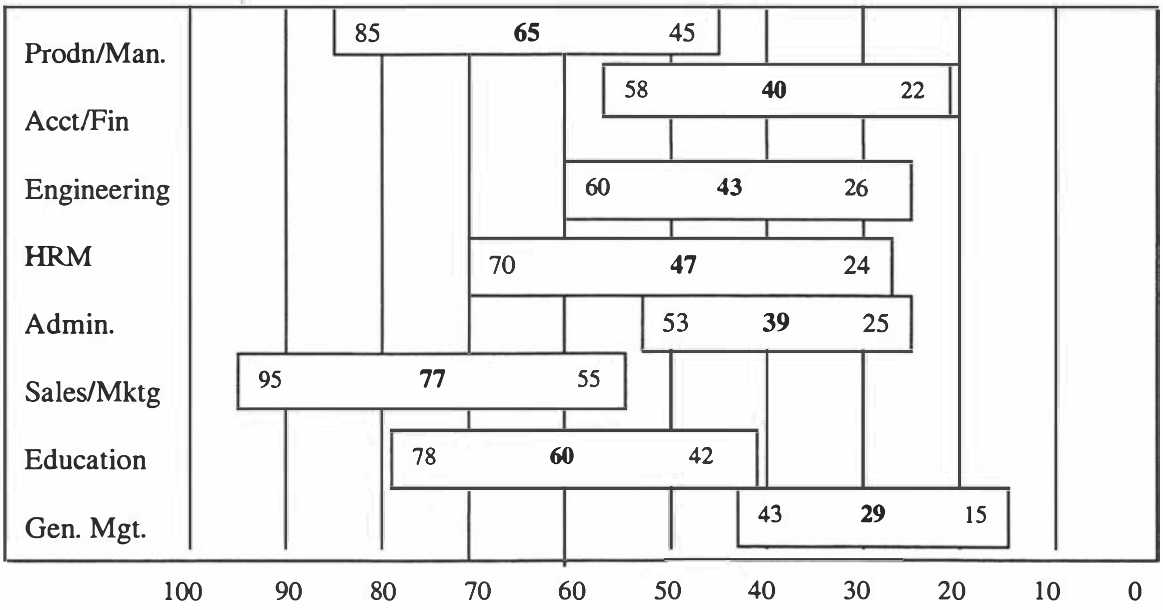
Table 12.13: Logistical Regression for Dilemma 10

Variable	Significance in Saturated Model	Regression Coefficient (B)	Significance of Regression Coefficient	Ranking in Forward Regression
Organisation	.711			
Gender	.597			
Year of Birth	.141			
Ethnicity	.355			
Function	.017			1
Production/Man.	.075	-1.347	.098	
Sales/Mktg	.012	-2.929	.002	
Time Served	.058	-.029	.181	
Role	.068			
Engineer	.059	.207	.539	

Time Served in the organisation was approaching significance in the saturated model, as was the difference between the Engineer and Operator roles. The only variable to be ranked in the Forward Regression, however, was Function, with the Sales/Marketing function significantly different from General Management in the saturated model and in terms of its regression coefficient. Figure 12.17 shows the Confidence Intervals for the functions analysed in this study.

Figure 12.17: Confidence Intervals for Functions—Dilemma 10

Percent Answering A: Customers



The Confidence Intervals indicate that people in General Management are most likely to value the aspirations of the organisation ahead of the demands of customers. The Confidence Intervals for Production/Manufacturing and Sales/Marketing functions do not overlap with General Management, while there is a 1% overlap with Education.

12.13 Getting Work Out versus Orienting New People

The dilemma was presented as follows:

When someone new joins a work team they need to learn about the team while the team needs to continue to perform. Which of the following do you agree with?

a. Getting the work out is a priority. Helping the new person learn has to be fitted around the need to maintain team performance.

b. Helping new people learn about the team and the part they play is the priority. Sometimes performance has to suffer so new people can learn.

Confidence Intervals for the organisations are shown in Figure 12.18. While all overlap, Unichem has only a 4% overlap with SWDC.

Figure 12.18: Confidence Intervals for Organisations—Dilemma 11

Percent Answering A: Getting Work Out

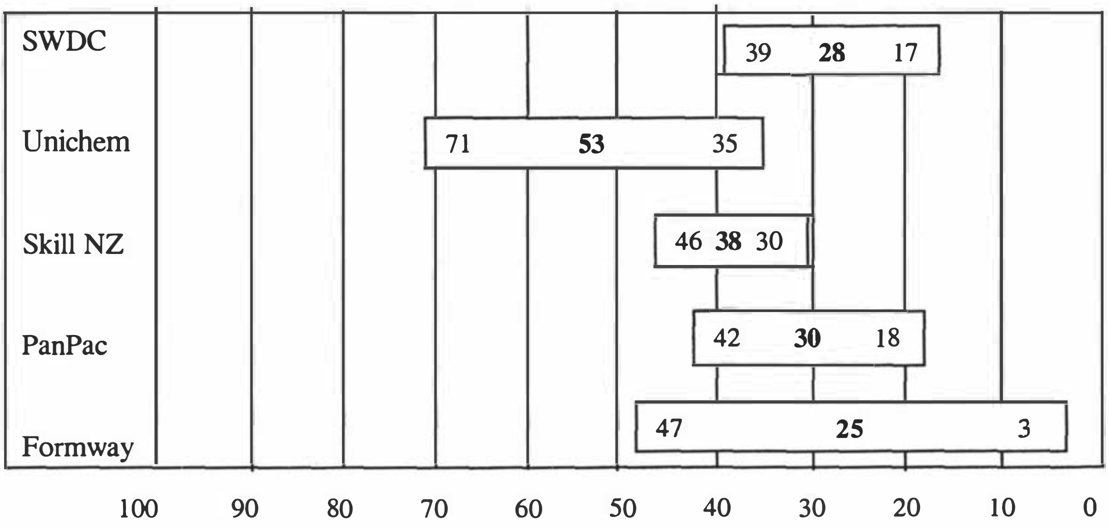


Table 12.14 shows the results of the Logistical Regression for the dilemma. Once again, Organisation was the first ranked variable in the Forward Regression. Responses of people at Unichem were significantly different from those at Pan Pac, the fixed category, in the saturated model.

Table 12.14: Logistical Regression for Dilemma 11

Variable	Significance in Saturated Model	Regression Coefficient (B)	Significance of Regression Coefficient	Ranking in Forward Regression
Organisation	.002			1
SWDC	.234			
Unichem	.002	-.433	.538	
Skill NZ	.147			
Formway	.494			
Gender	.346			
Year of Birth	.244	1.208	.125	
Ethnicity	.055			
Maori	.043	1.705	.010	
Function	.839			
Time Served	.329			
Role	.430			

The other significant variable in the analysis was Ethnicity. Compared with NZ Europeans (the fixed category) of whom 30% answered ‘a’, Pacific Islanders (20%) were more likely to put orienting new people ahead of getting work out, where Maori (45%) were less likely. The predictive power of the Maori ethnic grouping was significant for both the saturated model and the Regression Coefficient, with Maori more likely to value getting work out ahead of orienting new people.

12.14 Instrumental versus Integrative

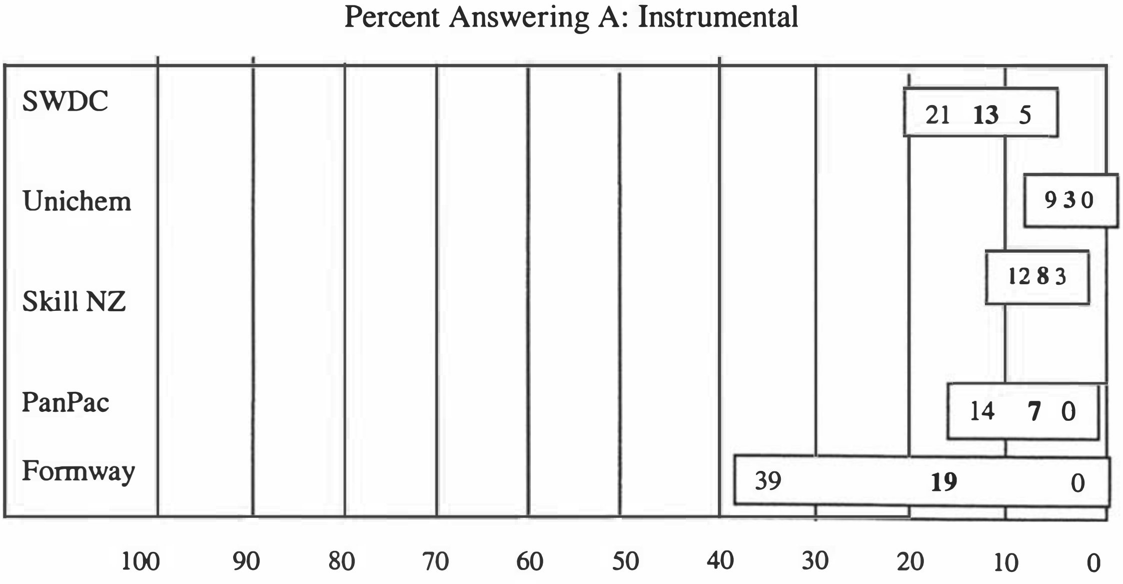
The dilemma was presented as follows:

Two managers were discussing the part learning plays in their organisation. Which do you agree with?

a. **One said, “Learning is a means to an end. We should invest in learning so long as it helps us move toward our vision.”**
b. **Another said, “Learning is an integral part of what we do. We should try to make sure that learning is built into all aspects of our work.”**

Figure 12.19 shows the Confidence Intervals for Organisations in the study. This dilemma had the smallest range of responses in the study: less than 20% of people in each of the organisations chose the ‘a’ response, showing a preference for having learning as an integrated part of what they do, rather than viewing it as instrumental in achieving the organisation’s vision. All of the Confidence Intervals for organisations overlapped.

Figure 12.19: Confidence Intervals for Organisations—Dilemma 12



As Table 12.15 indicates, none of the variables achieved the .050 level of significance in predicting responses, and none were included in the Forward Regression model.

Table 12.15: Logistical Regression for Dilemma 12

Variable	Significance in Saturated Model	Regression Coefficient (B)	Significance of Regression Coefficient	Ranking in Forward Regression
Organisation	.307			
Gender	.749			
Year of Birth	.515			
Ethnicity	.145			
Function	.829			
Time Served	.900			
Role	.911			

12.15 Localness versus Aspirations

The dilemma was presented as follows:

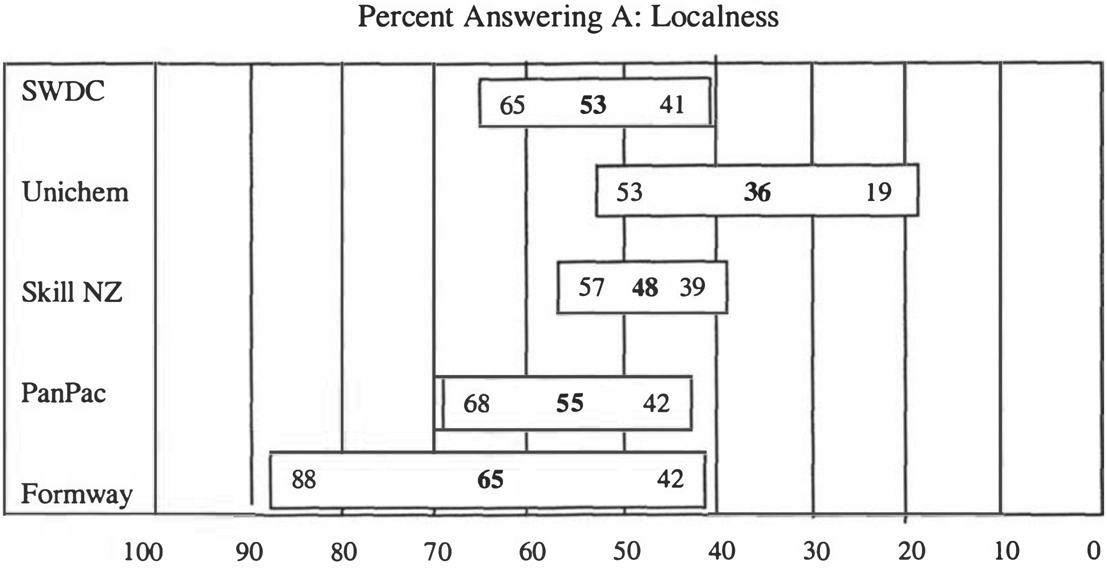
Two managers were discussing their organisation's vision. Which do you agree with?

a. One said, "We need to limit what we strive for. We need to make sure that our success isn't at the expense of the community we work in."

b. Another said, "It's a mistake to be constrained by local conditions. We need to set our sights as high as we can, even if we outgrow our community."

Figure 12.20 shows the Confidence intervals for organisations in the study. All of the Confidence Intervals had some degree of overlap.

Figure 12.20 Confidence Intervals for Organisations—Dilemma 13



The results of the Logistical Regression are shown in Table 12.16. None of the variables achieved significance in their ability to predict the response of people to the dilemma. This was with the exception of one functional category: Human Resource Management. People within the HRM function were significantly more likely than those in General Management to value localness ahead of the aspirations. Despite this, no variables were sufficiently predictive to be included in the Forward Regression model.

Table 12.16: Logistical Regression for Dilemma 13

Variable	Significance in Saturated Model	Regression Coefficient (B)	Significance of Regression Coefficient	Ranking in Forward Regression
Organisation	.473			
Gender	.960			
Year of Birth	.528			
Ethnicity	.649			
Function	.262			
HRM	.050	-2.097	.003	
Time Served	.492			
Role	.630			

Confidence Intervals for the functions included in the study confirmed that people in Human Resource Management, with 72% answering ‘a’, were more likely to value localness over organisational aspirations, than people in General Management, where 33% answered ‘a’. Other Confidence Intervals involving functions overlapped.

12.16 Self-Reliance versus Knowlegde Sharing

The dilemma was presented as follows:

Is it more important for people to:

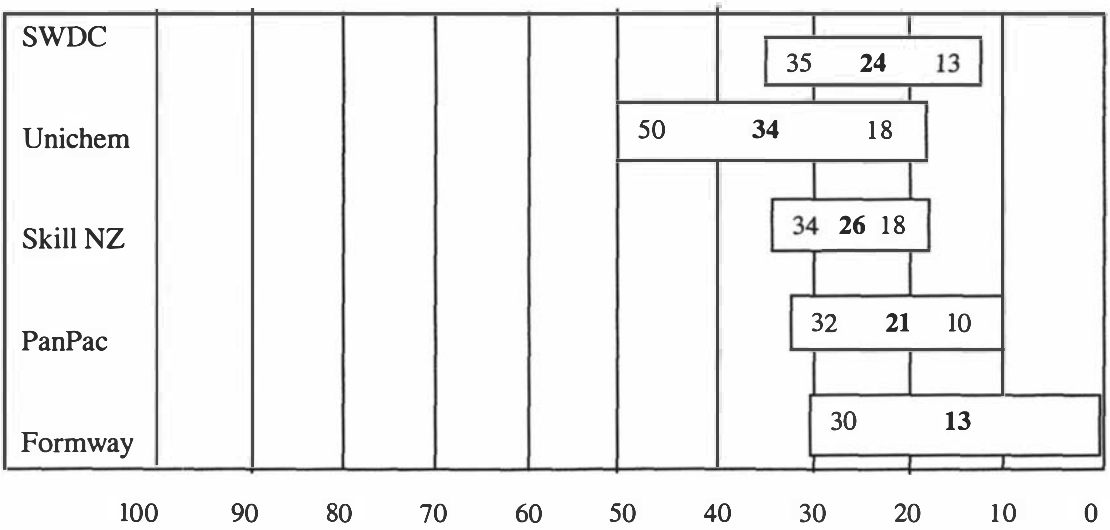
a. **Learn to be self-reliant, building their knowledge and skills so that they have more to offer an organisation?**

b. **Learn to contribute to the success of those around them, freely exchanging knowledge with others?**

People in each of the organisations in the study showed a preference for Knowledge Sharing over Self Reliance. Confidence Intervals for the organisations in the study overlapped one another, as shown in Figure 12.21.

Figure 12.21: Confidence Intervals for Organisations—Dilemma 14

Percent Answering A: Self Reliance



None of the variables used in the Logistical Regression were useful in predicting the response of people to this dilemma, as shown in Table 12.17. No variables were included in the Forward Regression model.

Table 12.17: Logistical Regression for Dilemma 14

Variable	Significance in Saturated Model	Regression Coefficient (B)	Significance of Regression Coefficient	Ranking in Forward Regression
Organisation	.612			
Gender	.296			
Year of Birth	.796			
Ethnicity	.385			
Function	.658			
Time Served	.495			
Role	.293			

12.17 Innovation versus Mastery

This, the final dilemma, was presented as follows:

Two managers were discussing the sort of learning that was most important for their organisation. Which do you agree with?

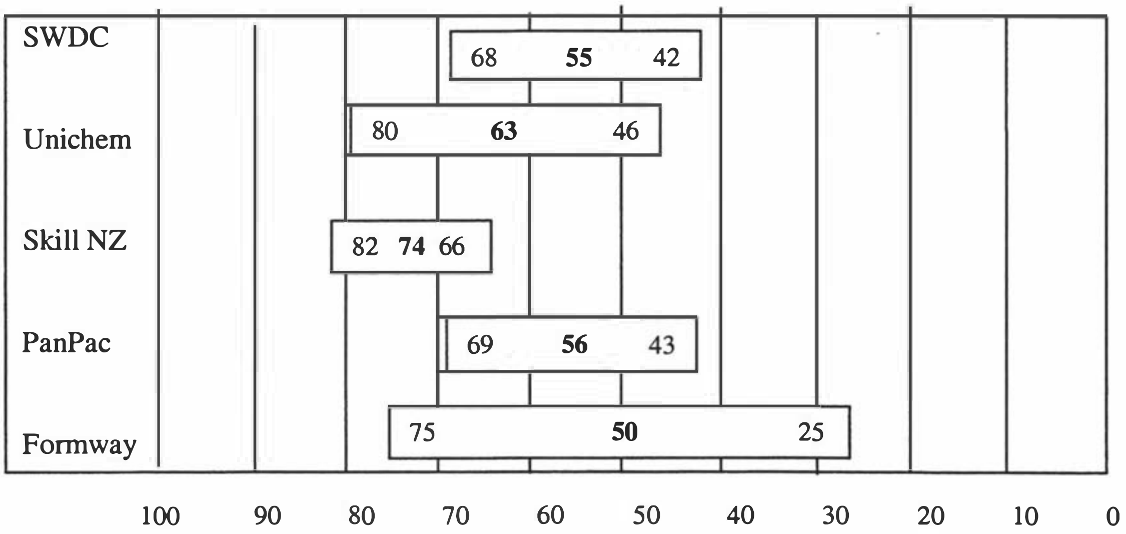
a. **One said, "People are really learning when they innovate. We need people to be experimental, trying new things."**

b. **Another said, "Real learning means gaining mastery of something. We need to be assured people are truly capable of doing their work well."**

As shown in Figure 12.22 people in all organisations in the study showed a preference for valuing innovation over mastery. Skill New Zealand had the highest percentage of people valuing innovation over mastery. While Skill New Zealand's Confidence Interval overlapped with those of the other organisations, in the cases of South Waikato District Council (2%) and Pan Pac (3%) the overlaps were small.

Figure 12.22: Confidence Intervals for Organisations—Dilemma 15

Percent Answering A: Innovation



The Logistical Regression showed a number of variables that were significant in the saturated model; that is, they were associated with predicting people's responses for the dilemma. The results are shown in Table 12.18. In the saturated model a significant difference was found between Skill New Zealand and the fixed category, Pan Pac. This suggests that the regression would also find Skill New Zealand to be different to South Waikato District Council, which had a lower mean and smaller Confidence Interval than Pan Pac.

Year of Birth was the variable most useful in predicting people's response to this dilemma. As Year of Birth increased people were more likely to answer 'a'. In other words, younger people were more likely to value innovation ahead of mastery. The regression coefficient was significant at the .050 level and the variable was ranked first in the Forward Regression.

Gender was significant in the saturated model. Females (70%) were more likely to value innovation over mastery than males (58%), though the Confidence Intervals had a 3% overlap. Time served in the organisation was significant in the saturated model.

The regression coefficient suggested that longer serving employees were more likely to value innovation, but this coefficient was not significant.

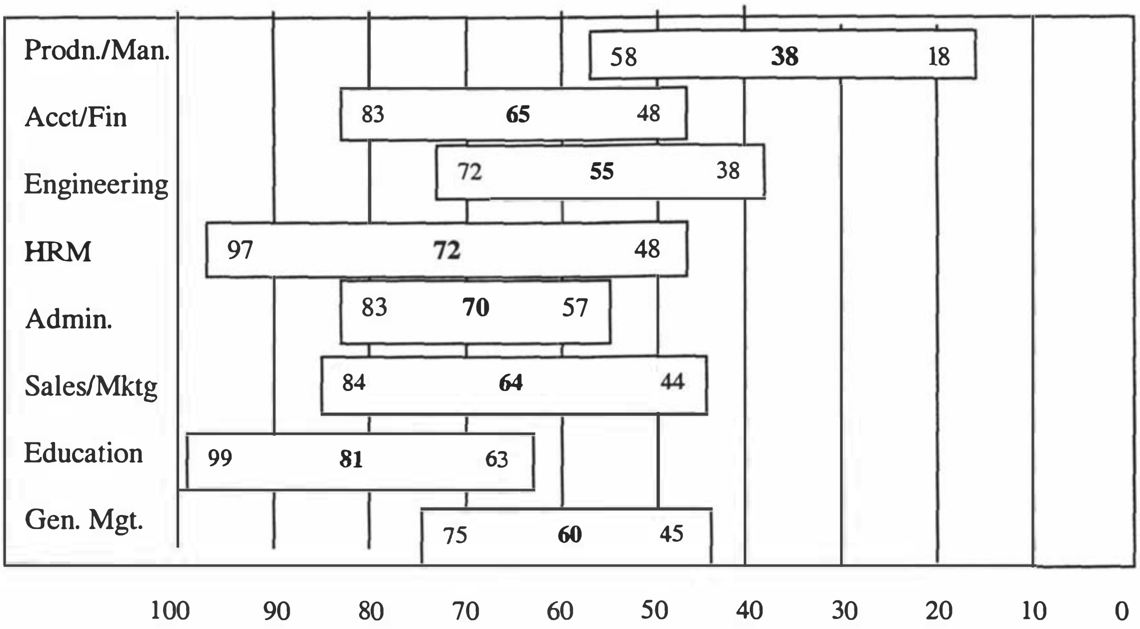
Table 12.18: Logistical Regression for Dilemma 15

Variable	Significance in Saturated Model	Regression Coefficient (B)	Significance of Regression Coefficient	Ranking in Forward Regression
Organisation	.043			
SWDC	.059	.645	.236	
Unichem	.723			
Skill NZ	.010	.032	.953	
Formway	.194			
Gender	.009	-.043	.904	
Year of Birth	.005	-.032	.031	1
Ethnicity	.191			
Function	.149			
Production/Man.	.003	1.703	.021	
Time Served	.009	-.003	.891	
Role	.349			

In regard to functions, people in Production/Manufacturing were more likely to value mastery over innovation that people in General Management. Confidence Intervals for Functions are shown in Figure 12.23.

Figure 12.23: Confidence Intervals for Functions—Dilemma 15

Percent Answering A: Innovation



As the Confidence Intervals indicate, people in Production/Manufacturing are more likely to value mastery over innovation, than are people in Education. The Logistical Regression indicated a significant difference between Production/Manufacturing and General Management, so it is noteworthy that four further functions had higher percentages responding 'a' than General Management. Those were HRM, Administration, Accounting/Finance and Sales/Marketing.

12.18 Conclusions

Table 12.19 shows the results of the various analyses carried out on responses to the dilemmas, as outlined earlier in this chapter. A grade has been given to indicate the strength of the finding in relation to each of the variables considered. The basis for the grades is shown in the Grading Key attached to the table.

Table 12.19 Comparison of Dilemma Results

Dilemma	Orgn.	Gender	Age	Ethnic.	Function	Service	Role
1	C			A	A		
2	D		A				
3					B	A	
4	B	C					
5	A				C		
6	B	A	C			C	
7	A						
8	A	D			C	D	
9	A				D		C
10					A		
11	B			D			
12							
13					C		
14							
15	C	D	A		C	D	

Grading Key:

A: The variable is significant (to .050 level) in the Saturated Model; has an associated Regression Coefficient (that is, for the variable itself or for a category) that is significant; is ranked in the Forward Regression; and, where appropriate, has categories with non-overlapping Confidence Intervals.

B: Variable has an associated, significant Regression Coefficient, and has categories with non-overlapping Confidence Intervals.

C: Variable, or an associated category, is significant in the Saturated Model and, where appropriate, has categories with no overlap of Confidence Intervals.

D: Variable, or an associated category, is trending towards significance in the Saturated Model and, where appropriate, has categories with a small (less than 5%) overlap of Confidence Intervals.

Immediately evident from Table 12.19 is the dominance of Organisation as a variable in predicting how people will resolve dilemmas. On 10 of the 15 dilemmas the Organisation variable featured in the analysis. This supports the concept fundamental to this study: that organisations develop a 'learning culture.' That is, people in organisations develop a set of assumptions about what learning is and how it should take place, and that these assumptions characterise the organisation. The learning culture of an organisation is part of what its identity, marking it as different from other organisational communities.

This thesis aims to develop a measurement system for describing Learning Organisations. We have attempted to do so using learning dilemmas, based on the assumptions that (1) a learning culture is fundamental to Learning Organisations, and (2) a culture is a pattern of dilemma resolution within a community. On the basis of these results of this pilot study, we can conclude that the instrument is able to establish patterns of dilemma resolution in organisational communities.

Table 12.19 shows that a number of dilemmas did not produce distinctions. Dilemmas 4, 11, 12, 13, and 14 failed to produce an 'A' grade distinction on any of the variables used in the study. We will review the quality of each dilemma in the next chapter.

12.19 Summary

In order to test the usefulness of the dilemma-based instrument a survey was conducted of people from 5 organisations. These organisations were involved to varying extents in learning related activities. This chapter has presented an analysis of the survey responses. Differences between organisations were examined using confidence intervals. Logistical Regression was used as a secondary method for establishing differences between organisations and to identify the influence of demographic variables.

The instrument was able to chart differences in the way organisational communities resolved dilemmas. This provides us with a basis for a measurement system that can be used to describe Learning Organisations.

While we have established that the instrument was able to make distinctions between organisations, further analysis is needed to test the construct validity of the instrument. The next chapter will consider this issue.

Addendum

For this analysis the statistical approach taken when comparing organisations was relatively conservative. A more powerful procedure would have been to use the data at the individual level with Maximum Likelihood Estimator procedure for logistic estimation. This would have maximised the study's degrees of freedom and could have produced more accurate probability estimates of likely choices.

Chapter 13: Reviewing Dilemmas

Earlier chapters have seen the development of a dilemma-based instrument for charting an organisation's learning culture, and the use of the instrument in a survey of five organisations. In this chapter we examine the dilemmas making up the instrument, considering the effectiveness of each dilemma in contributing to a description of a learning organisation. In this way we will be assessing the construct validity of the instrument. Construct validity refers to the degree that a test or instrument measures what we want to measure, a judgement inferred from the weight of research evidence (Guion, 1985).

To some extent Dilemma Methodology generates its own construct validity. Culture is, by definition, a pattern of assumptions guiding the resolution of pertinent dilemmas within a community. If we have sound reasons for saying that dilemmas are pertinent to the subject at hand—in the case of this research, to the understanding of learning in organisations—then the responses we get are a direct insight into a community's culture. At the same time, the danger exists that in the process of constructing the instrument, dilemmas have been worded in ways that may distort the description of organisations that result from the survey.

Dilemmas that produce a limited range of responses and fail to make useful distinctions between communities are of little value to us. Given that we are defining culture as a collection of differences, a dilemma that does not produce differences will not help us in describing organisational cultures.

In this chapter we will consider whether dilemmas made distinctions between identified subcultures within the sample. We review each of the dilemmas used and identify those that have failed to produce useful distinctions. We discuss reasons why these dilemmas may have 'failed'. We then use research evidence to determine which is the most likely cause in each case. Further, we will compare survey results with data from interviews with executives in three organisations taking part in the study. This discussion forms the basis for constructing a second version of the instrument.

13.1 Match with Subcultures

In Chapter 4 we discussed patterns of dilemma resolution within a variety of subcultures. These subcultures were established as variables in our analysis of survey results. One way to test construct validity of the instrument is to consider the question:

To what extent do the results for other variables match what we might expect? We will consider each of the variables in turn.

13.1.1 Gender: Table 13.1 shows the dilemmas associated with gender differences. Each of the dilemmas is presented with the more 'male' value to the right and the 'female' to the left. This does not necessarily indicate that a majority of males chose one particular value ahead of its opposite. Rather, it indicates that a greater percentage of males chose that value than females.

Table 13.1 Gender and Learning Values

Female	Male
Emotionally Engaged	Emotionally Neutral
Action	Reflection
Flexibility	Consistency
Innovation	Mastery

Emotional Engagement, Flexibility and Innovation are all values we might expect to be more feminine than masculine, based on literature relating to gender differences as outlined in Chapter 4. Some authors link these values to 'right brain', intuitive processes more commonly associated with females than males. The link between Reflection and males is less direct and perhaps less expected. Interestingly, the Method of Triads model, discussed in Appendix 7 placed 'Action' very close to the other three 'female' values, while 'Reflection' was not proximate to the other 'male' values. The findings related to gender thus give support to the construct validity of the instrument.

13.1.2 Age: Table 13.2 shows the dilemma results of the survey related to Age. Again, the table shows the general direction of the values associated with age, rather than whether people of a particular age are more likely to choose one value ahead of another.

Table 13.2 Age and Learning Values

Younger ← Age	→ Older
Balanced Life	Commitment to Organisation
Action	Reflection
Innovation	Mastery

These results are also in line with what might be expected. Commitment, Reflection and Mastery are values associated with mature or stable systems, and we would reasonably assume that they would be associated with older respondents. These results, therefore, also support the construct validity of the instrument.

13.1.3 Ethnicity: Table 13.3 shows dilemma results of the survey related to Ethnicity. Because significant differences were found between the New Zealand European and Maori group, the table focuses on those results.

Table 13.3 Ethnicity and Learning Values

NZ European/Pakeha	Maori
Technical	Social
Orienting New People	Getting Work Out

The finding that New Zealand European respondents are more likely than Maori to value Technical skills ahead of Social skills is in keeping with other cultural data. We could expect that Maori would be more likely to take an integrative view where New Zealand European (whose roots are primarily British) would be more inclined toward an analytical view. This finding, then, supports the construct validity of the dilemma.

The second finding was less expected. It might have been expected that Maori would be more communitarian than New Zealand European, therefore more likely as a group to orient new people rather than focus on getting work out. Conversely, it could be that Maori are more ascriptive than New Zealand European, and consequently less inclined to sacrifice the performance of the organisational community as a whole for new members who are yet to establish any status within the community. More work would need to be done to understand how the dilemma was understood by respondents before a judgement could be made on its construct validity.

13.1.4 Function: A number of differences were found between functional groups in the study. Table 13.4 summarises differences between General Management and the three functions with two or more significant differences: Production/Manufacturing, Engineering, and Sales/Marketing.

In comparison with respondents from Production/Manufacturing those in General Management were more likely to value the aspirations of the organisation over the specific demands of customers, and to value innovation over mastery. Both results suggest that General Management is a more integrative and strategically focused discipline than Production/Manufacturing, and are thus in line with what might be expected.

Similarly, respondents from Engineering were more likely to put Technical skills ahead of Social, and Mastery ahead of Innovation than those in General Management. This result is in line with the expectation that General Management is a more integrative function than Engineering.

Table 13.4 Function and Learning Values

General Management	Production/Manufacturing
Aspiration	Customers
Innovation	Mastery

General Management	Engineering
Social	Technical
Flexibility	Consistency

General Management	Sales/Marketing
Social	Technical
Environment	Systems
Performance	Learning
Aspirations	Customers

Sales/Marketing respondents also gave evidence of a more analytical orientation than those in General Management with their preference for Technical Skills over Social and for Systems over Environment. They were more likely to choose Learning ahead of Performance than General Managers, suggesting that they were strongly inclined to accept failure as a natural part of their work. And predictably, they were more likely to put the demands of customers ahead of the aspirations of the organisation than were the General Managers group.

In each of these functional areas results were in line with what might be reasonably expected. The results thus support the construct validity of the instrument.

13.1.5 Service: The results shown in Table 13.5 suggest that the longer people have served a particular organisation the more likely they are to choose Systems ahead of Environment, Reflection ahead of Action, Consistency ahead of Flexibility and Innovation ahead of Mastery. The first three of those results are in line with what might be expected if we assumed long service was linked with stability. That is, it is reasonable to think of long-serving employees as more likely to view learning as a reflective process of implementing practical changes to systems and thus enhancing the consistency of the organisation's performance.

Table 13.5 Service and Learning Values

Shorter ← Service	→ Longer
Environment	Systems
Action	Reflection
Flexibility	Consistency
Mastery	Innovation

It is less expected that longer serving employees would be more likely to value Innovation ahead of Mastery. It is noteworthy that this is the result with the smallest Regression Coefficient (.003). This means that an increase in the length of time served is associated with a very small increase in the likelihood of preferring Mastery; indeed the Regression Coefficient was not significant at the .050 level. Only the preference for Systems over Environment had a significant Regression Coefficient. These results do not add support to the construct validity of the instrument.

13.1.6 Role: Table 13.6 shows the result from the survey relevant to the Role variable. Respondents in the Engineering role were more likely to value Performance ahead of Learning than those in the Operator role.

Table 13.6 Role and Learning Values

Engineer	Operator
Performance	Learning

This is a result in line with what might be expected, given Schein's descriptions of the Engineer and Operator cultures. The Engineer role is associated with an analytical, mechanistic orientation that aims to eliminate error or failure. The Operator role has a more integrative, organic orientation, where it is more likely that failure would be accepted as a normal part of organisational life. This result thus supports the construct validity of the instrument.

13.1.7 Conclusion: As summarised in Table 13.7, this analysis of values associated with demographic variables has, in the main, supported the construct validity of the instrument. We can conclude that data from this study supports the construct validity of the instrument.

Table 13.7 Demographic Variables and Construct Validity

Demographic Variable	Supports Construct Validity?
Gender	Yes
Age	Yes
Ethnicity	In part: more research needed
Function	Yes
Service	No
Role	Yes

13.2 Troublesome Dilemmas

Given that the purpose of the dilemmas is to provide a means of describing differences between organisations, dilemmas that produced little difference between organisations in the study are troublesome. While each of the organisations was interested in learning, they were selected as a diverse group in order to produce differences. Further, each organisation comprised a diverse mix of individuals, differing around factors such as gender, function and age—variables already considered in the study—along with personality, communication styles and other variables we did not consider. Ideally, we want dilemmas to produce a diverse range of responses that enable differences to be charted.

Figure 13.1 uses a quadrant model to chart the dilemmas used in the study. The X axis considers the degree of diversity found among organisations. Diversity is considered high where there are non-overlapping Confidence Intervals along with a range of mean scores (percentage of respondents in the organisation answering 'a') greater than 20. The Y axis considers the degree of diversity found amongst individual respondents. Diversity is considered low where less than 25% of respondents chose one option of the dilemma.

The five dilemmas in the top-right quadrant of Figure 13.1 generated responses that had a high degree of individual diversity and enabled us to distinguish between organisations. The other dilemmas used in the instrument were more troublesome, in the sense that they lacked either individual diversity, organisational diversity or both.

Figure 13.1 Dilemma Diversity Quadrant

Individual Diversity / Organisational Diversity	Low	High
High	Systems—Environment Customer—Aspirations Work Out—Orienting Localness—Aspirations Innovation—Mastery	Technical—Social Neutral—Engaged Exec. Led—Community Reflection—Action Inclusion—Voluntary
Low	Balance—Commitment Instrumental—Integrative Self-Reliance—Knowledge Sharing	Flexibility—Consistency Perform—Learn

These are 'troublesome' in the sense that their inclusion in the survey is called into question by these results. We need to find other evidence to confirm or disconfirm the place of each in the instrument. Before considering further evidence, we should explore the question, What causes might lie behind the lack of diversity evident in some dilemmas?

Four causes suggest themselves; two relating to methodological error and two relating to the nature of dilemmas and Dilemma Methodology.

Firstly, some dilemmas may not give respondents sufficient opportunity to indicate what is distinctive about the culture of their organisation. As discussed in Chapter 11, in designing the instrument the choice was made to use a 2-option format rather than a 5-option format. This choice, while considered necessary in the process of development of the instrument, did mean that respondents had a limited number of responses available. They were able to indicate which item they valued ahead of the other, but where they could see a need for both values they could not indicate their preference for how the dilemma could be reconciled.

A second potential methodological error lies in the wording of the options. Although the dilemmas had been checked prior to the survey, as described in Chapter 11, the troublesome dilemmas may have had one option that was particularly unattractive to respondents. The nature of dilemmas should cause people to find unattractive those options that run counter to their values. However, it would be a methodological error if the wording of a dilemma caused people to find an option they valued unattractive. Wording could cause respondents to believe that the researcher would prefer them to answer in a particular way: that one option was the 'right' answer, though again, the nature of values will mean that one option should look more 'right' than the other.

The nature of cultural processes could also limit the range of responses generated. First among the cultural reasons is the macro-culture within which the survey took place. Each of the organisations taking part in the study was based in New Zealand, and most respondents were of New Zealand origin. It is likely that the New Zealand macro-culture will have a marked affect on how people resolve at least some of the dilemmas.

Finally, the nature of organisational learning may influence the way dilemmas are resolved. As people progress through life they follow a particular path that causes them to encounter dilemmas at different times. Adolescence involves unique dilemmas, as does marriage, parenthood and retirement. There is a degree of chaos involved in when and if people encounter particular dilemmas, but we can be reasonably confident that an adolescent will not encounter the unique dilemmas of a grandparent. In a similar way, we can imagine that organisations may encounter the learning dilemmas included in the instrument at different points in their journey along the path of becoming a learning organisation. Some dilemmas may only be pertinent to organisations after considerable time; perhaps once more fundamental dilemmas had been successfully reconciled.

To explore whether these different causes were operating we will examine the comments respondents made in completing the survey. Respondent's comments have been summarised for each dilemma, and are presented in Appendix 5.

Comments have been classified according to the Polarity Maps used in Chapters 6, 7, 9, and 10. When a respondent, for instance, chooses the 'a' option in a dilemma, they may give as a reason what they believe would be gained by 'a' or what might be lost by 'b'. A comment could also indicate that the respondent believes that the values represented in 'a' and 'b' options are complementary and can be reconciled. Some comments indicated that the dilemma represented an area of conflict. The respondent's comment might indicate that the organisation to which they belonged espoused one option but practised another, or that while the organisation valued one option the respondent personally valued the other. Finally, some comments indicated that the respondent thought the dilemma was flawed; either it was not a true dilemma or some aspects of its wording were inappropriate.

The Tables used in Appendix 5, therefore present comments in the following sections:

1. The upside of the 'a' option
2. The downside of the 'b' option
3. The upside of the 'b' option
4. The downside of the 'a' option
5. Values in the dilemma are complementary
6. Mismatch between values (e.g. Personal values and Organisational values)
7. Flaws in the dilemma

Sections are presented in this order so that reasons for answering 'a'—categories 1 and 2 above—are placed together, as are reasons for answering 'b'—categories 3 and 4.

What do we learn from an examination of the comments? I will start by making some general observations regarding the comments, then examine each of the dilemmas in turn.

Firstly, the vast majority of comments fitted into the polarity map format, represented by the first 6 categories listed above. Only 17 of 1,128 comments (1.5%) suggested that the dilemma concerned was flawed. This result suggests that wording of the dilemmas was not a major factor in peoples responses.

Exceptions to this may have been Dilemma 2: Balance versus Commitment, and Dilemma 9 Performing versus Learning. On Dilemma 2 two people (2%) indicated that they felt a mismatch between their personal values and the organisation's values. While representing a small proportion of the comments on these questions the comments drew to my attention that these dilemmas asked respondents to comment on the values of people in general, whereas other dilemmas asked about the respondent's personal values. The responses for these two dilemmas were relatively low in individual diversity. In part this may have been caused by the dilemmas allowing for a generalised response rather than a personal one. Further testing of the dilemmas would need to examine whether responses changed when people were asked about their personal values in these areas.

The comments indicated that there was strong support for the development of a 5-option version of the instrument. 511 of the 1,128 comments (45%) indicated that the values were complementary and that the respondent would have preferred an answer that enabled them to reconcile the values in some way. Interestingly, the comments indicated a variety of ways that reconciliation could be achieved and these suggestions can form the basis of the 5-option version of the instrument. Several of the comments to do with flaws also suggested that a 5-option instrument was needed, by referring to language used in the 2-option format as extreme. This reaction also suggests the respondents were looking to reconcile the dilemmas.

13.3 Dilemmas Reviewed

Having considered the general nature of the comments, I will review each of the dilemmas used in the survey, giving particular attention to those that could be considered 'troublesome' (see Figure 13.1).

13.3.1 Dilemma 1 Technical—Social: The inclusion of this dilemma in the instrument has been strongly supported. It was originally included because it surfaced in both the literature on learning organisations and in the Practitioner Workshops. There was a diverse range of responses, both individually and organisationally.

13.3.2 Dilemma 2 Balance—Commitment: This was a troublesome dilemma, in that there was little diversity amongst individuals and amongst organisations. Respondents consistently opted for the 'balanced life' option. The dilemma surfaced as a result of the Practitioners Workshops, where people from two of the participating organisations indicated that it was the basis of conflict over design of learning initiatives. Workshop participants suggested that initiatives often were designed on the assumption that people were deeply committed to the health of the organisation, when what they really sought was a quiet, balanced life. Responses supported the view that people, in the main, did value balance over commitment. Comments were also particularly one-sided, with 53% related to the upside of balance, and 10% related to the downside of commitment.

While the low diversity of responses does give rise to concern, there is a reasonable possibility that the responses reflect the New Zealand macro-culture. Cultural artifacts that give evidence of a New Zealand preference for balance over commitment include what is referred to as the “She’ll be right Attitude”: a belief that there is little point in upsetting yourself or those around you with over-concern for organisational imperatives, such as quality standards or deadlines.

This could be tested by extending the survey to organisations based in other nations, and by research that compared the responses of consultants to those of practitioners. As suggested earlier, the dilemma can also be reworded to examine the effect of respondent’s personal values.

13.3.3 Dilemma 3 Systems—Environment: This dilemma was troublesome in that it did not produce significant differences between organisations. On the other hand, there was a reasonable degree of diversity amongst individuals and a range of comments supporting the conclusion that people experience this as a dilemma. The dilemma was originally included in the instrument because it had surfaced through an examination of literature. It may be that this is a dilemma of concern primarily for organisations that are some distance along in their learning journey. These would be organisations that are having to encourage ‘environmental’ learners (who think that getting the right culture or ecology is enough) to get serious about embedding learning in organisational processes, and encourage more ‘hard-nosed’ systems engineers to create supportive learning environments. To test the value of the dilemma the research would need to be extended to involve organisations at different points on their learning journeys.

13.3.4 Dilemma 4 Emotionally Neutral—Emotionally Engaged: The inclusion of this dilemma received strong support. It generated a relatively high degree of diversity amongst individuals and organisations and comments indicated that people experienced a range of cultural dynamics in relation to the values involved.

13.3.5 Dilemma 5 Executive Led—Community Driven: The inclusion of this dilemma was also strongly supported by survey responses.

13.3.6 Dilemma 6 Reflection—Action: The inclusion of this dilemma was strongly supported. No comments were made regarding flaws to the dilemma. As a dilemma it produced one of the more intriguing results, where men appeared more reflective than women in their values. This is a finding that warrants further research.

13.3.7 Dilemma 7 Inclusive—Voluntary: This dilemma also received strong support. It surfaced during the Participant Workshop process. If we accept that some dilemmas present themselves to organisations at different stages of a learning journey, the nature of this dilemma suggests that, along with Dilemmas 1 and 5, it is one that most organisations will encounter early.

13.3.8 Dilemma 8 Flexibility—Consistency: This was troublesome in that there was relatively little individual diversity. Despite that, some significant differences were found between organisations. No comments were made about flaws in the dilemma. Rather, comments were particularly one-sided, with 57% categorised as the upside of flexibility. As with Dilemma 2, it would be reasonable to conclude that responses to this dilemma were strongly influenced by the New Zealand macro-culture. Cultural artifacts that support the value of flexibility include mythological support of people who can "turn their hands to anything" and fix anything with a piece of "Number 8 wire".

13.3.9 Dilemma 9 Performance—Learning: This dilemma was troublesome in several ways. Firstly, as described above there is reason for concern over wording, with the dilemma asking respondents about the values of their organisation as a whole rather than their own values. Secondly, the dilemma produced results very low in individual diversity with most respondents indicating a preference for learning over performance. Finally, the very one-sided result is contrary to the experience of the author in regard to the New Zealand macro-culture. Particularly in teaching situations where I discuss the dilemma, people experienced in organisational life in New Zealand consistently report that their organisations suffer from an over-emphasis on performance and a neglect of learning.

One explanation is that the organisations involved in the study are ones that have overturned this cultural preference. However, the organisation that has done the least work on becoming a learning organisation and that might be expected to be the most performance oriented, Unichem, was the organisation that had the greatest proportion of people choosing the learning option.

There is a strong possibility that responses were influenced by the way the dilemma was worded. The instrument was clearly focused on values related to learning, and the 'learning' option is likely to have appeared more desirable than the 'performing' option. Interestingly, comments regarding the complementarity of the values generally indicated that learning is needed because it enables individuals and organisations to perform better. This reasoning is most likely to exist within cultures that value performance—seeing it as the ultimate goal—and that have learned the need to learn. So, a possible explanation is that the New Zealand macro-culture does value performance, and the organisations taking part in the study are very conscious of the need to engage in learning activities to make learning happen. It is also possible that, in a macro-culture that values balance, an option that talks about an unwillingness to tolerate failure is likely to be rejected.

To determine whether the explanation provided above is reasonable, research using a 5-option version of the survey is needed.

13.3.10 Dilemma 10 Customers—Aspirations: This dilemma was troublesome in the relatively low organisational diversity that it produced. While there were no significant differences between organisations there was a high degree of individual diversity. Comments also indicated that a spread of values existed, with 22% of comments supporting the valuing of customers, 26% supporting the valuing of aspirations and the remainder relating to the complementarity of the values.

This item sought to explore the dilemma people in an organisation experience when ideals relating to learning clash with the pragmatic need to satisfy stakeholders. This dilemma arose in Practitioner Workshops, which suggests that it is a dilemma that has been encountered by the organisations in the study. It is possible that they have not yet learned how to resolve the dilemma. It is also possible that organisations have learned strategies that would be more apparent with a 5-option format: many of the comments (53%) related to complementarity and reconciliation of values.

Interestingly, comments made regarding three other dilemmas (Dilemmas 2, 4 and 12) referred to the clash of aspirations and pragmatism, particularly where people saw actions as unrealistic or unsuitable to the 'real world'.

For these reasons, it seems appropriate to continue to include an Aspiration—Pragmatism dilemma in future surveys. However, it may be necessary to experiment with the way the dilemma is framed. Two of the organisations taking part in the study were outside the private sector and it may be that a dilemma framed around customers may have acted as an obstacle to determining how they handle the underlying values.

13.3.11 Dilemma 11 Getting Work Out—Orienting New People: This dilemma had a reasonable degree of individual diversity and a low degree of organisational diversity with no significant differences between organisations.

Interestingly, this dilemma is a more focused version of the Performance—Learning dilemma (Dilemma 9). The added focus seems to have resulted in a clearer picture of the values involved. In particular, the organisations in the study all tend toward the 'Orient New People/Learning' option. In this case, however, people in the more performance-oriented organisation Unichem, were more likely to value getting work out ahead of orienting new people. It may be that the lack of difference is a reflection of the value all organisations in the study place on orientation. This could be explored by including a greater range of organisations—including 'Non-learning organisations' in further research. At this stage it seems appropriate to continue to include the dilemma in future versions of the instrument.

13.3.12 Dilemma 12 Instrumental—Integrative: This dilemma was troublesome with low levels of individual and organisational diversity and very one-sided comments: 60% of comments could be categorised as the upside of Integrative. This was one of the two dilemmas that had no significant results using Logistical Regression. There was some evidence that respondents saw this as a dilemma, with 13% of comments giving reasons for taking an instrumental view of learning and 23% suggesting that the values are complementary. Despite that, there was little to suggest that this was a dilemma regularly encountered by individuals or organisations.

The dilemma surfaced through the Delphi Process involving consultants (see Chapter 9). One of the consultants involved expressed the concern that the criteria emerging from the process tended to assume that learning was an end in itself, as opposed to a means of enabling an organisation to achieve its vision. This view is in line with the work of de Geus (1997) that the goal of this work is to create 'living' organisations, rather than 'learning' organisations. In a living organisation, learning is viewed as one of the critical processes required in a sustainable community rather than the ultimate end.

On the basis of the results achieved with this dilemma, this distinction appears to be somewhat advanced or esoteric for the organisations taking part in the study. Organisations that are much farther advanced in their learning journeys may have had to deal with this dilemma. If that were to be the case it would be a useful gauge of maturity. Further research would be needed in order to establish this, perhaps in the form of Practitioner Workshops conducted with a wider range of organisation than was included in this study. At this stage, however, there does not appear to be strong support for including the dilemma in the next version of the instrument.

13.3.13 Dilemma 13 Localness—Aspirations: This dilemma was low in organisational diversity but relatively high in individual diversity. The Logistical Regression produced very little that was predictive of the way people would answer. Comments, however, showed that respondents saw the values involved as complementary.

The dilemma surfaced from the discussion of outer-focused capacity building presented in Chapter 7. In this way the dilemma is similar to Dilemma 12, as discussed above, in that it deals with concepts to do with learning that are somewhat esoteric or academic. As with Dilemma 12 it may be that organisations taking part in the study have not encountered this as a learning dilemma and have not had to find ways to reconcile the values involved. Unlike Dilemma 12, comments made by respondents indicate that individuals taking part in the research have encountered the dilemma and a diverse range of views exists as to how the dilemma can be resolved. With the growth of interest in business sustainability and recognition of this as a learning issue, there appears to be good reason to continue to include the dilemma in future instruments. Further research is needed to establish whether the dilemma differentiates organisations that are dealing with sustainability issues.

13.3.14 Dilemma 14 Self Reliance—Knowledge Sharing: This was another troublesome dilemma. There was low individual and organisational diversity. The Logistical Regression produced no significant results. Comments were one-sided with only 11% supporting Self Reliance over Knowledge Sharing.

This dilemma surfaced as a result of the Delphi Process with consultants and was seen as a variation on the Technical—Social dilemma (Dilemma 1). Dilemma 1, however, was high on both individual and organisational diversity. What accounts for the far more one-sided response to this dilemma?

It may be that the wording of the dilemma was a key difference between Dilemmas 1 and 14. While many of the comments (51%) suggested that the values should be viewed as complementary, many comments associated Knowledge Sharing with teamwork and support. The organisation with the most individualistic learning initiatives, Skill New Zealand, had the second to lowest proportion of people choosing the 'Self Reliance' option.

Interestingly, while relatively few people in the study valued self-reliance ahead of knowledge sharing the personal responsibility of individuals to learn appeared among comments related to four of the dilemmas in the survey (Dilemmas 2, 5, 7 and 14). With Dilemma 2, personal responsibility was used as a reason to support a 'balanced life' approach to learning; in other words, it was used to support the desirable option in a highly one-sided dilemma. Dilemmas 5 and 7 were among the dilemmas that were high in both individual and organisational diversity.

This suggests that if Dilemma 14 is to be included in a future version of the instrument, it needs to be reworked. The focus of the dilemma could be shifted to address the question of where the responsibility for learning lies.

13.3.15 Dilemma 15 Innovation—Mastery: This dilemma was marginally troublesome in that it had a low degree of individual diversity. Despite that, there were significant differences between organisations. Also, on this dilemma the Logistical Regression established significant differences involving more variables than with any other dilemma. These results suggest that the New Zealand macro-culture encourages the valuing of innovation over mastery, as might be expected in a relatively young nation, and that despite this influence the dilemma is still useful in distinguishing between communities.

13.3.16 Conclusions: For this instrument to be of value as part of a measurement system for learning organisations, the dilemmas within it need to be useful in making distinctions between organisations. As summarised in Table 13.9, six of the dilemmas in the instrument made useful distinctions. Seven others did not receive support but results may have been affected by the influence of the New Zealand macro-culture or by the limited range of organisations taking part in the study. Two dilemmas did not receive sufficient support to warrant inclusion in future research.

On the basis of these results we can conclude that the dilemmas used in the instrument provide a basis for making distinctions between organisations, and that more research is needed to further refine the instrument.

13.4 Learning Cultures of Organisations

Another basis for reviewing the dilemmas used in the study is to examine whether they provided an accurate picture of the learning cultures of the organisations that took part. You will recall that a culture is a collection of differences that give a community a unique identity. A learning culture is a collection of differences that distinguish an organisation from others in the way it goes about a learning journey.

The purpose of the dilemma-based instrument is to provide a means of charting the values of organisational communities, allowing for more precise descriptions of learning cultures than has been possible until now. Construct validity will ultimately be established by research that compares survey-based descriptions of particular learning cultures with qualitative descriptions of the same cultures provided by informed researchers. How this research could be undertaken is discussed in the Chapter 15.

At this stage in the development of the instrument a comparison of this nature was not possible. Wolcott (1995) discusses the need for a researcher to achieve a level of intimacy with a community before drawing ethnographic conclusions. While I had worked occasionally with two organisations taking part in the study and had undertaken research processes such as the Workshops, I was not at the level of intimacy described by Wolcott. However, some insight into whether the survey results provide a valid picture of the culture can be gained by comparing results with data from interviews undertaken with executives from three organisations: South Waikato District Council, Skill New Zealand and Pan Pac Forest Industries. Interview transcripts are provided in Appendix 6. Transcripts are line numbered, which I use for reference when discussing interview data.

13.4.1 Skill New Zealand: Survey results for Skill New Zealand (see Chapter 12) indicated that it differed from other organisations on five dilemmas. Compared with those in other organisations in the study, people at Skill New Zealand were more likely to:

Dilemma 5: prefer people taking personal responsibility for learning, rather than having learning an executive led process.

Dilemma 4: see learning as an emotionally engaged process, rather than an emotionally neutral process.

Dilemma 8: value flexibility rather than consistency.

Dilemma 7: value voluntary participation in learning ahead of inclusion, and

Dilemma 15: value innovation ahead of mastery.

An interview was conducted with Max Kerr, the CEO of Skill New Zealand (see Appendix 6). A number of his comments align closely with the results outlined above.

Max describes the impetus for their learning journey as a need to move from a clerical orientation to a position where people throughout the organisation were exercising their own judgement in decision-making (Lines 94-101). Learning was integrated into this shift through the Learning Initiative: a programme that encouraged people to exercise responsibility for their personal learning (Lines 136-140, 236-241). The impact of this process is reflected in the degree to which people within Skill New Zealand see learning as a personal responsibility with which individuals are emotionally engaged, rather than an emotionally neutral effort in response to the leadership of organisational executives. Associated with these values is an assumption that people can be expected to engage in learning voluntarily, exercising their own judgement as to whether they take part.

Max describes Skill New Zealand's learning journey as marked by development leaps that were externally initiated (Lines 159-179). As a government agency, changes to government policy have required dramatic shifts in the organisation's role within the New Zealand education system requiring Skill New Zealand to rethink its role. This history of change aligns with the value people within the agency place on flexibility and innovation.

One area where there is an apparent mismatch between the interview data and the survey results is in relation to knowledge sharing. Max reports that one area where the agency has struggled has been in encouraging people to share knowledge across regions (Line 200-213). It might be expected that Skill New Zealand would be more oriented toward self-reliance than knowledge sharing on Dilemma 14, when there was little difference in the results. A number of factors might account for this mismatch. While Max indicated that the agency experienced problems with knowledge sharing across regional boundaries, throughout the interview he referred to people valuing conversation and collective reflection that, presumably, takes place within regions (Lines 20-21, 55-56, 64-65, 114-117). It may be that the learning culture of Skill New Zealand encourages people to share knowledge, while at the same time limits the extent to which this can be done by emphasising personal responsibility and suppressing the role of centralised leadership.

The interview data from Skill New Zealand is substantially aligned with the results gained through use of the instrument.

13.4.2 South Waikato District Council: Survey results for South Waikato District Council (see Chapter 12) indicated that it differed from other organisations on four dilemmas. Compared with those in other organisations in the study, people at South Waikato District Council were more likely to:

Dilemma 5: expect learning to be an executive led process rather than one driven by personal responsibility.

Dilemma 4: treat learning as an emotionally neutral process rather than one where people are emotionally engaged,

Dilemma 7: expect that inclusion in learning would be valued ahead of voluntary participation.

Dilemma 9: value performance ahead of learning.

The Chief Executive of South Waikato District Council was not available to be interviewed. Instead, interviews were held with Murray McAllister, the Human Resources Manager, and Sue Arthur, Director of Community Services.

Both interviews highlighted that the initial impetus for the Council's learning journey was a need to move from a focus on technical skills toward the valuing of social skills. Murray discussed the development of a team culture and of competencies that enabled people to work together more effectively (Lines 7-49). Sue described the overly hierarchical organisation that existed prior to the learning journey and the impact of learning on enabling cross-functional work (Lines 16-25, 72-79, 143-152). This data aligns with the survey results which show the valuing of Technical and Social skills within the Council to be relatively balanced. If the Council was technically-oriented prior to its learning journey, as described in the interviews, the balanced results reflect a shift in the values targeted by the organisation.

The executive-led nature of the Council's effort is also highlighted throughout the interviews. Murray described the role of the CEO in driving learning within the Council (Lines 153-155, 202, 216-217, 257, 357). Both Murray (Lines 460-465) and Sue (Lines 216-225) spoke of the need for leadership skills to be developed throughout the Council. Murray described how Council staff felt that the organisation's learning journey had come to an end because of the executive decision to disband the original learning groups (Lines 275-282).

The descriptions provide an insight into how people involved in the learning journey also align with the values indicated by the survey. With people in the organisation used to an emphasis on technical skills, a learning journey based around social skills met with a degree of resistance according to Murray (Lines 53-57). According to Sue, staff were not used to some of the approaches to learning (Lines 28-36) and care needed to be taken that staff were not burned out by the experience (Lines 128-131). Murray (Lines 117-120, 310, 382-403) and Sue (10, 111-115, 190-191) spoke of the challenges of ensuring people were included in learning and of the need to "sell" the idea of learning to people.

Apart from a comment by Murray that some parts of the organisation demanded that investment in learning be justified in measurable terms (Lines 61-66), there was little data in the interviews to substantiate the relatively high value placed on performance.

These descriptions create a picture of a learning culture that aligns with that generated by the survey results. Both sets of data indicate a culture where social skills were initially not valued. In order to address that need while minimising the impact of resistance, the Council has undertaken processes that encourage people to treat learning as relatively emotionally neutral, executive led and inclusive.

13.4.3 Pan Pac Forest Industries: Survey results for Pan Pac (see Chapter 12) indicated that it differed from other organisations on two dilemmas. Compared with those in other organisations in the study, people at Pan Pac were more likely to:

Dilemma 8: value consistency ahead of flexibility, and

Dilemma 9: value performance ahead of learning.

In both cases, a majority of people at Pan Pac valued what appears to be the secondary option. That is, the majority still chose the 'flexibility' and 'learning' options of the dilemmas. Results show differences relative to other organisations in the study.

An interview was held with Doug Ducker, General Manager of Pan Pac's Pulp Division: the division most involved in learning processes. To what extent did interview data align with the results of the survey?

Interestingly, Pan Pac had the least extreme results of any organisation taking part in the study. Where it differed from other organisations, it was to be more moderate on dilemmas where there appears to have been a strong macro-cultural influence. This may reflect the nature of the learning journey undertaken by Pan Pac: a journey that has been less overt than those of Skill New Zealand and South Waikato District Council.

Doug describes the initial impetus for learning as a desire to make people throughout the organisation more robust, capable of handling challenges beyond the day to day demands of their particular jobs (Lines 33-36). This involved removing hierarchy from the organisation (Lines 62-81) so that decisions could be made by people directly operating the plant (Lines 87-99).

Doug described a challenge similar to that of South Waikato District Council, the need to bring about change when the workforce is technically-oriented and does not value social skills (Lines 150-163). Pan Pac's approach to this challenge was different. Doug spoke of the value the Pan Pac workforce places on living balanced lives (Lines 257-271) and his reluctance to push against any resistance to learning (Lines 273-276). So, rather than undertake an executive led initiative to convince a technically oriented workforce to engage in learning processes they did not particularly value, Pan Pac changed the structure of the workplace, adding a greater decision-making dimension to people's jobs. Then, rather than directly push people into learning processes, they allowed the changed nature of the work to move people to seek training for themselves (Lines 258-259). Some people within Pan Pac chose to leave, some have engaged with learning processes, and some are slow to move (Lines 132-142).

The survey results may reflect this non-confrontational approach to learning. People have not been put in positions that required any adjustment in values, so there is a greater degree of diversity regards learning within the Pan Pac workforce. The nature of the organisation's work, oriented toward engineering and production, is likely to account for the relatively high proportion of people valuing consistency over flexibility. The relatively high proportion of people valuing performance may be a reflection of a learning journey that has been oriented toward performance (Lines 171-177).

13.4.4 Conclusion: A further test of the construct validity of the instrument is whether results it produces are in agreement with other descriptions of organisational learning cultures. In this section we have compared survey results with descriptions provided by executives of organisations taking part in the study.

As mentioned earlier, assessing the construct validity of the instrument requires a higher degree of intimacy with the culture than is available through interviews. The analyses above involved significant interpretation that may have been influenced by the desire to fit the interview data with the survey results. In Chapter 15 I will discuss how more rigorous validation could take place. This analysis has shown, however, that there is alignment between the survey results of organisations and the experiences of executives involved in their learning journeys. We can conclude that the data from interviews with executives gives some support to the construct validity of the instrument.

13.5 Conclusions

In this chapter we reviewed the construct validity of the instrument on the basis of three questions:

1. Are results for subcultures in line with what might be expected?
2. Do the individual dilemmas included in the instrument make useful distinctions between individuals and organisations?
3. Are patterns of dilemma resolution produced by the instrument in line with executives' descriptions of learning in their organisations?

Table 13.8 shows the conclusion reached for each of these questions.

Table 13.8 Construct Validity Conclusions

Construct Validity Question	Conclusion
Are results for subcultures in line with what might be expected?	Yes. Results on four out of six variables supported the construct validity of the instrument. Results for one variable required more research, and results for one variable did not support construct validity.
Do the individual dilemmas included in the instrument make useful distinctions between individuals and organisations?	Yes, though further work is needed. Six dilemmas produced useful distinctions in their current form. Seven dilemmas were 'troublesome' and required further research. Two dilemmas did not warrant inclusion in future versions of the instrument.
Are patterns of dilemma resolution produced by the instrument in line with executives' descriptions of learning in their organisations?	Yes, though in a limited form. Data from interviews in all three organisations supported results from the instrument. Limitations of this study mean that further work is needed before a strong conclusion can be reached.

When we considered differences identified by the instrument—differences related to variables such as gender, function and role—we found that these differences were generally in line with what we might expect on the basis of other research.

We then considered the results produced by each of the dilemmas. This review showed that dilemmas used in the study did enable distinctions to be made, and suggested areas where the instrument could be improved. Results supported the change to a 5-option format in future research. Future research should aim to broaden the range of organisations involved to include those from a range of macro-cultures. Areas where future versions of the instrument could be improved were also noted.

Finally, we considered the degree to which survey results for particular organisations were aligned with the experiences of executives within those organisations. We discussed the alignment between interviews with executives from three of the organisations taking part in the study. Their comments on the experiences of their organisations, the impetus for learning and the values involved in their learning processes generally aligned with the survey results.

More work is needed in order to (a) further develop the instrument, so that it gives a clearer picture of learning within organisations, and (b) establish the validity of the instrument. This will be discussed in Chapter 15.

Throughout the thesis we have been exploring whether Dilemma Theory can be used to build an holistic model of learning organisations and to develop a measurement system for describing them. In the next chapter we bring this exploration to an end, assessing the efforts we have made and drawing final conclusions.

Chapter 14: Rest from the Journey

Throughout this research we have explored the learning cultures of organisations, using Dilemma Theory to address fundamental concerns people have with the Organisational Learning/Learning Organisation (OL/LO) field. The study centred on the two questions:

Can Dilemma Theory be used to:

a. Generate an holistic model of what a Learning Organisation is and how it develops? and
b. Develop a measurement system that can act as a basis for empirical research into Learning Organisations?

This chapter will draw together material from throughout the thesis in order to reach conclusions about these questions. Firstly, we consider a definition and model of Learning Organisations based on Dilemma Theory. Secondly, we will review the measurement system developed and piloted in the thesis, using criteria presented in Chapter 8 as the basis for our critique. Areas for improvement are identified as a basis for a modified instrument.

14.1 Holistic Model of Learning Organisations

In Chapter 7 the following definition of a Learning Organisation was presented:

> ***An organisation that seeks to build the capacities it needs for the future while meeting the demands of the present. Some essential capacities are internal, such as organisational memory, readiness to change and strong social bonds. Others are external such as the environment's capacity to absorb waste and the level of trust in the community.***

This definition represents the basis for an holistic model of Learning Organisations. It treats "learning" as synonymous with "capacity building". Doing so enables us to integrate the diverse and fragmented views presented in academic literature regarding what constitutes essential capacities of organisations.

The definition is based around a fundamental dilemma for organisations: whether to focus attention on meeting the demands of the present (Performance) or building capacity for the future (Learning). Dilemma Theory helps us to extend the model beyond a definition: we can use it to describe key processes involved in Learning Organisations.

When people in an organisation decide that they need to build some essential capacity they embark on a learning journey that requires them to discover how dilemmas can be reconciled. Consider how dilemma resolution plays a crucial part in the learning process.

If you decide to learn to fly an aircraft, unless you are exceptionally talented, you do not attempt to learn it all at once. Rather, you will start by learning very basic skills such as how to use the control column to keep the aircraft's wings level (using the aircraft's ailerons). Of course, there is more to flying than keeping your wings level: you must also maintain the correct altitude (using the elevator) and keep the aircraft pointed in the right direction (using the rudder). However, trying to do all those things at once is too much for a beginner. So, your flying instructor will find a way to isolate the one skill you are working on. The instructor will have a second set of controls and will ensure that altitude and heading are under control so you can concentrate on keeping the wings level.

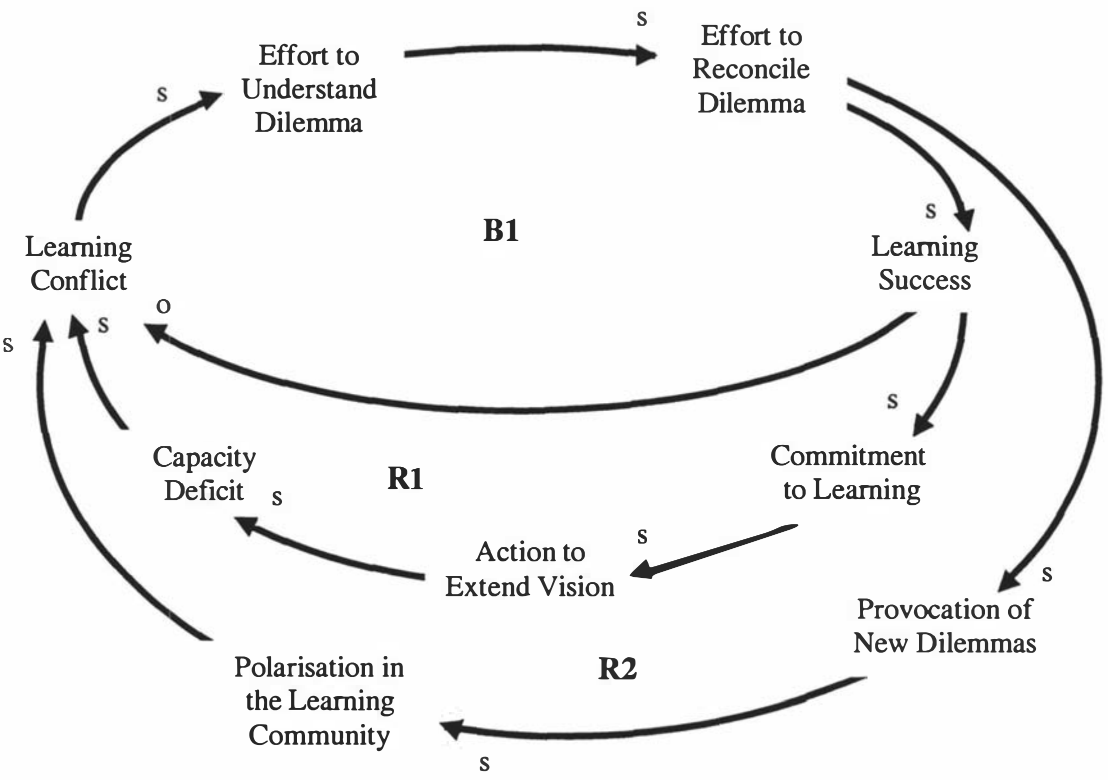
In this way you will eventually learn how to use each of the main controls: ailerons, elevator and rudder. Using all three separately, however, does not guarantee that you will be able to use them in combination. Your next challenge will be to integrate these skills so that you can 'fly straight and level'.

When you first attempt to fly straight and level you will have a dilemma: do you focus attention on flying straight or flying level? Initially your attention will oscillate between the two and your flying will be awkward. Over time, as you learn, you will begin to integrate the use of the three controls, unconsciously using whichever combination of ailerons, elevator and rudder is needed. The 'straight or level' dilemma will have been reconciled. It will be time for you to move on to a new skill; for instance, integrating the skill of flying straight and level with the skill of communicating with Air Traffic Control.

Instructional designers refer to component skills—'use the rudder'—as *subordinate* skills, and the integrated skill—'fly straight and level'—as a *superior* skill (Pipe, 1975). Interestingly, instructional designers do not use the term *supreme* skill. Superiority is relative, so that every superior skill is itself a subordinate skill of another level of performance. In other words, all learning involves reconciling component or subordinate skills. Once reconciliation has been achieved a learner naturally moves on to reconciliation at a new level.

Similarly, organisations may face an initial dilemma that highlights a need to embark on a learning journey. Perhaps they have technically competent people who struggle to work as a team. The learning dilemma involves finding a way to be both technically competent and socially aligned. As people in the organisation address this dilemma they find ways of reconciling the two demands so that over time it happens throughout the organisation. In reconciling the dilemma, however, learning is not completed or finished. Rather, new dilemmas become apparent. Figure 14.1 presents this process in the form of a causal loop diagram.

Figure 14.1: The Learning Journey CLD


Effort to Understand Dilemma
Effort to Reconcile Dilemma
Learning Conflict
B1
Learning Success
Capacity Deficit
R1
Commitment to Learning
Action to Extend Vision
Provocation of New Dilemmas
Polarisation in the Learning Community
R2
s
s
s
o
s
s
s
s
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s

As mentioned above, the impetus for a learning journey arises when an organisation recognises that there is a deficit in some critical capacity, causing stress or anxiety within the organisation. The existence of the Capacity Deficit will generate some form of Learning Conflict.

Firstly, a Performing—Learning dilemma will exist. Some within the organisation will react in a performance-oriented way: "Stress is a normal part of organisational life, and we should live with it. We're too busy performing to invest in capacity building." Others will think, "We shouldn't be stressed. We must build our capacity even if it means sacrificing some performance in the short term."

Secondly there will be a dilemma over how the capacity deficit can be addressed. As we have seen, learning has different meanings to different people. There may be conflict over whether a capacity deficit is best dealt with using an individual approach or a social/collective approach. Or, whether learning should be voluntary or inclusive.

The organisation may choose to suppress the conflict, opting out of the learning journey. Of course, the Capacity Deficit will not disappear; the organisation will find itself experiencing increasingly high levels of stress, over time leading to burnout. Loop B1 represents the learning process the organisation will go through in dealing with the conflict if it opts to embark on a learning journey. The learning journey will involve understanding the nature of the dilemma, then taking action to resolve the dilemma. This may involve introducing organisational practices or systems that allow the values involved in the dilemma to be reconciled. Reconciling these values 'closes the loop', reducing the level of Learning Conflict.

Two forces exist, though, to act as drivers for continuation of the learning journey. Loop R1 represents the compelling nature of learning. Particularly if an organisation has operated for some time with a performance orientation people will find that learning is a 'breath of fresh air', the opportunity to act on values that have been suppressed. People often develop a high level of commitment to learning and a desire to extend the organisation's vision. This reaction places new demands on the organisation in areas it may have never addressed. New capacity deficits emerge, leading to new learning conflicts.

Loop R2 represents the complexities of life. When an organisation learns to resolve one dilemma, it will generate new dilemmas for itself. Finding balance in one area of organisational life will put the organisation out of balance in another. For instance, an unintended consequence of an organisation-wide learning effort may be that people begin to value inclusion over voluntary participation in learning. Eventually the organisation will experience the downside of inclusion and start exploring how the inclusion—voluntary dilemma can be resolved.

As an organisation proceeds with its learning journey it develops a unique learning culture: a pattern of assumptions that shapes the way learning takes place. These assumptions are unconsciously held beliefs about how learning dilemmas are to be resolved. The learning culture will be distinctive depending on what has happened during the organisation's learning journey. The organisation's learning culture may include:

1. Assumptions about dilemmas the organisation has learned to reconcile where it is assumed 'both/and' solutions exist, though one value may be given priority over the other, and
2. Assumptions regarding dilemmas the organisation is currently experiencing, so that there is a mixture of polarisation, conflict and compromise regarding the values involved.

There will also be dilemmas that the organisation has not—or, not yet—encountered. With these there may be no particular pattern to assumptions held by individuals, apart from a pattern that may result from the influence of other factors such as the macro-culture of the country in which the organisation is operating.

Learning cultures will operate to make organisations or communities distinctive. People will recognise differences in learning when they move from one community to another. This will be the case even where organisations have confronted and learned to reconcile the same dilemmas. This is possible because dilemmas can be resolved in different ways, with either of the opposing values being given priority.

This definition and model enable us to distinguish between Organisational Learning and Individual Learning. While individuals within an organisation may develop capacities of all sorts, these do not necessarily result in increased organisational capacity. For instance, several managers within an organisation may individually encounter a dilemma and find a way of resolving it. Imagine that over time it becomes apparent that managers throughout the organisation as a whole need to address the same dilemma. The individuals who have already learned may each express their opinion about how to resolve the dilemma. Because their views are independent, fragmented and diverse their individual learning could result in the organisation becoming mired in polarised, internecine conflict that prevents the development of organisational capacity.

Organisational learning, then, differs from individual learning in that it generates *organisational* capacity, and contributes to a pattern of dilemma resolution within the organisation as a whole. Organisational learning should result in a decrease of stress and anxiety in whatever domain the learning is taking place, because it is bringing capacity into line with demands in that domain. It should also result in reduced conflict within the learning domain as reconciliation reduces the polarisation.

The model of Learning Organisations encompassed by the definition and the CLD shown in Figure 14.1 acts as a frame that can allow the integration of what have been fragmented concepts making up the OL/LO field. A concept can be accommodated by the model as long as it represents either a capacity needed by organisations or a dilemma related to the learning journey.

Table 14.1: Underlying Principles of a Model of Learning Organisations

1. Learning is synonymous with capacity-building, therefore a Learning Organisation is one that consciously seeks to build the capacities it needs for the future.
2. Learning Organisations face a fundamental dilemma: how to build capacity for the future (Learning) while meeting the demands of the present (Performing).
3. Dilemma Theory enables us to understand the dynamics of the Learning—Performing dilemma, and to describe other processes of learning an organisation will encounter.
4. Organisations that choose not to learn risk over-emphasising performance so that they experience increasing levels of stress, leading to the burnout of essential capacities.
5. Learning Organisations embark on a learning journey in which they encounter and learn to resolve an on-going series of dilemmas.
6. As one dilemma is resolved more will become apparent.
7. Learning is compelling. An organisation on a learning journey will tend to extend its vision, bringing to light further areas where capacity needs to be built.
8. As an organisation proceeds on a learning journey it develops a unique culture: a pattern of assumptions about how dilemmas can be best resolved.
9. Organisational learning is more than the sum of individual learning. OL deals with the capacity of a community to resolve learning dilemmas.
10. Conflict within the OL/LO field is evidence of individual learning by researchers.
11. Because it is based on Dilemma Theory, this model of Learning Organisations provides a basis for measurement.

Along with enabling concepts to be integrated, the model explains why diverse and conflicting concepts arise in the OL/LO field. Researchers working in the area do not necessarily encounter the same dilemmas as one another. Even when they deal with the same dilemma, they will develop different ways of resolving it, depending on the values they choose to prioritise. As discussed above, conflict between researchers is indicative of individual rather than organisational learning within the loosely bound community of people interested in OL/LO.

Table 14.1 summarises key features of the model. Developing the model has, in itself, been a learning journey. A provisional model based on the literature review was presented in Chapter 6. As could be expected with a learning journey, at that point a new dilemma emerged: could the model act as the basis for a measurement system that is appropriate for empirical research in the OL/LO field? As Table 14.1 suggests, because our model is based on Dilemma Theory, measurement is possible. We will discuss the measurement system in section 14.2.

14.2 A Measurement System for Learning Organisations

Having established that Dilemma Theory was a basis for an holistic model of Learning Organisations the study focused on developing a measurement system that would be appropriate for empirical research in the OL/LO field.

The measurement system involves several processes. Firstly, dilemmas need to be identified. For the measurement system to be robust, dilemmas should represent as much of the OL/LO field as possible. In this research the OL/LO field was divided into three communities as suggested by Senge and Kim (1997): academics, consultants and practitioners. In this thesis a different technique was used to surface dilemmas in each community. A process of literature review and the development of an integrative model was used to surface dilemmas in the academic community. The Delphi Technique was used to identify dilemmas within the consultant community. And Culture Exploration Workshops were conducted to surface dilemmas from the practitioner community.

The process used in this thesis could be modified in a number of ways. An alternative way of dividing the OL/LO field could be used, one which identifies a different set of communities. Different techniques could be used to surface dilemmas in whatever communities were identified. Different techniques can also be used for the academic, consultant and practitioner communities. Whatever dilemma-surfacing techniques are used, the challenge is to find dilemmas that are relevant to learning and enable distinctions to be made between organisations.

Once dilemmas are surfaced instrument items can be developed. In this thesis, items were presented in a two-option format. The options were constructed as a creative process based on the experience and intuition of the designer, and then tested in a variety of ways (see Chapter 11). To some extent the intuitive element of the design process can be augmented by other data. For instance, in designing a 5-option version of the instrument used in this study, participants' comments are available. These provide examples of polarised, compromising and reconciling views that have been used in a revised version of the instrument (See Appendix 8).

It would be possible to collect comments in further research and incorporate those that respondents use most frequently. According to Dilemma Theory, however, this would be of limited value. Many people assume that reasons, as stated in their comments, are the basis for values and therefore the choices they make regarding dilemmas. Yet, people in one culture have a pattern of choosing a particular option in a dilemma while the reasons they give for doing so vary. This suggests that values are more fundamental than the reason people give for their choices. Consequently, there is limited value in searching for an ideal comment.

Following the development of the instrument, it can be used to survey organisations or other communities of interest. Results can then be analysed to generate descriptions based on comparisons with other communities. Once again, variations on the analysis used in this research are possible. In this study, statistical analysis involved comparison of mean responses, using confidence intervals, along with logistical regressions. This form of analysis was particularly suited to the 2-option format of the instrument. A change to a 5-option format will require changes to the way analysis is carried out. Table 14.2 summarises features of a measurement system that can be used in the OL/LO field.

Table 14.2 Features of a Measurement System for OL/LO

1. A variety of processes are used to identify dilemmas pertinent to the experience of organisations engaged in a learning journey.
2. Dilemmas are used to create items for an instrument.
3. Mean responses on dilemmas are used to compare the learning cultures of communities engaged in learning.

14.3 Assessing the Measurement System

To what extent does such a dilemma based measurement system meet the criteria we established in Chapter 8 and outlined in Table 8.2?

14.3.1 Capacity to synthesise the range of perspectives in the OL/LO field: Because the measurement system is based on dilemmas it does have the capacity to synthesise diverse perspectives. Dilemma theory acts as a meta-concept, making links between diverse viewpoints. Any approach to organisational learning can be framed as an effort designed to reconcile a dilemma.

Dilemma reconciliation involves moving from an 'either/or' approach to dealing with a dilemma to a 'both/and' approach. At the most basic level in organisational learning efforts, this could be dealing with the dilemma: (a) we have to get things done and need direct results, and (b) learning takes time, so its results are not direct. Many approaches to organisational learning will be explanations of how this dilemma can be resolved so that organisations get both direct results and take the time for learning.

The nature of learning involves integrating something new with whatever can already be done. This is, in itself, an exercise in dilemma resolution. Therefore, a measurement system that is based on dilemma resolution is capable of incorporating any perspective on organisational learning.

In the research undertaken for this study 15 dilemmas were identified and used to describe differences between the learning cultures of organisations. These 15 may not encompass all perspectives on Learning Organisations. However, anyone advocating a perspective that is not presently represented can be accommodated within the measurement system. Accommodation is dependent on advocates of a perspective being able to articulate the dilemma they seek to reconcile, and to establish that this dilemma is pertinent to the learning journeys of organisations.

14.3.2 Emphasises the learning of organisations: The measurement system does make a distinction between individual learning and organisational learning. As discussed in Section 14.1, the system is based on an holistic model of learning organisations which makes this distinction. Individual learning occurs when an individual learns how to reconcile a particular dilemma. Organisational learning happens where people within a community or organisation learn how to reconcile dilemmas so that conflict over that dilemma is eliminated.

14.3.3 Provides a basis for empirical research: The measurement system has the potential to act as a basis for on-going empirical research. Development of a database of responses would provide a way of describing and comparing the learning cultures of various communities. In this study we have seen that we can identify differences between organisations, as well as differences connected with gender, function, role and so on. A database of responses will enable descriptive studies of learning organisations, including comparisons between national cultures and investigations of the effect of approaches to dilemma resolution on other measures of organisational health.

The measurement system can also be used to assess the consequences of organisational learning interventions. In particular, it could be used to assess the degree to which values associated with learning shift following an intervention. We could assess whether an intervention resulted in changes to particular values targeted by the organisation. We could also assess whether there were unintended consequences: dilemmas on which people in the organisation become more polarised.

Some further work is needed on the measurement system before empirical research can be undertaken. A number of validation issues need to be addressed.

Firstly, in this research dilemmas have been identified from academic, consultant and practitioner communities within the OL/LO field. However, we subsequently used the measurement instrument only in the practitioner community, comparing learning cultures of various organisations. More work is needed to validate dilemmas from within the academic and consultant communities in particular.

Secondly, any research using an instrument that requires people to choose between categories—an *ipsitive* instrument—is in danger of imposing inappropriate categories on the population being studied. We have already discussed how the 2-option format of the instrument restricts responses. Respondents' comments reflected this, with a high percentage of comments indicating that a "both" option should be available. While a change to a 5-option format provides greater opportunity for respondents to represent their views, the forced-choice issue remains. The categories used in a 5-option format would conform to those articulated in Dilemma Theory. Various validation techniques can be used to test whether these fully represent all possible options for respondents.

14.3.4 Must go beyond actions to chart the mental models involved in learning: Because it is based on Dilemma Theory, the measurement system directly addresses values and assumptions associated with learning, rather than particular behaviours. Therefore, it addresses the mental models of individuals and organisations. Senge (1990) says that mental models are deeply held, often tacit, "images of how the world works, images that limit us to familiar ways of thinking and acting" (p. 174).

The measurement system addresses mental models in their most basic form: unconsciously held preferences for one value over another. Some might object to this approach, concerned that it makes mental models overly simplistic. This concern is the result of the choice to sacrifice the detail complexity of assumptions—the fine distinctions between assumptions—in order to capture dynamic complexity in the pattern of values held within an organisation. Without using dilemmas in this way it is difficult to imagine how mental models could be made measurable.

So, this criterion is achieved by the measurement system, in that mental models associated with learning are held to be a 'learning culture': a pattern of assumptions about the way learning dilemmas are best resolved. As we have seen, this pattern of assumptions can be charted and used to compare approaches to learning in organisations.

14.3.5 Must contribute to change processes within organisations: The measurement system enables organisations to gain insight into their mental models regarding learning, insight that can make a significant contribution to change processes.

How people respond to dilemmas provides an insight into what could be termed their "readiness to learn". Consider what is indicated by people's responses to the Technical—Social dilemma presented in our survey. Where a person accepts the Technical and rejects the Social option, they indicate that they are ready to learn more technical skills but do not value social skills and are likely to resist learning them. The converse is also true. However, when people believe that the two parts of the dilemma can be reconciled—that there are 'both/and' approaches that can be adopted—they indicate that they are ready to learn in both domains.

Having this knowledge benefits an organisation in a variety of ways. Firstly, organisations can identify areas where their readiness to learn gives them some form of advantage. Secondly, they can predict where they will encounter resistance to their learning efforts. They may be able to identify sub-cultures within the organisation that are ready to learn where others are not, thus identifying areas where change forays are likely to take hold. Organisations are also able to identify what would previously have been invisible: values that have been suppressed or neglected, and which may present a threat to the organisation's capacity for further learning.

As noted earlier, the measurement system is also able to aid the change process by tracking the way values change in response to organisational learning interventions. By contributing to organisational change processes in this way the measurement system is more likely to be attractive to practitioners, thus overcoming the problem of access that often limits the effectiveness of empirical research.

14.3.6 Must reflect real or natural learning: Because the measurement system charts a natural phenomenon, culture, it undertakes measurement in a way that reflects natural processes. The measurement system produces a comparison of learning cultures that people moving between organisations would tacitly recognise.

Consider, for instance, what you would notice if you spent time in both Skill New Zealand and South Waikato District Council. As you observed decisions being made and actions being taken you would notice that more people at Skill New Zealand engaged in personally initiated learning activities than at SWDC, and conversely, that more people at SWDC responded readily to centralised efforts to direct learning. Because the measurement system is based around comparisons of mean responses to dilemmas, there will be a close link between observations and survey results. With a 5-option version of the survey, this link is likely to be even closer. The results of the measurement process will match your observations of the degree of conflict produced by polarised views and the likelihood of people in an organisation seeking to reconcile the opposing values.

A major concern with measurement systems expressed by people in the OL/LO field is the tendency for people to treat a particular score as ideal, and for organisations to aim to score 'well' on whatever scale is used. Because this measurement system is based on dilemmas it is less likely that respondents will consider attractive options they do not personally value. There was no evidence of this form of error in the comments made by respondents to the survey.

When feeding results of the survey back to the organisations that took part, none of the executives expressed a view that their results either achieved or fell short of some ideal. Rather, they saw the results as an insight into the character of their organisation. This reaction may stem from my orientation as a researcher. The results were not used to make a judgement of the organisations or of their cultures. They were used to describe the culture in a way that gave executives greater understanding of the dynamics they had already experienced and greater choice and mobility in the decisions they faced in the future.

Table 14.3 summarises the degree to which the measurement system we have been investigating meets the criteria established earlier in the study.

Table 14.3 Assessing the Measurement System

Criteria	Achieved?
Has the capacity to synthesise the wide range of perspectives people have about Learning Organisations	Potentially Yes, subject to identification of appropriate dilemmas
Emphasises the learning of organisations	Yes
Provides the basis for empirical research	Potentially Yes, subject to further validation.
Goes beyond actions to chart the mental models involved in learning	Yes
Contributes to change processes within organisations	Yes
Reflects real or natural learning	Potentially Yes, using a 5-option format.

10.4 Final Conclusion

Earlier in this chapter an holistic definition and model of Learning Organisations, based on Dilemma Theory was presented. This thesis has presented a measurement system for Learning Organisations based on this model.

We can conclude that, using Dilemma Theory, a measurement system can be developed for use in empirical research in the OL/LO field. Further work is needed on the measurement system used in this study before it meets all the requirements outlined in our criteria.

Addendum

An important issue organisations will encounter on a learning journey is how they deal with increasing size and complexity. The challenges of size were not considered in this study because of the participating organisations. In each case they were small to medium sized organisations whose size had been relatively stable over the period of their learning journeys.

Size and complexity is likely to affect culture in at least two ways. Firstly, size will create more opportunity for the existence of subcultures within organisations. There are likely to be a greater number of communities operating within the larger organisational community. This will means a greater need to understand the dynamics of learning cultures, particularly when encouraging people within the organisation to share knowledge.

Secondly, size will create new dilemmas around which cultural assumptions can form. Some dilemmas emerging from this research are likely to be pertinent to the challenge of growth: in particular the Inclusion—Voluntary and the Knowledge Sharing—Self Reliance dilemmas. It is likely that issues of universalism versus particularism in relation to learning will challenge organisations.

Further research involving (1) organisations experiencing growth while on a learning journey and (2) large organisations, is needed to explore this issue.

Chapter 15: Epilogue

When I undertook this research on Learning Organisations I embarked on my own learning journey. Like any learning journey it presented me with dilemmas along the way, many of which I had not considered at the start. The journey has brought me to this point. I posed questions in the introduction to the thesis that have now been answered. I have concluded that it is possible to create an holistic model of learning organisations, and that it is possible to develop a measurement system that can be used for further research in the OL/LO field.

Is this the end of the journey? No. As discussed earlier in this chapter, resolving one set of dilemmas will ensure that new dilemmas present themselves. For that reason it is useful to consider what research activities will be involved in moving this journey forward. In keeping with the theme of the study, it will also be useful to identify a dilemma likely to be encountered along the way.

15.1 Publication of Results

The study so far has already produced a number of publications (see Appendix 1), and further publications are envisaged based on work already completed and reported in this thesis. These include the following:

Development of the Measurement System: a summary of the research journey. Toward the end of the research process I presented a seminar in which I attempted to summarise the work involved. It was apparent that it is difficult to capture in one hour the lessons of several years worth of learning. On reflection, I decided that a way to develop a summary of the research suitable for seminars or conference presentations would be to write an article that summarises the work. An effective summary would need to start at the end of the journey—the use of a tool for describing learning cultures—and highlight only the key points that took place in development of the tool.

An Holistic Model of Learning Organisations. A key outcome of the research process has been the development of the holistic model of learning organisations presented in Section 14.1. As discussed, the model is designed to provide a definition of learning organisations that enables people working in the field to see how diverse perspectives can be integrated. An article can be written that describes the model, including the central role of dilemmas and of the capacity building metaphor in explaining what organisational learning is and why it is important.

Readiness to Learn. A consistent theme in this research has been the role of values in learning. Values shape the learning that takes place in organisations—even the meaning given to learning—and, through dilemmas, provide a means of measuring and describing learning that addresses underlying mental models rather than learning activities. Towards the end of the research it became apparent to me that the values people hold in an organisation affect what could be termed "readiness to learn". Values can encourage learning in some areas while suppressing learning in others. Actions to reconcile opposing values gives an organisation greater mobility; that is, the organisation becomes ready to learn in a variety of directions. 'Readiness' has become a useful way of expressing the capacities needed for organisational health; Redding and Catalanello (1994) discuss 'strategic readiness', Dym and Huston (1998) talk of 'readiness to change', and Paul (2003) describes the process of organising oneself as 'getting to ready'. 'Readiness to learn' is likely to be an easily understandable way to explain the role of values to people interested in learning organisations.

Analysis of the OL/LO Research Culture. As discussed in Section 8.4, research in the area of learning organisations has tended to over-emphasise conceptual model-building and intervention studies. An article can be written outlining how these preferences create a research culture different to that found in many other fields and discussing the implications this has for the area.

Uncovering Consultant Dilemmas: use of the Delphi Technique. The Delphi Technique process described in Chapter 9 is a case study in how dilemmas can be surfaced and criteria established within a loosely connected community. An article discussing the process could be directed at consultants working in the OL/LO field, or to researchers interested in application of the technique.

Uncovering Practitioner Dilemmas: use of Culture Exploration Workshops. The Culture Exploration Workshops described in Chapter 10 represent an innovative way of uncovering dilemmas confronting organisations engaged in learning processes. An article describing the workshops and the outcomes could be directed to audiences interested in challenges of learning in organisations.

Learning Preferences in Organisations: how different functions learn. The results generated by the survey, presented in Chapter 12, include information on learning that is likely to be of interest to a range of audiences. In particular, people from different functional areas are likely to be interested in the way learning in their area differs from other functions. The logistical regression analysis used in this study highlighted how other functions differed from people in General Management. That analysis could form the basis for an article directed to a management audience. The same type of analysis could be carried out with any of the other functions acting as the baseline against which the others are compared, thus providing the basis of an article for audiences in that particular area.

Performance versus Learning: a key dilemma for individuals and organisations. Throughout this research the usefulness of using the Performance—Learning dilemma in explaining dynamics of organisational life has been apparent to me. It is also useful in explaining what is needed for individual learning to be sustainable.[1] In particular, the dilemma helps explain from a cultural viewpoint why learning is frequently neglected even though people espouse its value.

15.2 Extending the Research

As outlined in Chapter 8 this research fits into the 'Measurement' phase of research: that is, it is designed to produce a measurement system that can be used for descriptive studies in the OL/LO field. It is my view that there is little point in conducting research unless it is progressive. Measurement studies need to lead to descriptive studies, which in turn need to lead to the later phases of Intervention and Dissemination studies. Clearly further research can grow from this study. What might the next steps involve?

As discussed already, the 2-option survey used in this study needs to be changed to a 5-option format for future work. Testing and validation of the new instrument will be required. A draft version of a new instrument in the 5-option format is included in Appendix 8. Variations on the instrument may result from some of the research processes discussed below.

Some effort is required to extend the research beyond New Zealand. Interest in learning organisations is international, as indicated by the literature on which this study is based. While the consultants and organisational practitioners taking part in this study were all based in New Zealand, much of their work was based on concepts originating in other countries. It makes sense that a cultural exploration of learning should include an examination of the role of national culture and values. Indeed, in discussing results on some dilemmas I assumed that particular results were influenced by the macro-culture of New Zealand, though this could not be tested in the study.

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[1] This dilemma was used in explaining the affect of perfectionism on sustainable learning in the article Ramsey, D. & Ramsey, P. (2003). Reframing the Perfectionist's "Catch-22" Dilemma: a systems thinking perspective. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted,* 26, 2. (see Appendix 1k).

Basing the study in New Zealand will have influenced the research in other ways. For instance, interest in learning organisations is relatively recent in New Zealand. The Culture Exploration Workshops described in Chapter 10 involved people describing events from their organisation's learning journey, generally a period of around 10 years. It is likely, therefore, that dilemmas surfaced during this process were ones that organisations encounter early in a learning journey. The same process undertaken with more mature learning organisations may produce other dilemmas we have not considered. Similarly, consultants working with more mature learning organisations may generate criteria and dilemmas that are different from those that arose in the Delphi process described in Chapter 9.

Therefore, research needs to proceed on two fronts: (1) research to generate dilemmas using organisations and consultants from outside New Zealand, and (2) use of the instrument to gather data from more organisations, both inside and outside New Zealand. While it may seem reasonable to generate new dilemmas prior to research using the instrument, this is not necessarily the case. Research designed to surface new dilemmas needs to be ongoing in order to ensure the measurement system is dealing with dilemmas organisations are actually encountering. In other words, a double-loop learning approach is needed, where the measurement system is both used for descriptive studies, and tested to ensure it is measuring the right things.

Some of the next steps, therefore, include making connections with organisations and institutions interested in organisational learning and based in other countries. It may be that existing networks such as the Society for Organisational Learning (SoL) will be interested in taking part in the research.

Other research will involve validation of the instrument, particularly in its 5-option format. Validation of the research design could include using a variation of the Method of Triads approach described in Appendix 7.

Further validation work needs to include testing whether dilemma items constructed for the instrument represent the values of academics and consultants, as well as those of organisations.

Because the instrument purports to measure the learning culture of organisations, construct validity can be assessed using people who are both familiar with the instrument and research design, and are closely associated with the culture being described. Ethnographer Harry Wolcott (1995) has described the level of intimacy a researcher needs to develop with a community before making conclusive statements about its culture. Wolcott estimates that 2 years of fieldwork is a reasonable minimum for developing the needed intimacy. Clearly, this would make the process of validation cumbersome if it were to be undertaken by a researcher starting "from scratch."

An alternative approach would be to compare findings from using the instrument with descriptions of the organisations made by consultants who had worked with the organisations surveyed over extended periods: consultants who had already achieved a high level of intimacy. Again, this type of research would best be carried out in conjunction with a network such as the Society for Organisational Learning.

In the longer term the measurement system can be used to develop a database of responses to learning dilemmas that can be used for a wide range of research activities. As indicated in this study, such a comparison might be made between organisations, between genders, across organisational functions and between countries. Resulting data would then form a basis for descriptive research, thus promoting a balanced approach to research within the OL/LO field.

15.3 A Final Dilemma

In this chapter I have already described the nature of learning journeys, how reaching a point where one dilemma is resolved seems to ensure that new dilemmas surface. As I contemplate where this research journey may head in the future I am aware of one dilemma in particular that will require special attention. This is the Practitioner Relevance—Academic Independence dilemma, shown as a polarity map in Figure 15.1.

Rynes, Bartunek and Daft (2001) have discussed what they perceive as a growing gap between academic research and managerial practice. As they note, researchers are divided over whether or not involving practitioners in research is likely to be beneficial. Some researchers take the position shown on the upside of Practitioner Relevance, while others argue that the downside will be the eventual outcome. Rynes and associates, however, note that most of this work takes the form of personal reflections and speculation, with little support from empirical research. In other words, the debate has the hallmark of a values-based conflict that follows the dynamics described in Chapter 3.

Figure 15.1 Practitioner Relevance—Academic Independence Polarity Map

	Practitioner Relevance	Academic Independence
+	Research is applied to the real concerns of managers, who are deeply involved in projects. Research outcomes are relevant, real, accessible and valued in organisations.	Research uses rigorous methods of enquiry in pursuit of knowledge that will benefit society as a whole. Practitioners value research outcomes for the insights they provide.
-	Research is narrow in focus, directed at short-term, commercially oriented projects. Managers use research for PR, masking exploitative practice.	Research is irrelevant dialogue between academics with little understanding of organisational reality. Concern for method squashes questions of purpose.

My aim with this research has been to provide a model of learning organisations and a measurement system that will help to bridge the research-practice gap. Had I been more cognisant of this dilemma from the start of the research there is more that I might have done. For instance, at the start of the project I sought to establish a model through my own efforts and involved practitioners only at later stages of the research, when the direction had already been set.

The way forward will require me to be mindful of managing this research polarity. I need to ensure that I give priority both to: (a) involving practitioners in research processes and communicating results and findings in ways that are accessible, and (b) taking care to ensure that research processes are rigorous, acceptable to the academic community. Given the nature of the research gap, finding a resolution to this dilemma will challenge my capacity for some time to come.

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Appendix 1:
Publications Resulting from the Research

Appendix 1a:

Paper Presented at the International Conference of the System Dynamics Society, Wellington, New Zealand, July 20-23, 1999.
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Countering Cultural Polarities

Countering Cultural Polarities

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Abstract

Culture can be understood as a pattern of dilemma resolution developed within a group shaping assumptions upon which group decisions are based. As such it is a critical part of the structure of social systems. Cultural dynamics leave groups prone to 'schismogenesis,' a process by which values are polarised. Practitioners working in the field of systems dynamics are likely to experience polarisation of values when working with groups, limiting their effectiveness to contribute to group decisions. Polarisation can be reduced by communication that breaks out of the 'Problem/Solution' frame typically applied in conflict situations, and by charting opposing values. Story-telling is a further means of sharing insights into systemic structure while avoiding polarisation of values.

The Need to Understand Culture

Systems dynamics operates to widen the perspective of people making decisions. Without a systems perspective decision makers often react to events that they frame as problems. But events that are problems to one person may not be problems to another. Rather than looking solely at events, systems thinking encourages people to place events within a context of behaviour over time, and to uncover the underlying structure that is determining the behaviour of the system (Richmond, 1997).

Culture is a factor that exerts a tremendous influence on the behaviour of any social system. When people encounter conflict they consider problematic, there is a good chance they are experiencing the dynamics of a culture (Johnson, 1992). Understanding these dynamics gives us insight into the nature of many of the conflicts that obstruct teams and organisations, and indicate how the forces creating conflict can be managed to generate greater organisational health. In this paper we will be examining the nature of cultural dynamics and, in particular, how cultural forces frequently lead to polarisation. We will also consider techniques that enable us to avoid such polarisation.

Cultural Dynamics

Culture is often defined as 'the way we do things around here' (Bower, 1966). That is, culture can be understood as the shared assumptions that govern the way a group operates. These assumptions shape all aspects of how the group functions, so the groups assumptions will be represented in artifacts: the systems the group designs and the language its members use (Schein, 1985). These artifacts are shaped by cultural assumptions, and they act to reinforce the assumptions. New members take often take on cultural assumptions that are expressed tacitly in the groups systems, language and decisions, rather than taught explicitly as the way to behave. How do these assumptions form?

Within anthropology a key concept used to explain the formation of culture is 'complementarity' (Bateson, 1972). Any group faces some predictable dilemmas that need to be resolved. For example, when actions by one member endanger the group as a whole, the group must decide whether priority needs to be given to the rights of the individual or to the needs of the community as a whole. In other words, the group must decide whether it values individualism more than community, or community more than individualism.

What determines which value will be given priority? All manner of factors shape the initial conditions bearing on the group's decision: historical factors, personality of group members, demands of the situation and so forth. In many 'ancient' communities the threat to the group as a whole was the most pressing issue, and value was given to community over individualism. Many 'modern' societies have been formed by individuals seeking opportunity to live without oppressive dictates of an autocratic system of governance, and in these societies value has been given to individualism over community.

Once a group has made an initial decision and given that the decision brings a desirable outcome, a precedent has been set for future occasions when the same dilemma arises (Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars, 1993). The more that a group relies on one value over its opposite, the more that this preferred value drops below the level of consciousness. The group no longer has to think about how to resolve the dilemma, the value has been established as an unconscious assumption of how the group handles such situations. And, as has been mentioned above, these values are built into the groups artifacts. In the USA, for instance, its founders felt a tremendous need to resolve dilemmas in favour of individualism, a value that has been built into its Constitution and legal system, not to mention its sports and arts activities.

While groups thus develop a preference for either individualism or community, these values are complementary. While they are opposites, they are nevertheless interdependent, so that actions favouring one value create a need for actions favouring the other. So while, on the one hand, groups naturally form a preference for one value, healthy groups find that they need to maintain a balance between pairs of interdependent yet opposing values. This balance requires groups to maintain on-going movement between values as needed. This movement is sometimes referred to as the 'circularity of values' (Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars, 1993).

Many pairs of complementary values exist, providing a basis for understanding the nature of decisions made by social groups. Groups must, for example decide whether to: impose *universal standards* to all members, or to *make exceptions for particular individuals*; to deal with complex situations through a process of *analysis* which breaks the issues up into smaller pieces, or through a process of *integration* which views the issues as a whole; to award status on the basis of *achievement*, or *ascribe* status on some other basis, such as age or experience.

Researchers Collins and Porras (1994) examined what made some organisations 'visionary organisations' with a reputation for excellence amongst business executives and a record of success over an extended period. They found that the distinguishing feature of the visionary organisations they examined was an ability to achieve balance between key sets of interdependent opposite values, such as stability and change.

So cultures can be understood as patterns of dilemma resolution within groups. These patterns may be evident at various levels. There may be a characteristic pattern for resolving dilemmas for the organisation as a whole--that is, an organisational culture. Within organisations various groups develop patterns that distinguish them from other groups in the same organisation--they constitute subcultures. Subcultures have been noted to form around functions (Pascale, 1990; Hampden-Turner, 1990b) and around occupational groupings (Schein, 1996). There are also discernable patterns of dilemma resolution in larger social groups, so that industries can be said to have their own cultures (Ramsey and Ramsey, 1996) and nations or societies form 'macrocultures' in which organisations operate (Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars, 1993).

Schismogenesis

While the circularity of values is desirable, the dynamics of culture often prevent it from happening. Unconscious reliance on values leads to over-emphasis of that value that is ultimately damaging to the group. Too much individualism destroys the social bonds of the community. And too much communitarianism leads to a trampling of the rights and freedoms of individuals. Unfortunately--and paradoxically—the growing need for the neglected value does not necessarily lead to a shift of emphasis within the group. Sometimes, due to a process termed 'schismogenesis,' (Bateson, 1972) the growing need for the opposite can lead to a breakdown of circularity, and further overemphasis of the culturally-accepted value, to the detriment of the group.

Schismogenesis is a term coined by Bateson (1972) to describe what often occurs when people holding polarised values meet. The term means the 'splitting apart of values,' Tannen (1990) uses the term when describing what often happens in conversation when someone who prefers to be direct meets someone who prefers to be indirect. Direct communication is purposeful and clear. Indirect communication hints at the message without saying it clearly. When the sender correctly receives an indirect message there is a sense of 'togetherness' those involve share—they understand one another where others may not. Communication between two people who prefer directness, or between two people who prefer indirectness is likely to be straightforward. What happens, though, when an indirect person and a direct person interact?

To a person who values indirectness, directness appears blunt, rude and crass. When someone communicates directly an indirect person may respond by becoming more indirect, hoping to indicate to the other person how communication could be carried out with more finesse. The direct person, finding the growing indirectness confusing and disorienting responds by becoming even more direct. Because these people are making the choice to be direct or indirect at a skilled level, below the level of consciousness (Argyris, 1990) while both are irritated by the nature of their interaction, neither are likely to be aware of its cause. Indeed, in situations like this there is a strong tendency to blame the other party to the interaction for the irritation (Senge, 1990).

In the same way, conflict arises within groups where people unconsciously adopt different values in resolving a dilemma. Perhaps a group of executives within an organisation has well established procedures and standards for handling situations to do with employees. A case arises involving a highly valued employee who's situation does not directly fit within the existing procedures, and who will be disadvantaged and aggrieved if the procedures are applied. Some in the group will be unconsciously assuming that applying procedures is the proper way to act, and that an exception would create a precedent that the organisation cannot afford. It may be, however, that others in the group sense that they have been over-emphasising procedures so that the organisation is becoming mechanistic and impersonal. They believe they need to advocate for an exception to be made in this particular case. Such a situation is set up for the schismogenetic process.

The more that one group 'crusades' for a change to the neglected value, the more likely it is that they will mobilise others in the group who feel they must act as 'tradition-bearers' for the defining values of the culture (Johnson, 1992). This response is exacerbated by the tendency of people to take polarised positions where they see only the upside of their own position and the downside of those advocating opposite values. Even where they may see an upside to the opposing view or dangers in their own they may feel they cannot admit these without weakening their own argument (Tannen, 1998). In situations like this, groups are blocked from achieving a healthy circularity of values, and instead become mired in values-based conflict (Ramsey, 1997).

Systems Dynamics and Schismogenesis

What relevance do these cultural processes have on those working in the discipline of systems dynamics? They can have a great deal in two ways: understanding cultural dynamics provides insight into the systemic structure of group functioning (Ramsey, 1997); and, systems dynamicists often operate as advocates crusading for the adoption of neglected values and face values-based conflict as a result. It is this second issue that we will examine in more depth here.

Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars (1993; 1997) have concluded that the macrocultures of Western nations in general, and English-speaking nations in particular, are characterised by decisions that value universal standards over particular relationships; individualism over community; analysis over integration; and achievement over ascription. This research accords with Ackoff's (1997) description of the rise of mechanistic thinking in Western nations since the Renaissance.

The predominance of these values in Western nations provides the context for current concern for systems thinking and for learning organisations. The 'learning disabilities' described by Senge (1990) represent the consequence of over-reliance on values of individualism, analysis, achievement and application of universal standards. Likewise, Senge's five disciplines address neglected. Team learning and shared vision address the need for community within organisations. The discipline of mental models acknowledges that, rather than imagine that there is a universally correct way of seeing the world, people understand the reality around them on the basis of their particular set of assumptions. The disciplines of shared vision and team learning also encourage people to ascribe status to others on the basis of their membership of a learning community, rather than solely according to their achievement of individualistic performance objectives. Finally, the discipline of systems thinking addresses the need to take an integrated, holistic view of the world rather than one that is analytical and linear.

While systems dynamics is a method by which we can gain an integrated view of complex situations it uses tools that have a basis in engineering—a discipline generally associated with 'left-brain' analytical thought (Hampden-Turner, 1990b). An interface developed for a computer model will typically resemble the control panel of a machine even though it may be designed to enable users to explore 'soft' social values.

The blend of analytical and integrative thinking represented in systems dynamics allows practitioners to experience schismogenetic conflict from two different poles. Some will find their work too integrative when their unconscious preference is for more mechanistic, cause-and-effect thinking. They will assume that it is of greater value to put aside consideration of variables not directly related to decisions at hand. Paradoxically, others will find that systems dynamics feels too analytical and mechanistic. This concern could arise out of an assumption that complex situations—particularly those involving social systems—are just too unpredictable for systems dynamics to deliver what it seems to be promising. Or they may assume that it is too technically challenging for people in general, and them in particular, to understand and use.

Thus, the cultural processes can result in rejection of insights from systems dynamics based on unconsciously held values, despite the contribution these insights may make to the quality of decisions.

Countering Polarisation

What can be done to avoid polarisation or to find ways out of impasses created by unconsciously held assumptions? Avoiding polarisation depends in large part on the way that people communicate value-based positions.

Any value taken to extreme will produce undesirable consequences. And the reason that people hold values is that they also produce desirable consequences. When thinking about a set of opposite values, therefore, four sets of possible consequences can be envisioned: an 'upside' and a 'downside' for each of the two values (Johnson, 1992).

When we desire to bring about a change it is because we are aware that people are experiencing the downside of their current position, and believe that a shift to the opposite value will generate some upside consequences. This is typically the way people frame their descriptions of a group's situation. A practitioner encouraging a systems view of an issue might say "I think you have a problem" and then describe the downside consequences of a group's analytically based attempts to resolve the issue. The practitioner might then carry on to describe the upside consequences of a shift to more integrative thinking. The practitioner is here viewing the needed change with what might be called a 'Problem/Solution' frame.

While this appears to be a reasonable approach it does not take into account the unconsciously held values of the group. While the practitioner may frame the shift from an analytical to an integrative approach as a move from a downside to an upside, the client group may be primarily aware of the upside of the value they currently hold, and the potential downside of the opposite value. So, due to their desire for the upside they know and their fear of the opposite downside people will resist the 'Problem/Solution' framing of their situation. How else can practitioners communicate the need for an opposite value?

A tenet of effective communication is to 'seek first to understand' (Covey, 1989). In this instance, practitioners need to seek to understand the way client groups are likely to frame their situations. What values led them to the situation they are in? In particular, what upside do they see to the values they hold, and what might they fear from a shift to neglected values? Johnson (1992) recommends that when communicating about values-based conflicts we should begin by talking about these positions. This is challenging to practitioners who may, like the majority of people, have a well-established habit of applying the 'Problem/Solution' frame when talking about change.

Where a group is already stuck in a values-based conflict, the challenge is to help the group become consciously aware of the values that are generating the impasse. This can be done by charting the values and plotting the positions that are creating the difficulties. Approaches to charting values-based conflict have been suggested by Hampden-Turner (1990) and Johnson (1992) who also emphasises the importance of surfacing the emotions associated with the values.

Story-telling is a further technique that systems dynamics practitioners can incorporate into their work to counter polarisation, particularly amongst those who may feel systems dynamics is too technically demanding. Stories can act as an introduction to pattern-recognition, a skill that is basic to understanding systems. Throughout history people have communicated insights they have into complex patterns of behaviour. Rather than directly or explicitly outlining these patterns using techniques of systems diagramming, most often they would be outlined indirectly and tacitly as the plots of stories (Ramsey, 1997b; 1998). Stories can thus act as a vehicle for describing the way common systemic structures operate.

Conclusion

Practitioners working in the field of systems dynamics are naturally concerned with bringing about change and improving the quality of decision making within groups. This concern naturally leads them into values based conflicts. Understanding the dynamics of cultural processes, particularly the tendency groups have for schismogenesis, is the basis for more effective interventions.

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Appendix 1b:

Book Chapter Published in *Organisational Learning at Work: embracing the challenges of the new workplace,* Wardman-O'Reilly, K. (Ed.). Waltham MA: Pegasus Communications (1999), 15-25:

The Structure of Paradox

Chapter Two

The Structure of Paradox: Managing Interdependent Opposites

by Philip Ramsey

When faced with a problem, how often do teams within your organization become polarized around proposed solutions that are opposites? For example, one group of people may be convinced that the only way to increase productivity is through greater teamwork, while another group may advocate better management of individuals as the best method for bringing about the desired result. Or perhaps the impasse exists over whether decision-making within the organization should be more centralized or more decentralized.

We regularly find ourselves stuck in futile conflicts over the choices we face. How can intelligent, committed people in the same organization be so divided? Could it be that both sides are right? If so, how does the conflict come about? And how can you and your team leverage the differences that exist among you? Help lies in understanding the structure of paradox.

Managing Paradox

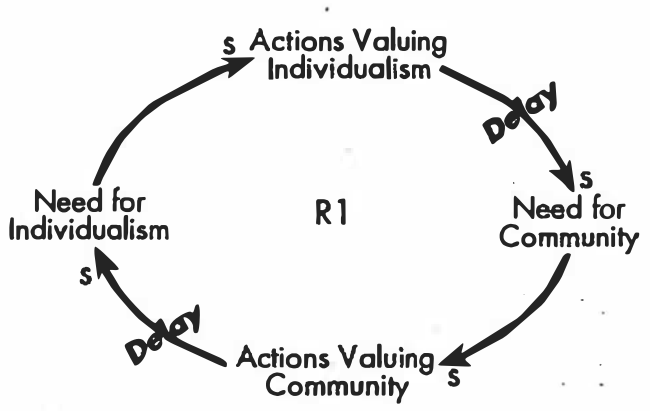
In their study of organizational effectiveness, James Collins and Jerry Porras noted that a distinguishing characteristic of highly visionary companies is the capacity to manage paradox. These authors define such capacity as "the ability to embrace both extremes of a number of dimensions at the same time" (see *Built to Last*, p. 44). This rare capability seems to allow successful companies to avoid falling into a pattern of values-based conflict, with parties becoming increasingly polarized around "either/or" choices.

Many decisions that groups face involve a choice between opposing values. Thus, when resolving a dispute, a team may feel the need to choose between the rights of an individual member and the well-being of the group as a whole.

Because the two choices are opposites, the group will take actions that support one value rather than the other. For example, in an emergency, people within a group may be expected either to "pitch in" and take actions that help the group as a whole, leaving aside their personal objectives for a time, or to complete their personal objectives first and help the team if they have spare time. Group norms and organizational reward systems tend to encourage one approach over the other.

In many cases, though, the values are interdependent. Over time, an organization requires both values to be healthy (see Barry Johnson, *Polarity Management*). Thus, when any group is formed, a cycle begins between opposing values (see "Circularity of Values"). Initially, the team feels a strong need for one value, such as individualism. Team members then take actions that value individualism. If unchecked, however, individualism destroys the cohesiveness of the group. So, individualistic actions eventually create a need for actions that value community. Over

CIRCULARITY OF VALUES



In this reinforcing loop, healthy circularity operates, as actions supporting one value create a need for its opposite.

the long run, this focus on community will in turn create a need for individualism, as group members lose their sense of personal identity. Some investigators of organizational culture refer to this movement between opposites as the "circularity of values" (see Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars, *The Seven Cultures of Capitalism*).

In many cases, the two values are interdependent, and an organization requires both to be healthy.

For example, Performance Management Associates (PMA), a small consulting company founded by Ralph and Sarah, had experienced consistently high demand for its services. Ralph was known for introducing leading-edge management concepts to organizations in need of change. He continually sought new ideas and built them into his consulting work. Ralph's clients found his approach innovative and challenging.

Sarah, on the other hand, had long recognized that Ralph's ideas were of limited value for businesses unless they could be further developed into systems and training products. By framing Ralph's insights in ways that organizations could implement and use, Sarah helped clients institutionalize needed changes. She brought stability and quality control to PMA.

Encouraged by their company's success, Ralph and Sarah hired two new consultants. With the support the additional staff would provide, Ralph planned to increase the pace of his innovative work. Barry and Frank, the newcomers, were excited by the prospect of further developing Ralph's ideas.

However, at PMA Barry and Frank felt they were approaching clients with half-formed products. Worse, Ralph kept coming up with new ideas even though the old ones still weren't fully developed. Barry and Frank grew frustrated with their work. When they complained that life at PMA had gotten too chaotic, Ralph felt they didn't understand the principles on which he and Sarah had built the business.

Thus, after years of success, PMA reached a state of crisis. The new consultants threatened to leave the organization. And several clients voiced their concern about the errors that sometimes crept into PMA's administrative practices.

The introduction of new people at PMA disrupted what had been a healthy movement between the opposing values of innovation and product quality. At the same time, Ralph's increased focus on innovation ultimately became detrimental to the organization as a whole. As we will see, PMA needed to learn how to manage opposing values, or paradox, in this new configuration.

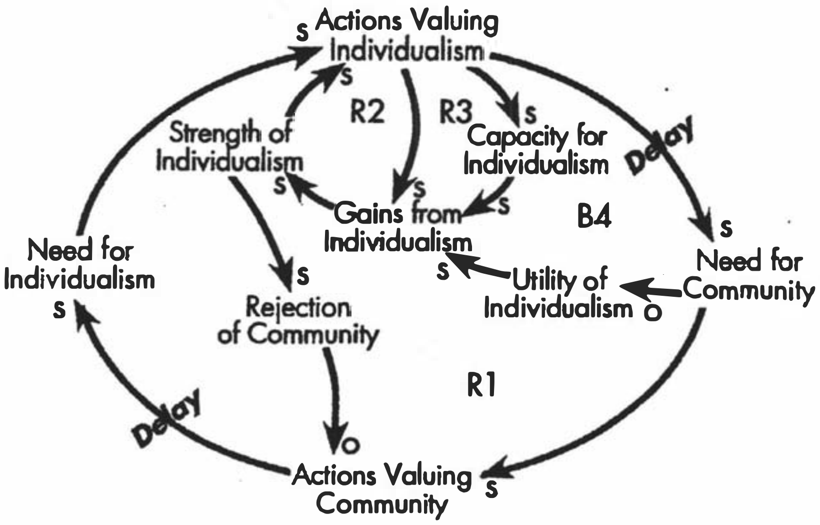
Unconscious Assumptions

The movement between two opposites rarely happens smoothly. Often, the delay between actions that support one value and the growth in the need for its opposite leads to an unconscious overemphasis on the original value. For instance, when a group clearly sees a gain from actions valuing the individual, it tends to resolve subsequent dilemmas in favor of the individual. Over time, the team will find that it emphasizes individualism without consciously thinking about the alternative. In this way, the group creates an unconscious assumption that pursuing one value ahead of its opposite is the best way to act. Thus, individualism may become part of the group's culture—its unconscious assumptions regarding the best way to act. This is represented in "Overreliance on One Value," on p. 19, as the variable "Strength of Individualism," which grows as a result of loop R2.

Another factor that causes imbalance between opposing values is that, as group members act in support of a value, they build their capacity to support that value (R3). An organization that has a history of valuing individualism is likely to have built up systems and skills that support individualism

PMA was experiencing similar dynamics based on the values of "innovation" and "quality": The company could invest in finding new products or in improving the quality of existing ones. Ralph found that his efforts to introduce innovative products brought gains in the form of satisfied customers. His capacity for generating further innovations also grew. Not surprisingly, his assumption about the benefits of innovation became embedded in PMA's culture. This dynamic explains why Ralph, and PMA, pushed for more and more innovation in their work, despite the problems this created.

OVERRELIANCE ON ONE VALUE


Actions Valuing Individualism
s
s
R2
R3
s
Strength of Individualism
s
Capacity for Individualism
Delay
s
s
Gains from Individualism
s
B4
s
Need for Individualism
s
s
Rejection of Community
s
Utility of Individualism
o
Need for Community
R1
Delay
o
Actions Valuing Community
s

Circularity of values is disrupted by an overreliance on individualism. Growing capacity for individualism, strength of individualism, and rejection of community lead to continued actions in support of individualism, despite this value's declining utility.

Finally, as mentioned earlier, "Actions Valuing Individualism" will eventually lead to a need for "Actions Valuing Community." As the need to value community grows, the "Utility of Individualism" and the group's gains from its actions valuing individualism also fall (B4). B4 thus acts as a limit to the growth that comes from the reinforcing processes in R2 and R3.

Conflicting Cultures

As at PMA, most organizations include groups with opposing values. Some focus on the gains to be made by sticking with the values that have brought them success in the past. Barry Johnson refers to such groups as "tradition-bearers." As the need for the opposite value grows, other members of the organization act as "crusaders" for new values.

Tradition-bearers and crusaders within organizations conflict over values. As the strength of each group's culture develops, so does the belief that the other's values are wrong. At PMA, Ralph's ever-growing belief in the value of innovation led him to reject calls for greater stability.

So far, the description of interdependent opposites has focused on the behavior of those in the organization holding the primary value (individualism in the diagram, or innovation in PMA's case). Within most organizations, these dynamics will be mirrored by those holding the opposing value. It is easy for any group to look past the interdependence of the values that are in conflict. An organization has experienced gains based on its values and has made a commitment to those values by developing capacity around them. We often feel that if one value is good, its opposite must be bad (see De Bono, *I Am Right, You Are Wrong*).

In addition, any group can readily find examples of the misuse of the opposing value. A value is misused when people continue to apply it past the point where it starts to undermine its opposite. Thus, extreme individualism destroys a group's sense of community. Concern for community, taken too far, erodes individual freedom and opportunity.

This pattern allows people holding one value to categorize all those holding the opposite value as extremists who want to take the rejected value too far. So, for example, people who value individualism may label those with values that focus on community as "communists." People who value community may label those with individualistic values as "anarchists."

At PMA, Ralph could point to numerous examples of clients who suffered from their reluctance to adopt new ideas, and these cases intensified his reliance on innovation. Frank and Barry, on the other hand, saw plenty of clients who were unable to institutionalize change based on their work with PMA. In their view, these examples confirmed the need for higher levels of product quality at PMA.

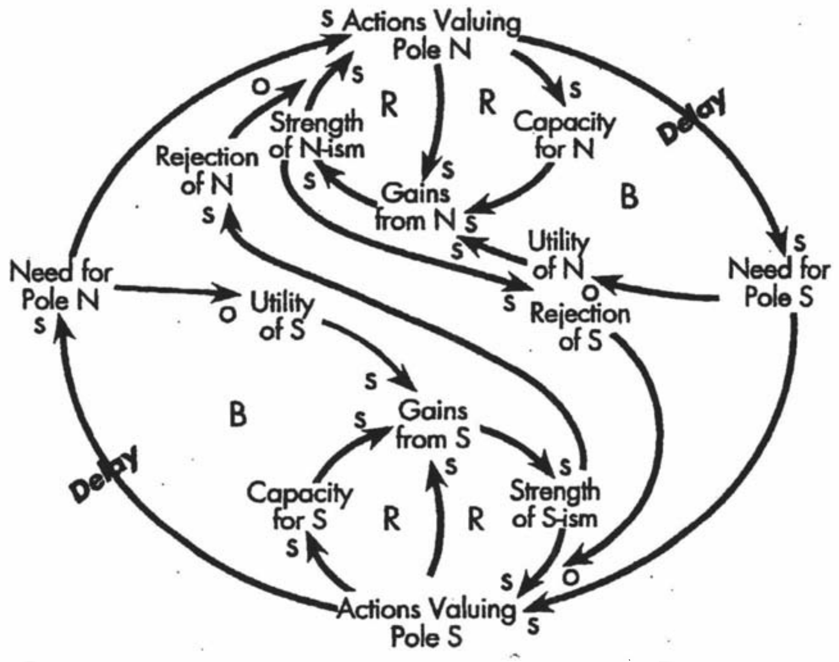
Leverage

The circularity of values is a naturally occurring cycle in living systems; for instance, there is constant movement between inhaling and exhaling, exertion and relaxation, integration and differentiation. Healthy movement between these opposites is needed to sustain the system overall. Problems arise because of the unconscious overreliance on one value at the expense of another. Conflict between groups within an organization is usually a tip-off that this unconscious process has begun.

Many people assume that solutions to problems caused by values-based conflict must involve power. Those crusading for a change in organizational practices feel that they should have more power in order to exert a greater influence. Tradition-bearers use the power they have to hold on to what they value. However, power-based strategies address only the symptoms of the structure of interdependent opposites; they resolve conflict by allowing one group to "win." In the future, either the conflict will return because the need for the "losing" value remains, or the system will die. To expose the self-destructive nature of this power-based approach, Barry Johnson encourages people to imagine the effect of treating breathing (inhaling and exhaling) as a conflict and having one side "win" at the expense of the other.

The back-and-forth dynamics within the structure tend to draw participants' attention away from the healthy operation represented by the outside loop (see "Values-Based Conflict"). To gain leverage, participants need to become aware of the possibilities that emerge when the outside reinforcing loop is working well. Those functioning within the system should also become conscious of the interdependence of the opposing values. Dialogue can be a useful tool for surfacing the need for a circularity of movement between values.

VALUES-BASED CONFLICT


Actions Valuing Pole N
Strength of N-ism
Capacity for N
Gains from N
Rejection of N
Utility of N
Delay
Need for Pole N
Need for Pole S
Utility of S
Rejection of S
Gains from S
Capacity for S
Strength of S-ism
Actions Valuing Pole S
Delay
R
R
R
R
B
B
S
O

Different groups within the organization develop subcultures around the opposing values, leading to values-based conflict. In this generic version of the Interdependent Opposites systemic structure, values are represented as Pole N (for "North") and Pole S (for "South"), to indicate their interdependent, yet opposite relationship.

People must be willing to move away from what they value in order to bring about the vision they desire—while trusting that the organization will eventually come back around the loop. They do not have to give up what they believe; they just have to live with a delay before their beliefs take center stage again. According to Robert Fritz, without awareness of this cycle, groups may oscillate between values rather than applying those most likely to bring about the greatest gains and highest leverage.

In *Polarity Management*, Johnson describes a simple yet powerful approach to attaining this leverage. His method involves charting both the upside and downside of each of the opposing values. This allows people to see and feel the need for movement between the values, determine the direction of movement currently needed, and establish how they will recognize the need to change emphasis. This approach is one way to achieve what Hampden-Turner describes as "reconciliation of values."

At PMA, Sarah recognized the need to stop the values-based conflict. Her solution was to split the company into two divisions. At one division, Barry, Frank, and Sarah concentrate on customizing and running existing programs for clients, and on improving the quality of PMA's services. At a separate location, Ralph develops new products. Once Ralph develops a product, he passes it on to the other group, so that he can move on to new ideas.

The new structure allows everyone at PMA to appreciate all the values contained within the company. Ralph now sees the need for quality. Barry and Frank are increasingly innovative in their own work, building on a foundation of solid products. They often consult Ralph about ways to improve their practice. The reconciliation of values at PMA has had a beneficial impact on the company's work with clients as well. Because client organizations also require this movement between innovation and quality, the company can offer them consulting services at whichever stage of the cycle the clients find themselves. As members of one division of PMA see their clients' gains diminishing, they might refer them to the other division.

Interdependent Opposites and Organizational Learning

Research by Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars suggests that English-speaking democracies (such as the U.S., U.K., Canada, Australia, and New Zealand) are characterized by:

- putting *universal rules* ahead of *relationships*
- putting *individual rights* ahead of *community health*
- dealing with complexity *analytically* as opposed to *integratively*
- awarding status on the basis of *achievement* rather than *ascribing* status on some other basis (for example, age or experience).

Each of these pairings follows the dynamics illustrated in "Values-Based Conflict"; for example, Universal Rules could be featured at the top of the diagram, with Relationships featured at the bottom. Because many groups and organizations in the West follow the pattern of valuing rules, individualism, analysis, and achievement, we could group all four of these values at the top and call them "Cluster A," and then group relationships, community values, integration, and ascription at the bottom and call them "Cluster B."

Organizational cultures within English-speaking democracies tend to overemphasize the Cluster A values. We can view the disciplines of organizational learning as a movement designed to compensate for this overreliance. So, for instance, team learning emphasizes relationships and community ahead of managing or controlling individuals through the use of universal rules. Systems thinking encourages integrative thinking over analysis. Learning organizations may award status to members of the organizational community who share the community's vision, rather than to those who achieve success according to analytically derived performance indicators.

Organizational learning practitioners thus take on the role of crusaders for values opposite to those unconsciously held by many in their organizations. Yet this crusading inevitably generates conflict with tradition-bearers. To support their crusade, practitioners may inadvertently enter into low-leverage, power-based strategies. They would do better to make the circularity of the values in contention visible to all, using the techniques described above.

Reconciliation

All groups face challenges involving opposing values. Indeed, the very nature of values and the structure of paradox lend themselves to conflict. Groups too easily see the benefit to be gained from their own values and a danger in pursuing values held by others.

The structure of paradox also encourages groups to pursue their traditional values until they experience crisis. But by definition, a crisis cannot be resolved by relying on the assumptions that originally got the organization into the situation (Mitroff et al., *Framebreak*). As we have seen, overemphasis on one value requires a shift to its opposite to undo harm that has been done. "Managing Opposing Values" provides examples of the results of either managing or mismanaging common pairs of opposing values. Only when these are managed well can an organization sustain itself over time.

Most diverse, complex organizations already possess the values required for building a sustained future. The challenge groups face is to

MANAGING OPPOSING VALUES

OPPOSING VALUES	FIRST DOMINATES SECOND	SECOND DOMINATES FIRST	CIRCULARITY OF MOVEMENT
Individual and Community	Selfish pursuit of individual rights destroys sense of community.	Conforming to rigid community demands suppresses individuality and diversity.	Strong sense of community provides individuals opportunities to express personality within reasonable boundaries, set to protect community.
Change and Stability	People experience future shock, as nothing seems stable or dependable.	Organizations atrophy and stagnate. Systems become "dinosaurs."	Core purposes provide solid foundation as people explore new ways to work. New approaches refine and enhance core purpose.
Analysis and Synthesis	Focus on detail prevents people from seeing the whole. People absorbed in means, forgetting ends.	Broad, holistic views predominate with little understanding of specific actions needed to bring results.	People see both the "forest" and the "trees," understanding their part in the larger scheme while developing special skills.
Centralization and Decentralization	Bureaucratic rules and procedures prevent people from responding to local circumstances; people feel controlled.	No coordination or wider learning from fragmented local initiatives leaves people feeling isolated.	People act to apply shared intent in ways appropriate to local circumstances, generating learning channeled to other divisions.

reconcile these differing values—the same values that often generate the most heated conflict within the organization. Rather than experiencing differences in values as a struggle that immobilizes an organization, people should enjoy these differences as diversity that infuses the organization with vigor and variety.

Philip Ramsey is a lecturer in Training and Development and Organizational Learning at Massey University in New Zealand. He is also the author of the *Billibonk* series, a set of stories that teach systems thinking and organizational learning concepts.

Appendix 1c

Article Published in *Women in Management Review* (1996) 11, 8, 4-12:

Feminine and Masculine Values in Flight Instructing

Feminine and masculine values in flight instructing

Deborah C. Ramsey
and Philip L. Ramsey

The authors
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Philip L. Ramsey is a Lecturer in Human Resource Development at Massey University, New Zealand.

Abstract
Describes a research project that explores differences in values between male and female flying instructors. Hazardous attitudes and practices in aviation have been attributed to masculine values associated with the flying culture. Data were collected from male and female flying instructors and their approaches to resolving instructional dilemmas were compared. Findings were used to predict whether female instructors were likely to shift the culture towards more feminine values, or whether the culture was likely to shift the values of the female instructors. Finds evidence of female instructors being less analytical in their view of instructing, and more achievement oriented than men. Suggests that female instructors are reacting to existing masculine culture rather than promoting feminine values.

Women in Management Review
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Introduction

Women bring values to organizations that differ markedly from those of men. At times these values clash with the existing culture, requiring women to either conform or work to have their values appreciated and rewarded by organizations.

It appears that this situation currently exists within the New Zealand aviation industry. Women often find the aviation culture requires them to act in ways they find unnatural. At the same time, many executives in aviation, particularly those concerned with safety issues, acknowledge the need for cultural change.

Flying instructors in aviation are central to its culture. They have a formative influence on the attitudes and behaviours of new pilots. Consequently their actions can either reinforce the existing culture or contribute to culture change. This paper examines gender differences in the instructional strategies adopted by flying instructors. We consider the effect aviation culture has on the approach female flying instructors take to their work, and the likelihood that they can lead cultural change in the industry.

Organizational culture

Organizational culture has been a major theme in managerial literature over the last two decades. Culture has been described as a pattern of basic assumptions used by a group in resolving problems and is taught to new members as the correct way to think, feel and perceive in relation to those problems[1].

A culture develops as members of a group develop a shared system of meaning, which gradually falls below the level of awareness[2]. When members of a group find that a particular strategy works in solving a problem, they will tend, naturally, to continue adopting the same strategy in similar circumstances. Over time the strategy becomes the established way of doing things for the group. The problem and the strategy can be acted on without explanation, having become a basic assumption. Through this process ways of acting fall below the group's level of awareness[3].

Every group of people is required to solve a number of general, universally-shared problems[4]. For instance, every group awards status to its members, therefore all groups face the problem of whether this should be awarded based on what members do or who they are. Patterns established as they select solutions in order to resolve these universal problems enable us to distinguish between different cultures. Doing so also helps us to predict where individuals will experience "culture clashes" as they move between groups.

Masculine vs feminine cultures

A number of researchers agree that gender differences can be viewed as cultural differences: that in growing up men and women develop different patterns of solving problems, based on different assumptions and values[5]. Viewed in this way, talk between men and women constitutes cross-cultural communication.

Hampden-Turner[6] has explored these cultural differences between genders across a set of dimensions based on the universal problems articulated by Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck[6]. He found that four dimensions in particular (shown in Table I) were useful in exploring the "cross-cultural" experiences of women executives operating in a predominantly masculine business environment.

The first issue relates to the making of rules and discovering of exceptions. Where groups have to deal with exceptional cases they can choose either to apply the nearest universal rule or make special exceptions according to the particular circumstances of the case. Often these circumstances have to do with the relationships involved: will an exception be made in the case of a close relationship?[7]. With regard to this issue, men tend to be more universalistic than women[6].

The second issue concerns how groups prefer to view complex issues: either endeavouring to view the entire system by seeking an integrative understanding, or deconstructing the system through analysis to understand its component parts. Women tend more than men to prefer integrative, as opposed to analytical, strategies for understanding complexity[6].

The third issue deals with the way groups reconcile individual rights with the needs of the community. Some groups make decisions that reflect a belief that the group is best served by giving individuals as much freedom and opportunity to develop as is possible. Decisions of other groups reflect the assumption that the needs of the community should be put ahead of the rights of individual members. In this, men tend to be more individualistic than women.

The final issue deals with the way in which status is accorded to people within groups. Some groups choose to accord people status on the basis of what they do or achieve. In other groups, status is ascribed to people because of who they are. This ascription may be made according to the age, experience, background or any number of factors that differentiate those making up the group. Women are more likely than men to award status through ascription[6].

Within a group there will be individual differences in the strength of the values used in resolving these issues. The culture of a group will, however, establish a pattern of resolving the issues that will be evident across the group as a whole.

Circularity of values

It is useful to think of the values shown in Table I as interdependent opposites[8]. When faced with a problem to be resolved a person or group must move, at least initially, towards one of the values or the other; there is a choice

Table I Masculine and feminine values

Issue	Masculine	Feminine
Rules versus relationships (Uni-Par)	*Universals*: establishing standard rules to be applied to everyone	*Particulars*: making exceptions to rules to suit special cases
Wholes versus parts (Anl-Int)	*Analysis*: breaking issues into separate parts	*Integration*: making connections between related issues
Group versus individual (Ind-Com)	*Individuals*: elevating rights of the individual members of the group	*Community*: emphasizing needs of the group as a whole
How status is accorded (Ach-Asc)	*Achievement*: awards and status based on current performance	*Ascription*: status based on other characteristics: age, loyalty, gender, etc.

to be made because the values are opposites. Over time, however, a group needs to balance the two values because of their interdependence. For example, when an organization encourages individual members of a work group to compete with one another, it does so at the expense of group cohesiveness. The more that individuals compete, the greater the need for the group to rebuild its sense of community.

The interdependence of the values creates a circularity of movement between them. The application of a universal rule may highlight the need for particularist exceptions to be made. As more and more exceptions are required the need for new or modified rules becomes apparent. In this way universalism leads to particularism which leads back to universalism.

In most cultures the need for each of the opposing values in a pairing is seen. The predominant value, though, is self-evident, while the need for its opposite becomes apparent over time. Cultures determine the priority given to the values: that is, which of each pair is most likely to be applied first. Women are more likely to strengthen a particularist relationship first, allowing a universal rule to be applied later, where men will tend to apply a rule first and later fix any damage the application causes to relationships.

Culture and economic performance

Because patterns of decision making in groups and organizations tend to fall below the level of awareness as culture strengthens, balancing interdependent opposite values is typically left unmanaged. A group with a strong analytical tendency will find that it increasingly suffers from the inability "see the forest for the trees", concentrating on details rather than contextual issues. While the need is for more integrative thinking, the cultural pattern is for the group to work harder to solve problems through analysis.

For this reason culture can set groups up to experience predictable crises. If an organization over-extends itself towards the value of ascribed status at the expense of achieved status, people will tend towards feelings of entitlement, so that the organization fails to achieve sufficient results to sustain itself[9]. If an organization extends itself too long in the direction of achievement at the expense of ascribed status, people will experience problems of burnout, and short-term rather than strategic thinking as people seek quick results.

Business organizations in English-speaking democracies have developed cultures that are predominantly masculine[6], consistently valuing universalism, analysis, individualism and achievement. This has left economies such as the USA, the UK, Australia and New Zealand struggling to compete in markets where customers value products with integrated values, customized to particular needs[7]. Organizations with cultures that comprise masculine values are better suited to strategies that involve low-cost routine performance than to strategies involving differentiated products.

According to this analysis, masculine cultures suit markets where customers can "have any colour as long as it is black". In most developed countries, however, organizations are seeking to move into "value added" markets by offering products or services with integrated values differentiated to meet particular needs of customers.

Popular themes in management literature suggest that many organizational cultures are experiencing problems associated with overemphasis on masculine values. Organizational learning, and in particular systems thinking, are aimed at balancing analytical and integrative thinking so that organizations can "see both the forest and the trees"[10]. Efforts at team-building and team learning are common in organizations seeking to overcome overemphasis on individualism[11]. Managers are increasingly urged to look for particularist solutions to problems, rather than resort to universal answers[12]. Many organizations are looking for alternatives to pay-for-performance systems that put too great an emphasis on achievement, leading to serious organizational problems[13].

Women in masculine cultures

The situation outlined above poses a dilemma for women in organizations with masculine cultures. To become accepted members of the organization they do their best to adopt its masculine values. Doing so, however, only contributes to the organization's imbalance in values and lessens it competitiveness in the long-term. Adopting masculine values increases women managers' chances of advancement within unsustainable organizations.

Alternatively, women managers could work to have feminine patterns of action and decision making valued within organizations. Doing so would likely disadvantage individual women managers in terms of short-term advancement, as the culture rewards that which it values. At the same time, this course is more likely to be advantageous for future women managers and the organization itself in the long term.

It seems most likely that women will choose the option that is to their short-term advantage unless the cultural issue is clear or their values are particularly strong. By choosing to become members of organizations with masculine cultures and seeking to advance within those organizations, women dispose themselves to adopt masculine values by default.

Masculine values in aviation

The culture of aviation provides a clear example of masculine values affecting people's attitudes and performance. There are a number of reasons for saying that aviation represents a masculine culture. Technology-related careers such as aviation typically have masculine gendered social environments[14]. Until recently there has been little inducement for women to enter professional flying, given the limited opportunities for airline careers[15].

Humour often conveys underlying assumptions and values inherent in a culture[16] and many jokes within the flying fraternity emphasize that women do not belong in the air. One such joke suggests that "if God had meant women to fly he'd have made the sky pink".

Further indications of an over-emphasis on masculine values are current efforts to move pilots away from individualistic, universalist and analytical ways of making decisions. The development of flying owes much to the two World Wars and to military flying, and the image of a glamorous but slightly reckless fighter or test pilot may colour both the popular view of pilots and the perception that pilots themselves have of their profession[17]. The attitude of "machismo" associated with this image has been identified as a hazardous attitude contributing to poor pilot judgement[18].

Masculine values appear to affect aviation outcomes directly as measured by air accident statistics. As aircraft become more reliable and more ergonomically suited to their human pilots, major air carriers are experiencing reductions in the overall rate of accidents. These improvements in technical factors have not been matched by improvements in pilot judgement, which is taking an increasingly prominent role in accident causation. Approximately 75 per cent of all airline crashes are attributable to flight crew factors rather than mechanical faults or external factors[19].

These factors are unacceptable to the aviation community, which is taking steps to reduce the role played by pilot error in accident causation. These steps primarily involve training for pilots in "human factors". Much of this training aims at reinforcing more feminine values such as risk-aversive flying and a less macho image for pilots. Most major air carriers now implement crew resource management (CRM) programmes designed to enhance the performance of the entire flight crew. Focusing on the flight crew as a team and exploring social factors that influence crew performance is a new departure in aviation training. For captains and their crews it involves a fundamental shift in assumptions from individualism to communitarianism in the cockpit.

Historically, the captain has been expected to maintain exclusive control of a flight. His word was law and the input from other crew members was not encouraged or, in some instances, tolerated. To underline the elevated role in the flight hierarchy captains were known to humiliate or demean their co-pilots intentionally.

While individualism may have been appropriate for single-pilot fighter aircraft during wartime, the needs of a civilian flight crew are significantly different. CRM programmes aim to help captains increase their insight into attitudes, values and habits that are largely subconscious, including being over-controlling, discouraging co-operation, adopting aggressive communication styles, and concentrating on task performance to the detriment of social relationships[19]. Communication practices advocated in CRM programmes are closely linked to feminine values[20].

While a shift towards feminine values is apparent in the training given to professional airline pilots, the ideal time to instil attitudes and practices is during initial flight training where life-long patterns are learned[19]. At the present time there is little likelihood that New Zealand pilots trained outside the airlines will be affected by CRM initiatives. General aviation pilots learning in aero clubs and flying schools are most likely to be taught to fly by instructors whose attitudes are shaped more by the prevailing culture of aviation than by initiatives and programmes developing in airlines.

One hope for a shift in the general aviation culture is the number of women entering careers in flying instruction. If they were to take a leadership role in instilling feminine values they might produce changes in pilot attitudes and decision making with a positive impact on aviation outcomes.

The study

Our research sought to explore differences between values of male and female flying instructors to gauge the impact of the existing flying culture on women instructors. To our knowledge, this is the first study to investigate this issue. The methodology involved posing to instructors of each gender dilemmas which oblige them to take sides on moral or instructional issues.

Because of the circularity of cultural values, discussed earlier, people are often able to see both sides of a values-based issue. As a consequence, people commonly espouse one value and practise its opposite, while being unaware of any discrepancy[21]. By forcing instructors to state a preference we sought to uncover which of the two values in conflict in each dilemma was regarded as fundamental: which was the first and which the second foundation stone on which the respondent's value system is based[7].

The study used dilemmas developed by Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars for their cross-cultural research. They had based these dilemmas on the seven fundamental valuing processes identified through literature on culture[4]. The Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars' dilemmas were modified so that they related to instructional situations and problems recognizable to flying instructors. The reliability of the original items was estimated by Cronbach's alpha with reliability scores ranging from moderate to excellent. Modified dilemmas were evaluated by an expert panel of three, tasked with assigning each dilemma to one of the seven value dimensions. Slight changes were made to some items until consensus was reached that dilemmas fitted the value dimensions.

A questionnaire booklet containing the dilemmas was administered by mail to 16 female and 40 male instructors. Fourteen females returned completed questionnaires. Nineteen questionnaires were returned from the males sampled. The small numbers in the study were due to the scarcity of female flying instructors in New Zealand. While no attempt was made to match the samples, male and female groups were similar in age and experience – 58 per cent of males and 57 per cent of females were between 20 and 29 years old; 68 per cent of males and 64 per cent of females had between one and five years' instructing experience. The only difference to emerge was in the hours flown per year, with males reporting an average of 354 hours, and females 214 hours.

Dilemmas were presented in random order, with opportunity given for respondents to make written comments about the way in which they resolved each issue and to indicate those dilemmas that posed particular challenges for them. Demographic data about age, experience, number of hours flown, and so forth, was collected.

Results

Twenty-one dilemmas were presented to respondents. Of these, ten concerned valuing processes that Hampden-Turner found to be unrelated to gender differences. These produced no significant differences in this study and were not analysed further. The remaining 11 items related to the four valuing processes used by Hampden-Turner in his research (see Table I). Of these 11 items, seven produced interesting results (see Table II).

The independence of the male and female samples was tested using the Chi-square test of independence. This test was used to establish whether the male and female samples represented independent groups. The Chi-square test indicates whether a relationship exists between variables, but does not indicate the strength of the relationship. For that reason a Phi test was also applied. This test indicates strength by assigning a value between 0 and 1, and, because of the nature of the test, adjusts for small sample sizes[22]. Table II shows the significance of the Chi-square test, and the value (V) and significance (S) results of the Phi test.

Table II Study results

Item	Male	Female	Chi	Phi
Percentage choosing a standard (Uni-Par)	74	64	–	–
Percentage rejecting "community relationship" view of aviation (Anl-Int)	52	57	–	–
Percentage preferring "objective expert" description of instructors (Anl-Int)	37	0	0.01	V 0.45
Percentage preferring analytical approach to performance problems (Anl-Int)	89	64	0.05	V 0.38
Percentage rejecting group developmental activities (Ind-Com)	26	43	–	–
Percentage awarding prizes on the basis of "commitment to school" (Ach-Asc)	37	43	0.02	V 0.42 S 0.05
Percentage rejecting "fitting into group" as primary basis for hiring (Ach-Asc)	58	78	0.18	V 0.32 S 0.19

Two questions proved to have significant levels of independence ($p < 0.05$) according to the Phi test, as indicated on the table above. One question tended towards significance ($p < 0.10$), and a fourth could be considered very marginal ($p < 0.20$).

Universals vs particulars (Uni-Par)

Dilemmas in this area place rules in conflict with relationships. It would reasonably be expected that there would be significant differences between the culture of aviation and that of women in general. Where women tend to place greater emphasis on relationships than men, aviation has a long history of prioritizing rules.

Throughout aviation great emphasis is placed on standard operating procedures. In order to minimize risk, pilots carry out standardized checks before, during and after flying. There is a universal language used for communication between pilots and air traffic control (ATC). All pilots are expected to conform to the rules of this language, no matter what relationship they may have with the person to whom they are communicating.

In contrast with aviation, education is moving away from universal ways of teaching, towards relationship-based, or "learner-centred" approaches[23]. Increasingly, educators are operating under the assumption that there are numerous ways for individuals to achieve mastery of skills and that learners can be given freedom to choose an approach that suits them, rather than having to conform to the approach prescribed by the instructor[24].

Because of the universalistic nature of aviation, flying instructors in general could be expected to be less likely to adopt learner-centred approaches than instructors in other industries. This is borne out in this study by responses to a dilemma that asked instructors to choose between reinforcing a standard procedure or allowing individual variation that did not compromise safety standards. Seventy-five per cent of respondents chose to reinforce the standard procedure.

Were women more ready to accept individual variation among learners? While 64 per cent of females chose to reinforce the standard procedure compared with 74 per cent of males, the difference between the groups was not statistically significant. While women appear less universalistic than men, over half of the women sampled conformed to the aviation culture.

It was noteworthy that no respondents declined to answer this question. Apparently all had clear preferences on the issue.

Analysis vs integration (Anl-Int)

Dilemmas in this area require respondents to choose between deconstructing an issue to view its component parts, or constructing the issue to view it as part of a larger whole. Engineering and technical areas of expertise have traditionally emphasized analysis, so it is not surprising that aviation is predominantly an analytical culture.

Military organizations also tend to emphasize clear separations between functions, thus deconstructing the organization into separate components rather than viewing it holistically.

The close link between aviation and the military is seen in the clear distinctions made between pilots and ATC, pilots and engineers, private pilots and commercial pilots, military and civilian, and so forth.

Responses to dilemmas in this area were inconsistent in their orientation. Male and female instructors tended to be more or less analytical depending on the subject being considered. One dilemma asked flying instructors to choose between descriptions of the industry. The first description emphasized the specialist tasks and functions performed and the need for these to be carried out efficiently. The second option described the industry as a community and then emphasized the need for healthy relationships between those in the community. There was a slight tendency for both male (52 per cent) and female instructors (57 per cent) to reject the integrative or holistic "community relationships" description.

There were clearer gender differences, however, when instructors were presented with dilemmas requiring analytical or integrative approaches to instructing learners. One dilemma asked respondents to choose between an analytical description of instructing that referred to an instructor as an "objective expert", and an integrative description referring to an instructor as a "coach". There was a significant difference between genders with 37 per cent of males preferring the "objective expert" description, where no women preferred that option.

Comments by women on this dilemma included "Must have a rapport with the student to achieve results", and "Most students we get start as kids. You have to encourage their maturity as well as flying, as the two go hand-in-hand".

A similar result was obtained when instructors were asked about strategies for correcting performance problems. They were asked to choose between initially helping the learner understand the reason for the mistake (an analytical approach), or building the learner's confidence (an integrative approach). The analytical approach was chosen by 89 per cent of males compared with 64 per cent of females. While females were significantly more feminine (integrative) in their responses than males, over half of the women sampled conformed to the masculine (analytical) approach that is standard in the aviation culture.

One male suggested that the confidence-building approach could be considered "if it was not a serious mistake". More integrative instructors might think the opposite: the more serious the mistake, the more likely it is that students require confidence building.

A female instructor provided an anecdotal example to support her choice of confidence building: "I once taught a girl in the circuit and she was having tremendous difficulty landing the aircraft. She knew *why* she was having difficulty, but she also had a mental block that she was 'hopeless', 'no good at flying' and 'my worst student'. In reality, she was an average student progressing at the normal rate, but who set high standards for herself. The remedy: I got her to sit in the back of the aircraft during another student's circuit flight so she could observe that others have similar difficulties and make the same mistakes. This boosted her self-confidence enormously and she is now working even harder at her flying."

Individuals vs community (Ind-Com)

Dilemmas in this area require people to choose between the rights of individuals or the good of a group or community. Aviation has a history of emphasizing and rewarding individual responsibility and initiative. For safety reasons great emphasis is placed on the individual pilot in control of an aircraft, the "pilot in command". CRM initiatives, as mentioned earlier, focus heavily on shifting pilots from an individualistic to a team focus.

Research in education and training suggests that important instructional outcomes can be attained through having learners work and learn in groups [25]. Over-emphasis on individualism in learning would prevent achievement of these outcomes.

In this study respondents were asked to choose between arranging for learners to do group work, or concentrating on individual development. It might be expected that female instructors would be more likely to choose the group development option, given the higher value placed on community by women. In fact, female instructors were more likely to reject group development (43 per cent) than were male instructors (26 per cent), though the difference was not statistically significant.

Female flying instructors may have rejected group development as a result of their own experiences as student pilots. Given the relatively small number of women involved in flying, group activities would have involved their working within groups comprising mainly men. Women may have found it more beneficial to concentrate on individual development in this circumstance. Comments from females who chose individual development over group work included "Bar time = group time", "Groups meet naturally – it should not be discouraged", and "Progress is an individual thing, not to be compared in the initial stages".

Achievement vs ascription (Ach-Asc)

Dilemmas in this area require choices regarding how status is awarded: according to what people achieve, or according to who they are. While masculine cultures generally award status by achievement, aviation tends to be ascriptive. People in aviation are given status based on what they fly, where they fly, who they have flown with, and so on.

The ascriptive nature of aviation culture is exemplified by Ernest Gann, who has written of the early days of commercial aviation in the USA[26]. Gann writes of how, at the start of his career, he was given the seniority number 267. Airline appointments were always given to the pilot with the lowest seniority number, rather than on the basis of current achievements. While this resulted in frustration for Gann when he missed out on appointments to those with seniority, the value placed on ascription is highlighted by Gann's reaction to meeting another pilot with his airline, Sloniger. Gann writes:

> This was Sloniger and his seniority number was...ONE...I had never seen Sloniger before and so knew him only by name, reputation, and the wonder of his unique number "One" (p. 266).

It might be expected that female flying instructors would find it most straightforward to conform to this aspect of aviation culture, and that their responses would mirror those of male instructors, or be even more ascriptive. The results were, like those concerning analysis and integration, dependent on the issue at hand.

One dilemma asked instructors whether they prefer to award prizes on the basis of commitment to the flying school over a period of years, or for flying achievements over the past year. Females (43 per cent) were more likely to choose the ascriptive "commitment" option than were males (21 per cent). In this case male flying instructors may have been more influenced by the cultural value of individualism than ascription.

In contrast to this were responses to a dilemma that asked about criteria for selecting a new flying instructor. Instructors were asked to choose between placing greatest weight on the candidate's ability to fit into the existing group, or on the candidate's skills, knowledge and record of success. In this instance, females (78 per cent) were more likely to avoid the ascriptive "fitting the group" option than were males (58 per cent). The level of significance for this question was more marginal than others indicated.

It seems likely that these results indicate a dislike among women for the ascriptive nature of aviation when it is evident in selection decisions. Where status is awarded for reasons other than achievement, women pilots are likely to have suffered when others have been ascribed status at their expense. Comments by female instructors indicate that this may be the case. One female respondent said regarding hiring decisions: "*So* political. ALL on equal terms." Another commented "I have been twice turned away from potential flying jobs for this reason". Commenting on another dilemma that dealt with ascribing status in hiring instructors, a female respondent commented: "Unfortunately, this is how it seems to work in New Zealand".

Conclusion

The study investigated the major influences on the decision making of female flying instructors, whether they were primarily influenced by the masculine values of aviation or the feminine values of women.

The results of this study suggest that aviation culture is exerting the stronger influence. At times female instructors appear to be conforming to masculine values of the existing culture, as in the case of standard procedures and their view of the industry. At times responses indicate that their attitudes are shaped by their reactions against aspects of the aviation culture. This appears to be the case when rejecting group activities and ascriptive hiring practices. In both cases, whether conforming to, or reacting against existing values, attitudes and decisions are being shaped by the aviation culture.

The area where female flying instructors are retaining feminine values despite the aviation culture is in their integrative view of instructing.

The power of organization cultures in shaping individual attitudes has been widely reported[27], so it is not surprising that female flying instructors' responses in this study have tended to be shaped by the culture in which they are working. Working to shift the culture would require a deliberate and, presumably, collective choice by women in aviation. Without that choice individuals are unlikely to view their instructional strategies as a leadership issue; rather they will react or respond to the immediate pressures and opportunities of their work lives[28].

If this is so, the implication of this for aviation and other masculine cultures is that culture change will not result simply from increasing the numbers of women within them. Because of the unconscious nature of cultures, culture change requires deliberate choices regarding the values that shape people's work. To this end, copies of this paper are being sent to women instructors involved in the survey, and results of the survey will be made available to the aviation community through flying schools, aero clubs and appropriate journals.

For women in masculine cultures the choice is a difficult one. Success in an organization is defined by the values of the culture. Women can work for short-term success by conforming to the prevailing culture. Alternatively they can sacrifice short-term success and work towards changing the values on which success is measured. It seems unlikely that women can have both.

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Appendix 1d:

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Learning to be Complete: the challenge of cultural dynamics

FEATURE

Learning to Be Complete: The Challenge of Cultural Dynamics

Philip L Ramsey

Imagine you are part of an industry that prides itself on its ability to learn. It has made huge advances over several decades with constant improvements to the technologies it uses and the service it provides to customers. Would you expect that your industry's ability to learn applied to all areas of its operation? Or might your ability to learn in one area of your operations lead to neglect of other areas?

The dynamics of an organization or industry's culture make it difficult to achieve balanced learning. And, significantly, because of the way cultural processes operate, areas that are neglected are often ones vital to the culture's survival. Consider the case of the aviation industry. It is easy to appreciate how much learning has taken place within aviation when we view film of early attempts at flight. And we are familiar with the thorough investigations that follow air accidents, and the industry's readiness to put lessons learned from such investigations into operation. Yet the history of air-accident investigation highlights the dramatic effect of culture on learning.

For much of the early history of air-accident investigation, there was a strong technical bias evident in reporting. Investigators explored and reported on technical malfunctions in detail, while they made little further examination into accidents that involved human failings and were generally attributed to pilot error (O'Hare and Roscoe, 1990). And while fine distinctions were being made regarding technical failures, pilot error was a causal factor in over 70% of air accidents in the years 1959 to 1989 (Helmreich and Foushee, 1993). So despite data indicating that human factors were the leading cause of air accidents, for years, the industry's preference for investigating technical factors limited what could be learned from accident reports.

A further cultural factor shaped what the industry could learn from accidents. Aviation has a strong tradition of individualism, assessing pilots on whether they have the "right stuff." Not until the early 1980s did analysis of documented incidents and accidents establish that pilot error was most commonly a failure of coordination or communication *between* members of an aircrew, rather than the lack of proficiency of one particular member (Helmreich and Foushee, 1993). In summary, the culture of aviation biased the industry toward looking for technical causes of accidents and, when dealing with human causes, to assume that solutions were best dealt with through improved individual proficiency. It was as if the industry as a whole had a blind spot preventing it from seeing clearly the nature of some accidents.

John Nance expressed the perplexing nature of this cultural bias in *Blind Trust* (Nance, 1986):

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> It was so obvious—so painfully obvious—but most of those engaged in commercial aviation couldn't see it, or wouldn't. Human beings engaged in a human enterprise are subject to human failures.

To understand better why members of an organization or industry might experience a similar bias in their learning, we need to consider more closely the dynamics of culture. What is culture and how does it shape preferences for learning? How might you uncover the blind spots in your organization? And how can culture enlighten efforts to create learning organizations?

What Is Culture?

It is tempting to think of an organization's culture as a *thing*. Culture might be better understood as a collection of differences. When people talk about the culture of their organization, they generally describe it in terms of differences. They might say, "Where other companies might do *A*, we would do *B*," or "we like to *X* rather than *Y*." People define the culture that identifies their group or organization by contrasting it with others. How do these differences come about? Charles Hampden-Turner and Fons Trompenaars (1993), researchers and authors on culture, suggest that cultural processes can be understood through the use of dilemmas.

People define the culture that identifies their group or organization by contrasting it with others.

Groups are constantly being presented with dilemmas—choices between two apparently opposite values. Two dilemmas presenting themselves early in the history of aviation were: Should our focus be on finding *technical* or *human* ways of improving operations? And should we view flying as a pursuit carried out by *individuals* or by *teams?*

All manner of variables will govern the initial choices made by a group presented with such dilemmas. In aviation, we can easily imagine that the engineering background of early aviators, connection with the military, and the difficulty of getting more than one person in an aircraft encouraged the choice of technical and individual responses to the dilemmas. Once a decision has been made, if it generates valued outcomes, the group is more likely to take the same option the next time the dilemma arises. And should the group favor one value over its opposite several times, the choice slips beneath the level of consciousness—it is a choice that no longer has to be justified, having become "the way we do things around here" (Bower, 1966).

Considering a culture as a collection of differences held unconsciously enables us to see that any culture is *both* good and bad for our organization. It is good because it presents us with certain valuable results and bad because it prevents us from achieving results available to other cultures. It makes sense that the aviation industry has a culture characterized by individualism and a focus on technology. However, this makes it harder to do some things that come easily to industries with cultures that emphasize collectivity and concern for people.

It may seem that there is an endless variety of differences we could use to distinguish between cultures. Some differences in values that most people have encountered are: tendency to praise and tendency to criticize; desire for planned outcomes and desire for emergent outcomes; focus on task and focus on relationships; concern for business efficiency and concern for customers; and risk seeking and risk avoiding. However, sociologist Talcott Parsons (1951) suggested that five pairs of values exist in any social system and can be used to understand the character or culture of that system. Other pairs of complementary values can be understood as variations on these archetypal pairings. The values identified by Parsons were:

- Emotionally charged and emotionally neutral—In some social systems, high value is placed on having people engage emotionally with one another, where, in others, value is placed on being emotionally neutral or objective.

- Diffuse and specific—Social systems generate different ways of dealing with complexity. One way is to view the subject in an integrated or diffused way, attempting to connect all parts of the subject into one view. The alternative is to take an analytical or specific approach, untangling the parts of the whole and dealing with each in isolation. In terms of relationships, some cultures are diffuse, encouraging individuals to relate to one another in a multidimensional way. Others are specific, encouraging a separation between the relationship people might have socially and the relationship they have at work.
- Universalistic and particularistic—Social systems determine how to handle incidents when someone acts outside the established rules. The culture of some groups encourages the establishment of universal rules, where the same standards are applied to everyone. Other groups have cultures that allow for exceptions to be made in particular cases, depending on the situation or the people involved.
- Ascription oriented and achievement oriented—Within social systems, decisions are made about how status is awarded. In some cultures, we award status to people once we see what they are able to achieve. In other groups, people have status ascribed to them before they have achieved anything; people may be awarded high status on the basis of family, caste, and school, or on the basis of age and seniority.
- Self-oriented and collectivity oriented—Some social systems operate on the assumption that if individuals are given the opportunity to pursue their individual interests, the group as a whole will be better off. Other cultures place greater emphasis on the collective, assuming that the needs of the group as a whole should be given priority, even if this means occasionally sacrificing individual freedoms or opportunities.

How do the cultural preferences of aviation considered earlier fit within Parsons's value dimensions? The tendency to individualism directly relates to the preference for self-orientation. While the connection between technology and Parsons's values may be less obvious, it is discernible. Working with technology rather than people appeals to values of emotional neutrality, specific measures, and universalism. Or, in the opposite perspective, our relationships with people tend to be highly emotionally engaging, particularistic, and diffuse. Consequently, the technological background of aviation, along with the discipline and rigor needed in flying, lead those involved in the industry to feel that these values are less desirable than their opposites.

Difference Dynamics

Many assume that the relationship between different values is simple and linear. If you wanted to describe a culture, you could draw a continuum between values in each pairing and use these to plot the relative position of a group's assumptions. While such measures are useful in providing a snapshot of the position of a culture, they do not represent the dynamics of such differences in living systems.

Anthropologist Gregory Bateson (1974) used values to explore differences between societies. He observed that differences between cultures were characterized by mutual relevance: the values of one group were different but complementary to another. You may have observed the same thing when visiting a country or organization different from the one in which you are at home. Do the differences indicate to you what is lacking in your own culture? Given that many people report this is the case, surely it is not coincidental. But why should it be so?

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The mutual relevance of different values indicates that any value has an opposing, complementary value. It further suggests that the value pairs outlined by Parsons are interdependent, so that the more a person or a group emphasizes one value, the more it creates a need for its complement. For instance, the more a group emphasizes individualism, the more it creates a need for community building, and the more it emphasizes collectivism, the greater its need for individual identity. This interdependence of opposing values is variously referred to as "complementarity" (Bateson, 1974) and the "circularity of values" (Hampden-Turner, 1990).

Complementarity indicates to organizations where their particular learning challenges are likely to be. By establishing what it is they value—perhaps examining each of the pairs articulated by Parsons—they can consider the consequences of neglecting the opposing value. What is valued within a culture thus suggests areas where that culture may have a learning blind spot.

The more a group emphasizes individualism, the more it creates a need for community building, and the more it emphasizes collectivism, the greater its need for individual identity.

If organizations are living systems in which complementarity is essential for a sustainable future, then, unless different values can be reconciled and the circularity of values established, an organization would be incomplete. At the same time, culturally-derived value differences are the source of strongly felt reactions that can prevent people from understanding what is obvious to others, disrupting the circularity of values. Strong reactions may also signal that a culture is experiencing a cultural process Bateson termed *schismogenesis*. Schismogenesis is also central to understanding the cultural context of efforts to create learning organizations.

Schismogenesis: The Splitting Apart of Values

While organizations may need to reconcile values that are complementary, the process by which a culture develops makes this difficult. In particular, the unconscious prioritizing of one value will mean that it is overemphasized at the expense of its opposite. Schismogenesis is the process by which this natural difference between complementary opposites becomes magnified and differences become irreconcilable.

The process of schismogenesis was evidently in operation within aviation, and can be used to account for the "blindness" to issues relating to people and teamwork. Because of the value given to technology, those considered best suited to investigate accidents would be people with technological expertise. Where causes of accidents were found to be related to people, solutions were quickly assumed to relate to their technical proficiency. And where members of the industry came into contact with people who might help them address human failings, the language used seemed "soft" and inappropriate for critical issues such as causes of accidents.

As an industry, aviation has had to deal with these issues, finding a place for values that do not appear to belong within the flying culture. In particular, this has involved efforts to train flight crews in crew resource management, addressing the team coordination and communication issues that had been neglected.

But what insights into efforts to build learning organizations can be gained from an understanding of culture and schismogenesis?

Charles Hampden-Turner and Fons Trompenaars (1993) established that the cultures of English-speaking democracies, such as the US, Britain, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand, are characterized by the valuing of universals, specifics, individualism, and achievement. While their research did not identify emotional neutrality as characteristic of these countries, many people would accept that, in their organizations, it is considered more "business-like" to be objective rather than emotionally engaged. Emphasis on these values means that values related to relationships, emotional engagement, integration, community, and ascription are relatively neglected. In other words, in these countries, it is assumed that the right way to run organizations is to hold individuals responsible for the achievement of specific, analytically established standards that we apply universally. We could conclude that schismogenetic processes were operating if people and organizations within these countries struggled to learn in areas associated with the opposites of these values. I believe that interest in learning organizations is evidence of this struggle. Consider how the work reported by Peter Senge (1990) in *The Fifth Discipline* reflects the value dimensions described by Parsons.

Disabilities and Disciplines from a Values Perspective

The Fifth Discipline shaped the way many people think about this body of knowledge, and the way in which many organizations have pursued the goal of becoming a learning organization. Among other things, Senge outlines a number of disabilities that prevent organizations from learning, and he identifies disciplines that can help organizations to become more enduring. Do these disciplines and disabilities reflect the values inherent in English-speaking democracies, as outlined by Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars? To answer this question, let's begin by reviewing the disabilities Senge outlined, rewording them to reflect the Parsonian values they embody:

- The enemy is out there—When encountering a problem, people neglect to consider how it may be a function of the diffuse relationship of which they are a part. They look instead for a specific individual upon whom blame can be laid.
- Fixation on events—Managers focus attention on dealing with specific, highly visible events, neglecting how those events might be considered part of a diffuse, multidimensional pattern.
- The parable of the boiled frog: People ignore diffuse, slow-building phenomena until they generate specific, measurable symptoms that can act as the focus of attention.
- I am my position—People assume that the roles they play within organizations are one dimensional, and that they can perform only within the confines of the *specific* role for which they were employed. They treat roles as universal, so that, for example, they consider all marketing people the same, rather than looking for the particular contribution a person might make to the organization.
- The myth of the management team—While people may use terms that suggest executives will act as a collective, they expect that the executives will really act as individuals focusing on their self-interest ahead of the interests of the whole organization.
- The illusion of taking charge—By proactively attempting to achieve performance improvements as indicated by specific measures, managers do not take into account the unintended consequences of their actions on diffuse, less easily measured aspects of organizational health.
- The delusion of learning from experience—People ignore negative effects that their actions might have on individuals in other parts of the organization, because they see each part as separate from the other and concern for the community as a whole might impair the achievement of the individual's personal objectives. Even where some individuals can see lessons to be learned from experience, because people do not talk together as a community, they cannot explore how they might act collectively to apply these lessons.

In each case, the disability can be framed as an over-expression of cultural values. While universalism, analysis, individualism, and achievement are not bad in themselves, as Barry Johnson (1995) says, there is no tool yet invented that cannot be overused. The disabilities give evidence that organizations in English-speaking democracies in particular have overused these values and neglected the need that has been created for particularism, integration,

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Commentary
by Alain Gauthier

Phil Ramsey's insightful article is a reminder that culture is a collection of differences. His use of Talcott Parsons's pairs of complementary values provides a simple yet powerful lens for understanding the ever-evolving challenges in creating learning communities.

As a consultant and educator, I have endeavored to assist in building learning organizations both in Europe and in the United States during the past 12 years. In my experience of overseeing and adapting the French translations of *The Fifth Discipline*, *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook*, and *The Dance of Change*, I realized how culturally specific the application of the five disciplines needs to be. In contrast to the American culture, the French often engage emotionally with one another, especially when they advocate, and tend to look at complexity and relationships in a more diffuse way. They are ideologically universalistic, but particularistic in practice. They award status on the basis of school reputation rather than achievement, and often use the collective to avoid individual accountability. Consequently, the diversity of mental models for the French is taken for granted; shared vision is talked about but seldom actualized; team learning is accepted, but reluctantly so; systems thinking is embraced intellectually but rarely practiced, and personal mastery is often perceived as an intrusion in one's private life. These types of resistance might well apply to other Latin countries.

There are, of course, notable exceptions among French companies, including corporate members of SoL France. But organizational learning "à la Peter Senge" has not yet taken hold in French society much beyond the intellectual curiosity it has aroused. For example, the interest in "objectifying" tools—such as systems archetypes, simulation models, and organizational assessment grids—reveals the

French propensity to address issues rationally rather than as an opportunity to challenge one's habitual ways of thinking, behaving, and being. Learning is viewed as transactional rather than transformational.

Although the complexity of a culture cannot be reduced to five sets of complementary values—generalizations usually do not apply to a small, active minority—it is fair to say that the French cultural immune system has, so far, thwarted attempts to introduce an Anglo-Saxon approach to organizational learning. This is one reason why SoL France and other European SoL fractals have adapted capacity-building courses and initiated projects to deal more productively with these culturally specific forms of resistance.

In conclusion, Ramsey's distinctions and observations will be invaluable in our growing understanding of the conditions needed for learning to be complete and for deep cultural change to take place in different parts of the world.

community, and ascription. Is there a correspondence between the neglected values and the disciplines promoted in *The Fifth Discipline*? Let's consider each in turn, again rewording them to highlight the Parsonian values involved:

- Mental models—Rather than act as if there was a universally correct way of understanding the world or the things in it, people should learn to appreciate that someone's understanding depends on the particular model he or she is using. And rather than assuming that group cohesion depends on everyone accepting one specific model as a standard, a community will be healthier if it learns to value its members' diversity of perspectives, even though this is a messier, more diffuse way of looking at the world.
- Shared vision—People intrinsically desire to be part of a community working toward an emotionally engaging, shared purpose. Despite this, many organizations rely on motivating individuals with extrinsically oriented reward systems and competition between organization members. While emotionally neutral extrinsic rewards allow managers some control over the specific behaviors of people seeking to achieve outcomes determined by the organization's executive, they undermine social bonds that hold the community together. So, rather than award people status on the basis of specific achievements, organizations can build community by ascribing status to people based on their commitment to shared vision, even though both the status and the basis for it are more diffuse.
- Team learning—Complex organizational problems require solutions that integrate the knowledge of a variety of people. Many organizations struggle to achieve integration because individuals have difficulty openly sharing knowledge in a collective way. The capacities needed for people to work and learn together in teams are diffuse—"soft" issues such as relationships and intentions—rather than specific skills and competencies more accessible to "hard" measurement.
- Systems thinking—Because organizations are complex systems, actions designed to achieve specific outcomes often have a diffuse impact, with unintended consequences occurring far—in both physical and temporal distance—from the expected target. Complex systems are better understood using integrative rather than analytical thinking.
- Personal mastery—In order for a community to act together in the integrative way needed to bring about progress toward shared vision, people need to master the creative process. If people cannot handle the tension involved in creating, they slide into a pattern of reacting to pressures or opportunities on the basis of specific events. Such reactivity by individuals undermines social bonds.

Commentators like Russell Ackoff (1997) have pointed out that the heavy emphasis on analytical thinking in Western nations provides a backdrop to the need for systems thinking. Exploring all of the values characterizing English-speaking nations in particular gives an even clearer context for the full range of disciplines making up the learning organization. I could summarize by saying that a learning organization is the sort of place in which we would all like to work (Kofman and Senge, 1993), because it allows for the expression of a full range of complementary values, and that currently the need in English-speaking nations is for greater expression of values of particularism, community, integration, ascription, and emotional engagement. But what implications does a cultural analysis have for those seeking to create learning communities?

But what implications does a cultural analysis have for those seeking to create learning communities?

Cultural Pitfalls

If becoming a learning organization involves ensuring that previously neglected values become fully represented in organizations, then people interested in cre-

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ating a learning community have taken on a cultural change project. They are seeking to bring about changes that will conflict with basic assumptions held by members of the organizational community. Two cultural dynamics that are likely to present themselves are schismogenesis and the tendency for people to revert unintentionally to the values they are seeking to change.

We have already considered the way in which schismogenesis operates to polarize people and groups around opposing values. Living in what has been described as an "argument culture" (Tannen, 1999), many people might assume that the way to bring about change is to advocate their position vigorously while showing others why or how their assumptions are flawed. This example of linear thinking encourages change agents to respond to resistance with greater and greater force. It is counterintuitive to people operating from these assumptions that schismogenetic processes limit the effectiveness of their advocacy. Indeed, the greater the force they use to advocate a shift in values, the more they mobilize forces determined to retain existing values. An argument for change creates an escalating conflict in which the existing culture has an established, strong position. Change agents thus need to guard against representing existing values as problems to be solved by organizational learning techniques. Rather, they need to seek "both/and" ways of understanding issues, appreciating that if existing "disabled" ways of thinking had no value, people would not be using them.

The second cultural challenge involves dealing with people or groups who want to change. The unconscious nature of people's assumptions will likely lead them into activities that unintentionally reinforce existing values rather than promoting the missing values the organization needs. Consider the values involved in some common practices you may have observed:

- Universal goals—Values of universalism and analysis may encourage us to believe that we should be able to create a model of what a learning organization should look like. This model would allow us to take specific measures as a diagnosis of what needs to be done, leading to prescriptions of the specific steps we need to take. We might also assume that the actions or activities needed are universal, whether organizations are in the US, France, New Zealand, or Chile.
- Standardized visions—Because of their unconscious reliance on universalism, some organizations create vision statements by following a leading company's formula. They may assume that there is a universally best statement that is motivating in itself, rather than seeing shared vision as a way a community can clarify the particular identity that sets it apart from others.
- Approaches to learning—Organizations may set about learning in ways that reinforce existing values. For instance, they may seek to have people learn about conversations by having them individually analyze their current practices in an emotionally neutral manner, comparing them with a universal model of how conversation should be conducted. Similarly, approaches to systems thinking may overemphasize development of emotionally neutral models in which variables are carefully analyzed and specifically stated.
- Overreliance on performance management—Many organizations have highly developed performance management systems (PMS) that enable them to organize work so that individuals commit themselves to achieving

specific outcomes. Success of these systems in conjunction with existing values may lead managers to think that they can use PMS universally, that is, as the way to bring about all change. This can lead to the paradoxical situation in which people are asked to pursue individual objectives to do with improving teamwork, as if the nature of teams resided within individuals rather than relationships.

Self-interested personal mastery—Practices of personal mastery can be used for the benefit of individuals or for the benefit of the community as a whole. Within an individualistic macroculture, people may assume that their organizations will automatically be better off if they use the creative process to pursue their personal opportunities and desires, unaware of any damaging effects this may have on the organizational community as a whole.

The workings of culture provide an underlying structure that naturally leads to the sorts of paradox and confusion outlined above. For those seeking to create learning communities, an understanding of values and culture provides an insight into how organizations unconsciously hamper their own efforts to generate change. A challenge for change agents in particular is to become conscious of that which they take for granted, to recognize how these assumptions shape their practice, and to explore approaches to change that utilize a wider range of values.

In summary, cultural processes have a significant impact on learning within organizations. When cultures form, values are established that promote learning in some areas, while creating blind spots to learning needs in complementary fields. This process can be observed within organizations and industries such as aviation. It can also be seen in the culture of Western business more broadly. Processes of schismogenesis in this context have created the need for values represented within learning organizations. In addressing this need, however, practitioners must respect and understand cultural processes, or they risk contributing to further splitting apart complementary values. The challenge of complementarity is for organizations to learn to be complete.

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The "Learning Organisation" Metaphor

2

THE "LEARNING ORGANISATION" METAPHOR

PHIL RAMSEY

If you are excited by the idea of creating a learning organisation you are not alone. Many people hear a learning organisation described and think, "That's the sort of place I want to work!" It is refreshing to find a reason to become truly passionate about the place we spend most of our time. People find the idea of a learning organisation aspirational—it captures their imaginations.

Sometimes, however, the passion and excitement that people feel about learning organisations hides confusion. If you are interested in helping your workplace to become a learning organisation one of your first challenges will be to find out what the term means. This chapter will discuss some of the different views people have of what it means to be a learning organisation. We will also attempt to clear up some of the confusion created by these differences, and discuss how they can be reconciled.

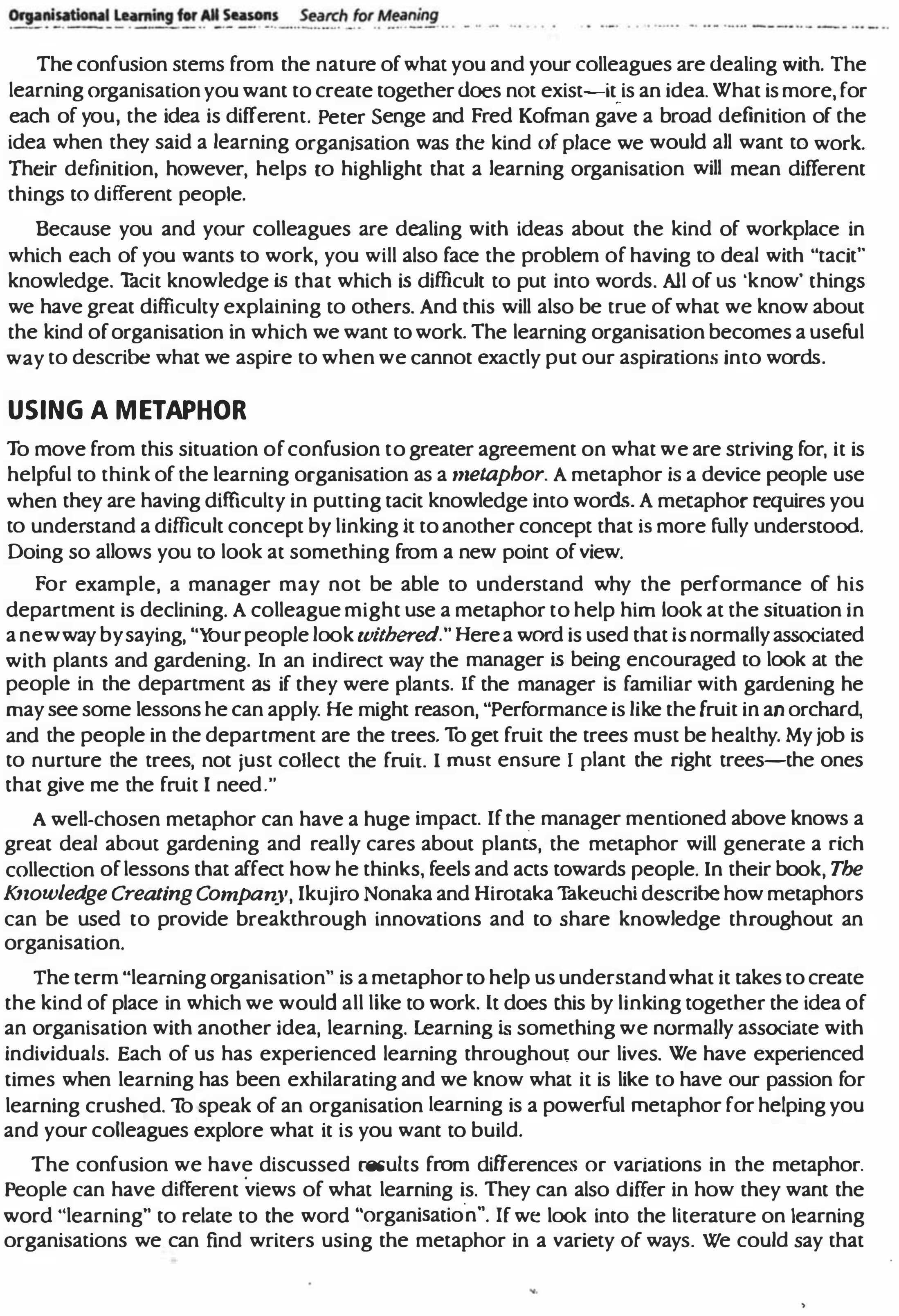
CONFUSION

It is easy to see how confusion exists when you think about the dynamics of people at work. Imagine that, along with a group of colleagues, you hear an inspiring presentation on learning organisations. Each of you is excited by the concept, how it might apply in your workplace and how it might help with the perplexing problems you have been struggling with. You realise that some things you have heard before, some of the things you have tried in the past and some of the reasons for your frustrations with work make sense when you think about what it would mean to be a learning organisation.

You decide you want to find out more, so you get a book on the subject and you talk to people who have experience working in the field. You embark on a learning journey, gaining a better understanding of what it means to be a learning organisation and what your organisation would need to do to become one.

When you get together with your colleagues again, you find an opportunity to discuss what you have learned. You find that each of them has also been excited by the concept. Your colleagues have also undertaken their own learning journeys, though in different ways from you. One colleague has read some material from the Internet. Another has discussed the topic with a friend who teaches at a local university. For each person, the new knowledge has fired his imagination and increased his desire to build a learning organisation.

When you and your colleagues get together you all quickly agree on the importance of your goal. You all talk about how you want to work together in a learning organisation. Your excitement, though, masks the fact that the term "learning organisation" now means something different to each of you. While these differences in understanding will not stop you from deciding to pursue the goal of being a learning organisation, they will lead to disagreements over what you need to do.



The confusion stems from the nature of what you and your colleagues are dealing with. The learning organisation you want to create together does not exist—it is an idea. What is more, for each of you, the idea is different. Peter Senge and Fred Kofman gave a broad definition of the idea when they said a learning organisation was the kind of place we would all want to work. Their definition, however, helps to highlight that a learning organisation will mean different things to different people.

Because you and your colleagues are dealing with ideas about the kind of workplace in which each of you wants to work, you will also face the problem of having to deal with "tacit" knowledge. Tacit knowledge is that which is difficult to put into words. All of us 'know' things we have great difficulty explaining to others. And this will also be true of what we know about the kind of organisation in which we want to work. The learning organisation becomes a useful way to describe what we aspire to when we cannot exactly put our aspirations into words.

USING A METAPHOR

To move from this situation of confusion to greater agreement on what we are striving for, it is helpful to think of the learning organisation as a *metaphor*. A metaphor is a device people use when they are having difficulty in putting tacit knowledge into words. A metaphor requires you to understand a difficult concept by linking it to another concept that is more fully understood. Doing so allows you to look at something from a new point of view.

For example, a manager may not be able to understand why the performance of his department is declining. A colleague might use a metaphor to help him look at the situation in a new way by saying, "Your people look *withered*." Here a word is used that is normally associated with plants and gardening. In an indirect way the manager is being encouraged to look at the people in the department as if they were plants. If the manager is familiar with gardening he may see some lessons he can apply. He might reason, "Performance is like the fruit in an orchard, and the people in the department are the trees. To get fruit the trees must be healthy. My job is to nurture the trees, not just collect the fruit. I must ensure I plant the right trees—the ones that give me the fruit I need."

A well-chosen metaphor can have a huge impact. If the manager mentioned above knows a great deal about gardening and really cares about plants, the metaphor will generate a rich collection of lessons that affect how he thinks, feels and acts towards people. In their book, ***The Knowledge Creating Company***, Ikujiro Nonaka and Hirotaka Takeuchi describe how metaphors can be used to provide breakthrough innovations and to share knowledge throughout an organisation.

The term "learning organisation" is a metaphor to help us understand what it takes to create the kind of place in which we would all like to work. It does this by linking together the idea of an organisation with another idea, learning. Learning is something we normally associate with individuals. Each of us has experienced learning throughout our lives. We have experienced times when learning has been exhilarating and we know what it is like to have our passion for learning crushed. To speak of an organisation learning is a powerful metaphor for helping you and your colleagues explore what it is you want to build.

The confusion we have discussed results from differences or variations in the metaphor. People can have different views of what learning is. They can also differ in how they want the word "learning" to relate to the word "organisation". If we look into the literature on learning organisations we can find writers using the metaphor in a variety of ways. We could say that there are a variety of metaphors used, each with a different emphasis and each leading to a different understanding of what an organisation should be like.

Let us consider six different ways of understanding the term "learning organisation". Each is a different metaphor found in books and articles published in this area. You may find that one metaphor appeals to you more than others. At the same time, your colleagues may like different metaphors from you. Understanding a range of metaphors enables you to see what it is that others are aspiring to. This can be the basis for more successful efforts to work together to build the organisation you *all* want. The six versions of the learning organisation metaphor we will consider are:

- Continuous Individual Learning;
- Learning Together as One;
- Conscious About Learning and Knowledge;
- A Culture That Values Learning;
- Experimentation and Change; and
- Capacity Building.

These might appear to be similar but, as we will see, each is a different way of understanding the metaphor and has its own slant on what is important.

CONTINUOUS INDIVIDUAL LEARNING

For many people, learning can only be an individual process. So, when they think about a learning organisation they think of a place where there is continuous learning by all the individuals who work there. The thought of continual learning appeals to many people because their experience at work has been of learning that is irregular and fragmented. Indeed, for many people, learning at work is unusual.

Consider the way people treat the term "work". In some organisations there is a very clear distinction between what work is and is not. If you see someone reading a book you might think that this is not work but someone reading e-mail messages is working. If you see two people talking while drinking coffee you might assume they are not working unless it is a manager talking to a subordinate. Often, we treat activity that is directly related to getting results as "work" and anything else as "not work".

You can observe people making this distinction when they discuss training. Many people think of time spent in training as separate from work. People leave work to receive training. When their course is finished they then talk about going "back to work". When people talk like this they show that they assume learning is not really work. Work is when you put what you know into action in order to get some results.

The consequence of having such a narrow definition of work is that there is not enough time for learning. There is always "work" to do. Consequently, people are so busy trying to get direct results they do not put aside time to learn. Learning has to wait until there is a break. Even then, many people feel guilty that they are spending time learning rather than getting done the things that demand their attention.

The "continuous individual learning" metaphor encourages people to change this view of work. It teaches the lesson "Learning *is* work" and implies that this is important for individuals and for the organisation as a whole.

For individual members of an organisation the "Learning is work" lesson is a reminder that things keep changing. I may have the skills to do my current job, but will these skills be enough in a year's time? Will they be enough in three months? If I want to succeed in the long term I need to keep on learning. Also, it is not enough to wait for my boss to send me on a course. I have to weave learning into what I do each day. This can involve taking on challenges that stretch me. It can mean seeking the guidance of people with expertise. And it can mean taking time to reflect on my efforts and the results I have achieved.

Another lesson for individuals has to do with taking personal responsibility for change. Most people in organisations can see things that should be changed. Often, they leave it to others to make the changes. The "continuous individual learning" metaphor emphasises that change will only happen if individuals take responsibility for doing things differently.

For the organisation, this metaphor creates a challenge. It is easy to see the benefits of efforts directed toward results. Many managers fear that the effort that goes into learning will be wasted. Individuals who have learned may leave the organisation. Or they may not use what they learn. Learning gives people the *potential* to contribute to the organisation but this potential may not be realised. Managers may believe learning is a good idea but find it much more natural to concentrate on getting direct results.

When managers accept that "Learning is work" they take on a challenge. They must re-examine their organisation in light of the new metaphor. To what extent is the organisation designed to encourage learning? What investment is being made in learning? What can be done to integrate learning into the day-to-day activities of the organisation?

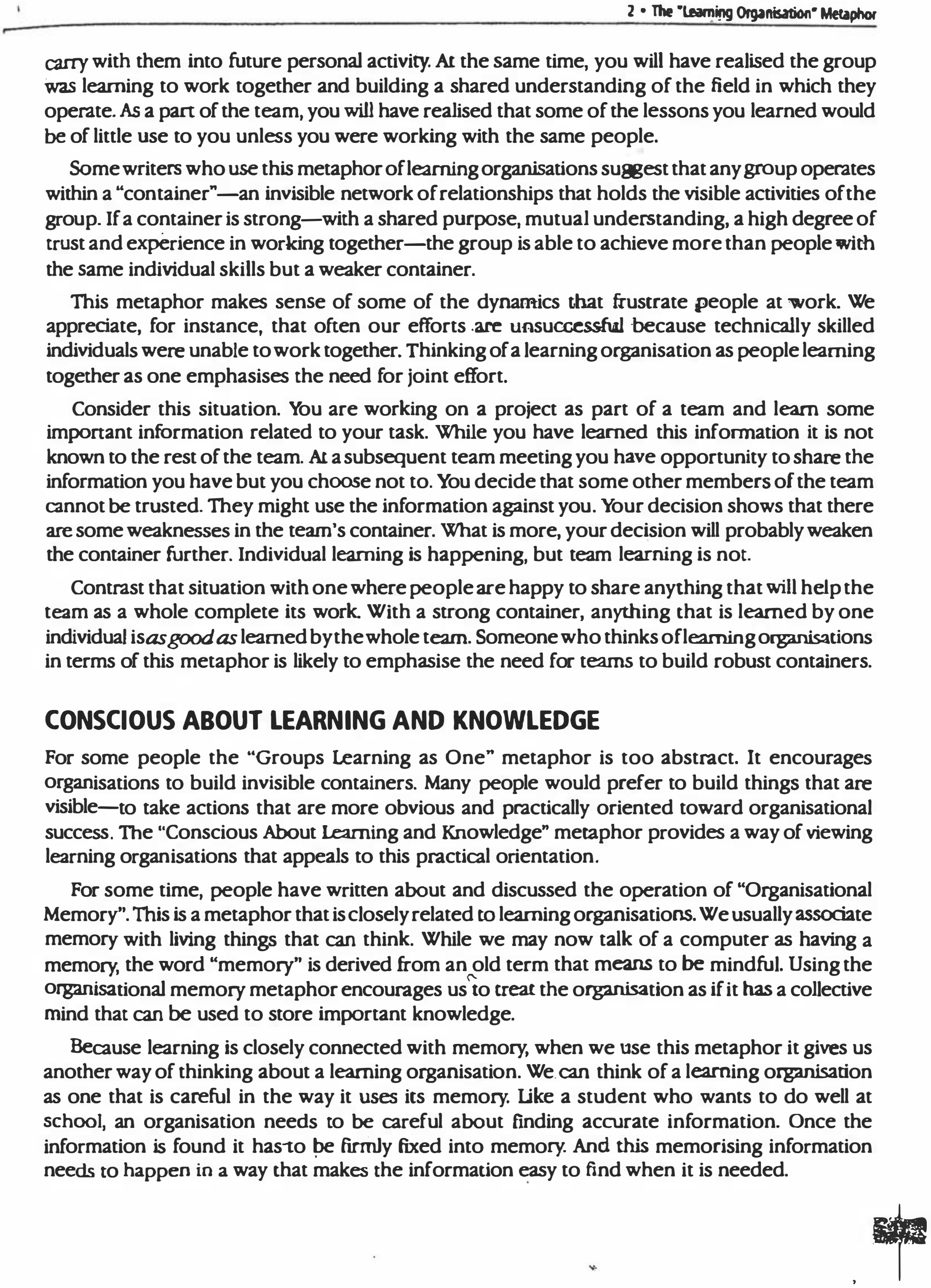
This way of viewing the learning organisation encourages people to see learning as an individual process and to arrange work in ways that ensure it is not neglected.

LEARNING TOGETHER AS ONE

While learning can be thought of as an individual process it can also be seen as a social one, that is, for some people real learning is what people will do together. Thinking of learning as a social process results in a different metaphor of a learning organisation: a group of people, or a community that learns together as if they were a single individual.

This social view of learning can be difficult for people in Western nations where there is a tradition of viewing people as individuals and viewing learning as an individual process. Yet, concepts of learning that are widely accepted in Western nations can be applied to both individuals and groups. Kolb's Learning Cycle, for example, describes learning as a series of four inter-related processes: experience, reflection, conceptualisation and experimentation. Kolb's original work discussed these processes in individual terms. Yet, each of the processes can also be carried out by a group of people working together. Conversation, for instance, is a process by which a group *reflects together* on their *shared experience*. When reflective conversation results in a shared understanding—or *conceptualisation*—of how things work, and leads to *experimentation* by the group, then the group as a whole will have completed the learning cycle.

You may have been part of a team that worked together in this way. If you have, you will have recognised that something special was taking place in the way you worked together. Each member of the team was engaged in personal learning, drawing lessons from the experience they could



carry with them into future personal activity. At the same time, you will have realised the group was learning to work together and building a shared understanding of the field in which they operate. As a part of the team, you will have realised that some of the lessons you learned would be of little use to you unless you were working with the same people.

Some writers who use this metaphor of learning organisations suggest that any group operates within a "container"—an invisible network of relationships that holds the visible activities of the group. If a container is strong—with a shared purpose, mutual understanding, a high degree of trust and experience in working together—the group is able to achieve more than people with the same individual skills but a weaker container.

This metaphor makes sense of some of the dynamics that frustrate people at work. We appreciate, for instance, that often our efforts are unsuccessful because technically skilled individuals were unable to work together. Thinking of a learning organisation as people learning together as one emphasises the need for joint effort.

Consider this situation. You are working on a project as part of a team and learn some important information related to your task. While you have learned this information it is not known to the rest of the team. At a subsequent team meeting you have opportunity to share the information you have but you choose not to. You decide that some other members of the team cannot be trusted. They might use the information against you. Your decision shows that there are some weaknesses in the team's container. What is more, your decision will probably weaken the container further. Individual learning is happening, but team learning is not.

Contrast that situation with one where people are happy to share anything that will help the team as a whole complete its work. With a strong container, anything that is learned by one individual is *as good as* learned by the whole team. Someone who thinks of learning organisations in terms of this metaphor is likely to emphasise the need for teams to build robust containers.

CONSCIOUS ABOUT LEARNING AND KNOWLEDGE

For some people the "Groups Learning as One" metaphor is too abstract. It encourages organisations to build invisible containers. Many people would prefer to build things that are visible—to take actions that are more obvious and practically oriented toward organisational success. The "Conscious About Learning and Knowledge" metaphor provides a way of viewing learning organisations that appeals to this practical orientation.

For some time, people have written about and discussed the operation of "Organisational Memory". This is a metaphor that is closely related to learning organisations. We usually associate memory with living things that can think. While we may now talk of a computer as having a memory, the word "memory" is derived from an old term that means to be mindful. Using the organisational memory metaphor encourages us to treat the organisation as if it has a collective mind that can be used to store important knowledge.

Because learning is closely connected with memory, when we use this metaphor it gives us another way of thinking about a learning organisation. We can think of a learning organisation as one that is careful in the way it uses its memory. Like a student who wants to do well at school, an organisation needs to be careful about finding accurate information. Once the information is found it has to be firmly fixed into memory. And this memorising information needs to happen in a way that makes the information easy to find when it is needed.

Organisations operate in a world where knowledge is important and needs to be carefully and consciously managed. A metaphor based on memory reminds people of the peculiar nature of knowledge, and how it needs to be treated differently from other more tangible assets.

You will remember times when, as a student, you put information into your memory but then could not find it again when you were being tested. Such experiences emphasise that knowledge needs to be stored differently to money or physical products. To store knowledge, we must use it and share it with others.

An organisation can store knowledge in a variety of different places. Of course, much of what an organisation knows is stored in the heads of people. But when we talk of organisational memory we mean anything that ensures knowledge is stored in a way that can be accessed later. Consider an illustration of how knowledge can be forgotten and how it can be remembered.

A problem arises in your company causing customers to be over-charged for services they receive. A highly skilled worker is asked to investigate and solve the problem. The worker finds out what has been causing the problem—a fault in the design of the organisation's billing system. He also finds out what customers should have been charged, contacts each of the customers affected and puts things right with them. But then he leaves the company. What will happen to the knowledge he gained? *He* will not immediately forget—the knowledge will stay in his head for some time. However, the knowledge has left the memory of the organisation—the organisation has forgotten what it once knew.

What could be done to make sure this knowledge was remembered, whether the worker left or not? The worker could have made a record of the procedure he used so others could follow it in the future. Changes could be made to the billing system so the problem did not arise again. The problem and its solution could have been discussed with others in the company, perhaps using a planned process of review.

Sadly, many organisations are not conscious of how they treat important knowledge. They do not ensure that it is captured or put in a form that allows the organisation to benefit. This version of the learning organisation metaphor encourages organisations to treat knowledge seriously, and design systems and processes that allow what it knows to be shared and used.

A CULTURE THAT VALUES LEARNING

For some people, the learning organisation metaphor appeals because it speaks of a culture that they want at work. They speak of a learning organisation in that same way that others might say theirs is a service organisation or an innovative organisation. They use the term "learning organisation" because learning is the predominant value shaping the organisation's culture.

To understand this version of the learning organisation metaphor, it is important to understand the nature of values. We can say we value something when we choose it ahead of other things that are also valuable. Consider what people mean when they say they value honesty. Most people prefer honesty to dishonesty but that is not enough to make it a value. Honesty is truly a value when it is put ahead of an alternative way of acting that is also attractive. For example, would you choose to tell the truth when doing so would harm your relationship with a friend? There is a choice to make about what you value most—telling the truth or having close relationships.

A value, then, is what you are prepared to put first, even when there is an attractive alternative. When people say they value learning, what is the alternative they are prepared to sacrifice? Most people prefer learning to staying ignorant but this preference does not make learning a value. Ignorance is not an alternative many people find attractive.

We discussed earlier that working to get direct results can be preferred to learning. Another alternative to learning that is attractive, and which often dominates the way things are done in organisations, is expertise. Learning is what people do when they do not know. Many people find not knowing uncomfortable. They would rather that people thought they were experts. They worry that not knowing will make them look foolish to others—perhaps to people who could affect the future success of the organisation.

What happens in an organisation that values expertise ahead of learning? There will be arguments as people attempt to prove that they are the real experts. There may be efforts made to disguise or hide failure. And conversations will consist of people telling each other what to do. Sadly, an expert organisation is only able to deal with problems or challenges that have happened before and which have a known solution. Organisations that value expertise will struggle to cope with new circumstances: situations where there is no expert.

The alternative is a learning organisation, a place where learning is valued, where people ask questions, admit when they do not know and openly talk about new possibilities.

This version of the learning organisation metaphor encourages people, particularly leaders, to establish a culture in which learning is allowed to dominate over expertise.

EXPERIMENTATION AND CHANGE

For some people, the learning organisation metaphor is appealing because it emphasises the need for ongoing change. The metaphor emphasises that the organisation is not in a finished state. It is still learning. People using the metaphor in this way treat organisations as open systems—ones that are constantly adapting and changing to suit the environment around them.

This is very different to thinking of organisations as being in a finished state. If I believe that my organisation is in a finished state, I come to work each day believing it is normal for things to stay as they are. Change is unusual, a process that has to be managed. When change happens I look forward to when the period of change will be over, and the organisation is once again in a finished state.

Of course, because the environment most organisations operate in is turbulent, change occurs regularly. With "finished state" thinking, this regular change is distressing. I want it to be over so the organisation can settle down. The process of change is sometimes described as "Unfreezing, Moving and Refreezing", and I want the organisation to stay frozen for longer.

My reaction to change has been based, at least in part, on the assumption that the organisation should be in a finished state. For some people the learning organisation metaphor means a workplace where people do not hold that assumption; where it is assumed that experimentation, change and adaptation is the norm. It means more than being "permanently unfrozen" because there is no reason to think an organisation should be frozen in the first place.

This view of the learning organisation metaphor treats the organisation as a living organism that is continuously adapting in order to find a place in its environment; an environment that is in flux. It emphasises the need to be ready to change and for ongoing experimentation.

CAPACITY BUILDING

Our final version of the learning organisation metaphor also treats organisations as living organisms, but with a difference. With this metaphor, the organisation seeks balance rather than change.

Each of us needs to find a balance between the demands we face and the capacities we have. Life makes many demands of our skills, time and other resources. If the demands on us are greater than our capacity to deal with them, we will find life stressful. On the other hand, if we have lots of capacity a few demands, life will be boring. It is normal to seek a balance.

The same is true for organisations: we can view them as living systems that need to balance demands with capacities. How do you think organisations are doing at achieving this balance? How is your organisation doing? Many organisations show symptoms of stress. All around we see signs that the demands on the organisation are running ahead of capacity.

While living systems can cope with stress in the short term, when stress is prolonged it causes a "burnout". Just as the name suggests, burnout is a condition where a system copes with stress by progressively using up more and more of its resources, until eventually all the resources are exhausted. We can think of organisational failure as a form of burnout; demands were allowed to run ahead of capacity so long that essential capacities burned out. But what does this have to do with learning?

Learning is a synonym for capacity building; when we learn we are building our capacity to cope with the demands of the future. So a learning organisation can be thought of as one that seeks to balance demands and capacity by a conscious process of capacity building. Because our organisations operate in a very demanding world, this process of capacity building is essential for ongoing health.

HARMONISING METAPHORS

We have looked at six different versions of the learning organisation metaphor. It can be overwhelming to try to understand all of them. There may be one version of the metaphor that particularly appeals to you and others that are a challenge to understand. Understanding the differences is only part of the challenge. How can these differences be integrated?

Integration is a challenge because the learning organisation is a metaphor. When we use metaphors we do not say, "An organisation *is like* a living system." Instead we say, "An organisation *is* a living system." We prefer to act as if our metaphor was the whole truth. Untangling the different meanings of the term can make the goal of becoming a learning organisation less attractive. Therefore, we need to be more interested in integrating differences rather than pulling apart the different views people might hold.

One way to achieve integration is to find a version of the metaphor that can incorporate rather than exclude the other versions.

The "Continuous Individual Learning" version encourages people to think of learning as an individual process, but thinking in this way does not allow us to treat learning as a social process. The "Continuous Individual Learning" version excludes the "Working Together As One" version. If a group is split over these two versions of the metaphor, they will find themselves in conflict over which approach to creating a learning organisation is correct. Happily, there is one version of the metaphor that accommodates and gives context to the others. It is the "Capacity Building" version. Consider how it can be used for integration.

Generally, people who are interested in creating learning organisations are attracted to the area because they feel something important is lacking in their own workplaces. We can say that they have noticed that the organisation lacks a vital capacity—a resource that is essential for ongoing organisational health. While they have noticed the lack of one capacity, many different capacities are needed for organisational health and a particular organisation may be lacking several. And when new demands are placed on the organisation deficits in still more capacities may become evident.

Generally, people who are interested in creating learning organisations are attracted to the area because they feel something important is lacking in their own workplaces.

What are some of these essential capacities? The different versions of the learning organisation metaphor considered earlier in the chapter help us to identify many of them. Organisations need to foster the capacity for its individual members to engage in continuous learning; some call this "personal mastery". Organisations also need the capacity for social learning—relationships that enable people to effectively learn together. They need the capacity to generate new knowledge and to store this knowledge so that it is accessible to people throughout the organisation. They need a culture—a set of values—that gives people the capacity to treat learning as normal. And they need the capacity for experimentation and change.

Today's world is a demanding place and promises to become even more demanding. Working to become a learning organisation is essential for good organisational health. As this chapter has shown, that involves appreciating the richness of the idea of the learning organisation and the range of capacities that one needs to build.

Appendix 1f:

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Natural Learning

NATURAL LEARNING:

Creating Productive Learning Environments

PHIL RAMSEY

The influence of organisational culture often results in learning being unintentionally neglected. This paper explores why this happens and what can be done to make learning a natural part of the work environment.

Humans are natural learners, as you will know from watching children master the use of a language, bicycle riding and so forth or from your own experiences learning a hobby. The process of learning is something that is potentially engaging, rich and meaningful. So, what goes wrong in so many classrooms? Anthropologist Gregory Bateson (1974) suggested that the source of our problems is the gap between how we think and the way nature works. Bateson's statement suggests that we do not deal with the world around us directly, rather, we observe the world, make decisions and act according to ways of thinking - termed mental models (Senge, 1990) - that may or may not be accurate.

Mental models are unconsciously held assumptions about how things work. For instance, when you first drove from your home to your place of work you made decisions along the way as to the best route to take. You may have made wrong turns that needed correction, but eventually you made it. The next time you made the trip you had a precedent you could follow, so travelling did not require the same level of choice making. After several trips you formed a pattern that enabled you to make the journey while thinking of all manner of things other than the route you are taking. You still make choices about which way to turn, but they have slipped beneath the level of consciousness. If someone was to challenge you over the choice of route, you might struggle to give a rationale. You might simply assert "That's *my* way, and I like it!"

The study of culture involves exploring the assumptions that have slipped below the collective consciousness of groups. Bower (1966) defined culture as *"the way we do things around here"*. The nature of cultural assumptions, mental models and learning raises interesting questions for those involved in training and education. How do cultural assumptions shape our mental models of training?

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How big is the gap between our mental models and how people really learn? To explore these questions, let's consider culturally derived assumptions common in New Zealand and Australia and explore how they affect what goes on in our classrooms and workplaces.

THE AUSTRALASIAN MACROCULTURE

While you may find a diverse range of unconscious assumptions amongst any group of people, typically you will also find a macroculture - common assumptions that shape the way things are done within the group. Within Australia and New Zealand differences relating to ethnic background, family circumstances, life experience, local traditions and so on will shape the way people make decisions.

A defining pattern in Western cultures and English-speaking countries, like New Zealand and Australia in particular, is the preference for analysis rather than integration. Both of these are ways of responding to complex situations. Analysis involves breaking the complexity into specific, separate bits that can be dealt with independently. Integration, on the other hand, aims to deal with the complex situation as a whole, understanding the connection between the bits. In an analytical culture, when asked how an organisation is going, a person is more likely to give an answer based on specific measures of key variables that have been identified as important. In an integrative culture, a person is more likely to give a diffuse answer about the overall state of affairs (Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars, 1993).

Australian and New Zealand organisations and managers tend to be analytical in their approach to complex problems. As we will see this affects the mental models they hold about how training and education should be carried out. As we have discussed, the reason people hold on to a value is because it worked at some time in the past. The challenge is to ensure that it is not over-emphasised. According to Ackoff (1997), analytical values are particularly useful when dealing with non-living systems, that is, machines, where the components can be readily pulled apart, replaced or fixed. There is therefore a danger in an analytical culture of unconsciously becoming overly mechanistic in our approach to dealing with human activity such as learning. Let's consider two assumptions that feature in the mental models of people involved in training - that learning is separate from work and learning should lead naturally to *doing*.

Assumption #1: Learning and Work are Separate

A key difference between humans and machines is that work needs to involve more for humans than simply performing. Performing involves using whatever capacity we have to meet the demands that are being placed upon us. Because these demands change, however, we also need to build our capacity to meet the demands of an uncertain future. This capacity-building activity can be called learning. Usually, if we get the balance between capacity and demand right, the experience we have at work is one we enjoy. If the balance is wrong, the experience is bad, either boredom or stress, depending which is over-emphasised. Creating a sustainable work environment involves an on-going process of balancing performance, learning and the experience of work (Gallwey, 2000).

Most people report that organisations are primarily concerned with performance, and have a tendency to neglect learning and experience. Many managers will give lip service to learning and to improving job satisfaction. They may say "We may get around to that later, but at the moment we have to meet these performance demands". Or, they may say "I'll invest in learning if you can show me there will be a performance outcome". In each case, managers are treating work as synonymous with performing and learning as something that is separate. Thus, learning becomes something done outside of work, preferably, it happens before one starts to work.

There are a number of unintended consequences from this separation of learning and work. Firstly, capacity-building tends to get neglected. Organisations place more and more demands on people, without making the necessary investment in capacity. Secondly, actions that would build capacity are considered inappropriate during work time.

Consider your own workplace. Generally there are things that are considered real work and things that are not. Often, reading a book, reflecting about what has happened or talking to colleagues are not considered real work. Yet these activities - reflection, experimentation, conversation - may be the very things needed in order for people to learn how to work together.

This neglect of learning is particularly apparent in terms of conversation. Many people report that the only time they get together is to make a decision and they express their dissatisfaction with the quality of the meetings they have. Because most decisions organisations have are complex, no individual is likely to have the complete picture of what needs to be done, so conversation is a core business process (Brown and Isaacs, 1996). Why are conversations at work so unsatisfactory?

As mentioned above, people generally get together to talk when they have to perform. There is a demand that a specific outcome is achieved by the meeting. It is rare to find groups that meet together to build their capacity for working together. When little effort is put into learning how to have conversations, it is not surprising that people find meetings frustrating. Yet the frustrations of the past also make people shudder at the thought of having a meeting to learn how to have conversations. In this way, many organisations find themselves in a vicious cycle where frustration with the poor quality of conversations leads people to avoid learning how to improve them, thus guaranteeing future frustrations.

The assumption that learning is separate from work often leads to neglect of learning. The challenge in an analytical culture is to recognise this as a cultural issue. It is not going to be resolved by a temporary investment of resources and more off-site training. Such investment may help temporarily, but also reinforces the idea that learning is not part of real work. The change required is cultural and involves encouraging people to seek to build learning into their everyday work with processes of reflection and conversation.

While a change such as this is a significant shift for an organisation, it is still not the whole story in creating a workplace where learning is natural. There are other assumptions that also need to be addressed including that concerning the relationship between learning and improvement.

Assumption #2: Learning Naturally Leads to Improvement

Do you experience the frustration of seeing individuals in your organisation (including yourself) continue to learn and develop, while the organisation as a whole seems to stay stuck at the same level as always? Often we do not get the gains we should from our investment in learning, even where the culture of the organisation is supportive. What more could be needed?

To answer this let's consider another way an analytical culture affects our mental models about learning. Analysis is the process of breaking things up and focusing on the individual parts. In Western countries there is a strong inclination to think of whole organisations as collections of individuals. When we make that assumption it is natural to assume that learning resides within the memories of the individuals who make up the organisation and that having individuals learn should result in change to the organisation as a whole. This assumption is so natural to analytical thinkers you may find the idea of an alternative view difficult to conceive. Yet, integrative cultures are more open to a different view of organisations.

As well as viewing individuals as living things that learn and remember, we can view organisations as living things - communities - that also have the capacity to learn (De Geus, 1997). An organisation's memory is stored in more than the heads of its individual members. For instance, a group of machine operators might make changes to their machines as they find better ways of doing their work. The machines are becoming, in effect, a storage bin for knowledge of how to do the work. Even if one of the operators leaves the organisation, the knowledge stored in the machine remains. When someone uses the machine they naturally bring into play the knowledge gained earlier. They are not personally remembering, but knowledge is being brought forth from the organisation's memory nonetheless.

Often the response to the idea of an organisational memory is a desire to build a gigantic database in which knowledge can be captured. In practise this is not a particularly powerful way of creating a memory. Knowledge is an intangible product and is not easily warehoused within a database. Much of what you know is tacit - it is difficult to capture in a form that can be put on a database. Rather, as Dixon (2000) points out, knowledge is something best stored by sharing it with others. The process of sharing knowledge with others is a critical part of an organisation's memory. Also, memory involves more than storing knowledge: it must also be accessed, and people will often have little interest in exploring what has been placed in an organisational database. So, rather than thinking of knowledge as stored within a database, think of it as stored in methods people use, the roles that people have and the physical structure of the workplace (Walsh and Ungson, 1991).

While it can be difficult to get used to thinking of an organisation as having a memory, it is a useful way of understanding what is necessary for learning to be put to use within the organisation. Along with making training memorable so that it stays within the heads of those attending, there is great value in ensuring that learners share what they know with others. Seek ways of embedding the knowledge you want remembered in organisational processes. And when people do not use the learning they gained from training or some other learning experience, treat this as an opportunity to explore how well your organisation's memory is working.

CLOSING THE LEARNING GAP

You have probably experienced many gaps between the way your teachers taught and your nature as a learner. If you have poured resources into generating learning in workplaces and experienced relatively little reward for your efforts you are experiencing similar gaps. Closing these gaps in workplace learning, though, generally requires looking outside the classroom. Some refer to this as looking at the "learning ecology" surrounding people at work (Stamps, 1997).

When we explore a learning ecology (the work context that determines the extent to which learning gets put into action) we need to consider both "hard" and "soft" issues. The culture of a workplace (the underlying assumptions that shape what happens) is often thought of as a soft issue. Assumptions are intangible; indeed, we aren't usually even conscious of their existence or their effect on us. Engineering knowledge into workplace systems, structures and tools is a harder, more tangible issue. It is an effort to construct an organisational memory that goes beyond the minds of the people in the organisation, an effort to build intangible knowledge into tangible processes.

Some people are more used to working with the tangible and some with the intangible. Creating a learning ecology that enables learning to occur naturally in a workplace requires both. And for Australian and New Zealand managers this represents a cultural challenge. It is the challenge of wholeness - to look at organisations as living systems, for whom learning is as vital as breathing.

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Appendix 1g:

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The Culture of Training

2. The Culture of Training

These are exciting times for people interested in creating healthy organisations – they are times of change. The growing importance of learning means that organisations have to view themselves as communities rather than machines. Changing the way you view something sounds as if it shouldn't be too difficult. It is! A change of this nature is a change of culture, involving a shift away from habits of thinking and acting that may be deeply ingrained. In particular, it involves rethinking our attitudes to performance, and creating a culture in which learning is valued. Let's consider what this means.

If you are in work you will know about performance. Work involves all sorts of demands and you have to perform. Performance means meeting the demands that are placed on you day by day. For many people, work means performing.

The idea that work equals performing would be reasonable if organisations and people were machines. As we discussed earlier though, they are not. People are people, and organisations are communities. With machines, we primarily care about whether or not they perform. We don't ask ourselves if the television is enjoying itself; we are only interested in whether or not it is working.

A community is different. Communities are interested in surviving and thriving. This means that meeting the demands of today is not enough. We don't want to get through today only to die tomorrow. And we don't want to simply survive in order to have a life of continuing struggle. Humans are, by nature, interested in continuing to live, and in enjoying that experience. For this reason, organisations that want the benefits of community have to be interested in more than performance.

As we have said, performance means meeting the demands of today. In order to do that, we have to make use of whatever capacity is available to us. An organisation's capacity comes in a variety of forms: its financial resources, the talents of its members, the equipment it has available and so on. Performance uses capacity to meet the demands of today.

However, the demands of tomorrow or of next year are likely to be different. They may require different capacities from those we currently have available. So as well as performing, we have to prepare for the future by building capacity. 'Learning' is really another term for building capacity. Notice that performing is different from learning. Learning builds capacity, while performing uses the capacity that exists at the moment.

Along with performing and learning, organisations that want to continue to survive and thrive need to be concerned with the quality of experience for their members. If people experience work as constantly stressful or boring or demoralising or combative, they won't want to keep doing it. They will find a way to leave. For this reason, organisations need to achieve a balance between performance, learning and experience.[1]

Have a look at organisations you know. While people within them may appreciate the need for both learning and ensuring that work is a good experience, day-to-day demands mean that performance is usually given priority. Learning and experience can always be put off until tomorrow, so they tend to be sacrificed for increased performance. Is this your experience? Can you think of times when you couldn't take time for training because of performance pressures?

Balance does not happen naturally. How can it be achieved?

Achieving a Balance

Bringing performance, learning and experience into balance is a tricky business, and is something that most organisations struggle with. The task is simplified to some extent by understanding the relationship between the three. Research indicates that creating a balance between performance and learning results in an experience people enjoy.[2] Where the demands of a task require you to perform at close to the limit of your capacity, you are able to experience 'flow' – a level of sustained concentration where you feel you are working at your best. When people are in flow, they are unaware of time and performance seems to be effortless. Not surprisingly, people seek opportunities to be in flow; it is an experience they value.

What if performance and learning are out of balance? If people don't learn, their capacity eventually falls behind the performance required of them. Have you ever been in a situation where the demands on you far exceeded what you could deliver? The experience is stressful. If it keeps up, something has to give – eventually you experience 'burn out', unable to continue performing anywhere near your best.

What happens when learning is greater than performance? Continued learning creates capacity that needs to be used. If the demands on you are low and you use only a fraction of what you have to give, you will experience work as boring. You will find concentration hard to sustain. Chances are you'll be busy looking around for other things to keep you occupied.

The implications of this balance are important. Many people and organisations don't seek balance; instead they try to maximise their performance. Maximising performance will mean getting out of balance in a way that is not sustainable. So, efforts to bring about learning should not be judged simply on whether they lead to increased performance. Indeed, learning can have no impact on performance and still be valuable. To see why this is the case, let's consider an illustration.

Think of a sports stadium near you. The stadium has a certain capacity, a limit to the number of people who can attend events. Various factors will determine the capacity: the number of seats, toilets and trained staff, along with the amount of parking or transport available. Let's suppose the stadium has the capacity to hold 20,000 people.

Just because the stadium has this capacity does not mean that 20,000 people come to the games that are held there. Perhaps 10,000 people come. So performance is 10,000 and capacity is 20,000. Performance can be increased without any capacity building. Imagine that stadium management aim to increase performance through an advertising campaign, and at the same time the local team starts winning. More and more people begin to come to the games. Attendance goes up to 14,000 then to 18,000. More advertising and more success for the local team lead to 22,000 people wanting to come to the next game.

Stadium management – who don't like turning away people prepared to pay – find a way of squeezing in the 2,000 people who can't really fit. Performance exceeds capacity, and the stadium managers are delighted. There is a downside, though – the experience of the people at the game suffers. Some have had to walk for miles to get to the stadium. There are queues at the toilets and food outlets. Some people can't see the game, and in the crush some seats get broken.

If performance continues to exceed capacity a variety of things will happen that cause capacity to erode. More of the facilities will be damaged. Skilled staff will find less stressful work elsewhere. The capacity may fall from 20,000 to 18,000, degrading the experience further for everyone involved. Stressed staff become surly. The seats are uncomfortable. Time normally spent on keeping the stadium clean is used to repair damage. A vicious cycle of diminishing capacity and growing stress could develop. Clearly, it is important to keep performance and capacity in balance.

Imagine that 22,000 have been attending games for some time. The stadium managers decide to do some capacity building. They make an investment in the stadium so that it can accommodate 25,000. If the same number of people continue to attend games, this investment in capacity won't have altered performance. But that doesn't mean the investment was not worthwhile. The *experience* of the people involved will have changed. People attending games and those working at the stadium will be less stressed and more likely to want to continue coming to future events. Even though performance hasn't changed, the work of the stadium has become more sustainable.

In the same way, learning aims to build an organisation's capacity. This will not always mean increased performance, but it still contributes to making the organisation sustainable.

Many organisations show symptoms of stress, with people and resources burning out. Have you ever been part of a group subjected to unrelenting pressure to complete a project, with no time or energy to look after relationships within the group? In situations like this it is common for a group to complete the project but never want to work together again. Relationships – the capacity to work together – were burnt out by the project rather than built up, so the group failed to become a sustainable team.

With situations like this so common, why don't groups manage the performance–capacity balance more effectively. To explain what happens, let's look more closely at the nature of 'culture'.

Culture and Learning

We could say that performance and learning are two sides of the 'capacity' coin. Performance exploits capacity, wearing it down over time. Learning builds capacity. As we've seen, a sustainable organisation requires both processes.

It should be no surprise that two processes which appear to be opposites are both needed in organisations. Remember that organisations are communities; they are living things. Pairs of opposing processes are built into all living things. Notice that your breathing involves opposite processes: inhaling and exhaling. You go through cycles of relaxation and exertion. You take in energy when eating and expend it when you exercise. These processes are opposites and yet they are linked. The more you do one, the more you create a need for the other. If you want to test this out, try exhaling only and see how sustainable it becomes.[3] The dynamic relationship that exists between opposites in living systems is sometimes called 'complementarity'.[4]

While complementarity occurs naturally, it is often disrupted by the workings of culture. You may have heard people talk about organisational, or corporate, culture. This term is often used in a loose way that leads to confusion. Clarifying the meaning of culture will help us to work out why organisations fail to balance performance and learning.

A culture can be understood as a pattern of decision-making that characterises a group of people. When looking at the decisions a particular group has made, you might notice that they usually prefer to take risky options. Or there might be a pattern of deferring to the oldest person in the group. Or they might typically do whatever their customers ask them. Behind any of these patterns lies a set of values, deeply held beliefs, about the best way to act. How do these values and patterns form?

Anything that you do often enough sinks below your level of consciousness. You might follow the same route to work every day, making the turns without thinking. When you first began taking that route, you made conscious decisions along the way, but you no longer need to. It may no longer be the best route, but you still take it because you operate at an unconscious level. If someone asks you why you take that route instead of another, your reply might be something like 'I just do!' Because the reasons behind your behaviour have become unnecessary, they are forgotten.

In the same way, when a group is faced with a decision, complementarity ensures that the group is usually placed in a dilemma: it can make the decision in a way that gives priority to one value, or to its complementary opposite. For example, all groups face situations where the need to perform is in conflict with the need to learn: say, for example, they must decide whether a new person needs some extra training or should get on with doing the job. To resolve the matter they will give priority to either performance or learning. Imagine that a group decides in favour of performance and the decision turns out all right. The next time a similar dilemma arises, the group has a precedent. They know that deciding in favour of the performance has worked in the past, so they may decide to do the same again. If this happens often enough the group will become unconscious in its decision-making. Performance will have become a 'value', in that the group – without even thinking about it – gives priority to performance rather than learning.

This is what has happened within many organisations. Performance has become part of the culture, in that it is given priority over learning. People may be *consciously* aware of the need for learning, but *unconsciously* still give priority to performance whenever they are forced to choose. Capacity-building functions – like training – are often 'counter-cultural' within most organisations, not quite fitting with the way managers make decisions. Unless required to think about it, managers will tend to ignore training and learning, even though the need may seem obvious to an outsider.

Implications for Learning

In situations where people operate on the basis of unconsciously held assumptions, managing requires skill. In particular, where people operate unconsciously according to deeply held values, it is easy either to act as a 'doormat', or to get stuck in conflict with them. Some people end up in conflict because they are so busy avoiding being doormats, while others end up as doormats while trying to avoid conflict. If you want to ensure that learning happens in your organisation, you need to know how to avoid both of these traps.

The doormat situation occurs when someone unconsciously assumes that performance must always be the priority, and in your conversations with them that assumption is left unchallenged. For instance, someone may want you to guarantee that an investment in learning will lead to improved performance. For someone operating from a 'machine' concept of organisations, asking this makes perfect sense: everything worthwhile needs to be related to improving performance. You may know that learning is about capacity building, not about performance. Thus, learning *can* lead to improved performance where the circumstances are right. It can also give your organisation the capacity to make current performance sustainable, which is also a valuable contribution. The 'doormat' response is to give the guarantee, hoping it turns out fine.

It is not surprising when this approach does not turn out fine. As has already been discussed, most organisations are already out of balance, with an overemphasis on performing. They are experiencing stress as a result of performing beyond their capacity. *They need to do some capacity building just to get back in balance.* The stress is a signal to them that capacity building has to become the priority. Given that this is the case, learning will not deliver improved performance. Instead, a stressed manager will blame the trainer for convincing him to invest in learning that did not deliver what was wanted. The manager will think ill of learning in general, and the trainer in particular.

While the trainer does not want to make promises that cannot be kept, he or she will have to be careful about how they respond to a manager's request for guaranteed performance improvement. Saying 'Learning doesn't have to improve performance to be worthwhile' may be true, but is highly likely to cause conflict. A statement such as this will alienate someone who values performance at a deep, subconscious level. It will make it appear that the trainer doesn't see performance as important.

The challenge is to engage in conversation that shows the need for *both* performance and learning. Because so many people are used to seeing things as 'either/or', statements that advocate learning are often misunderstood as anti-performance. How can this be avoided?

A well-established maxim for healthy conversations, and indeed healthy relationships, is 'seek first to understand'.[5] When others see that you understand their values they are more likely to consider other ways of looking at situations. This requires being able to talk about what someone is looking for through their values, and what they fear may happen if the opposite values predominate. So, if someone says 'I'll invest in some learning if you'll guarantee that it improves performance,' you might ask about the performance issues they see as important for the organisation. You could then say something like this:

> I agree, performance is critical if this organisation is going to get anywhere. We've got to keep performing to survive. I'd hate to see us waste our time and energy on activities that don't contribute to our future. And I don't want to throw money away sending people on courses where nothing gets learned.[6]
>
> My concern is that there is *more* to surviving than performance. As I see it, we have to find a way to both perform now, and build our capacity for the future. Let's talk about what it takes to do both.

Saying this will not convince a manager to act. What it does is open up a conversation, allowing values that are usually unspoken to be considered. It creates the opportunity to explore the complementarity of learning and performance. We will continue to explore ways in which we can bring about this happy union.

Summary: The Results of Overemphasising Performance

Organisations with cultures that overemphasise performance and give learning a low priority:

- 'Burn out' essential capacities that are needed if they are to be sustainable
- Sacrifice the quality of people's experience at work
- Need greater emphasis on building capacity through learning in order to be balanced and sustainable
- Often resist the practicalities of learning

Notes:

[1] This discussion is based on the work of Tim Gallwey, outlined in his article 'The Inner Game of Work' from *The Systems Thinker*, Vol. 8, no. 6, August 1997. Gallwey calls performance, learning and experience the 'Work Triangle', and has pioneered the use of partnership coaching in achieving a balance between the three.

[2] Pioneering research into how people experience work has been carried out by psychologist Mihaly Cziksentmihalyi, and published in a variety of books including *Finding Flow* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997).

[3] You can inhale again now!

[4] The anthropologist Gregory Bateson used the term 'complementarity' to describe the workings of cultures. The ideas in this chapter are based on his book *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1975), along with Charles Hampden-Turner and Fons Trompenaars' *The Seven Cultures of Capitalism* (New York: Doubleday, 1993) and Barry Johnson's *Polarity Management* (Amherst MA: HRD Press, 1993).

[5] Stephen Covey uses this principle in his book ***The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*** (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989).

[6] Notice that the word 'but' is not used at this point: it is a word that often tells someone we don't really understand or care about what they value. As we discuss in Chapter 12, where we feel the need to say 'but' it is better to have a brief pause.

Appendix 1h:
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Rethinking Grades for Sustainable Learning

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Rethinking Grades for Sustainable Learning

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SUMMARY

Many students manage their learning processes on the basis of one measure of achievement: the grades they receive on assignments. While these represent current levels of performance, lifelong learning requires that students manage their learning and the quality of their experience as well as performance. This article summarizes the dangers involved in using a singular measure of achievement, and reports on a teaching innovation that encourages students to assess their own learning and experience prior to receiving back graded work. The innovation was successful in allowing students who valued learning to take a holistic view of their achievements.

RETHINKING GRADES FOR SUSTAINABLE LEARNING

Many academics are becoming frustrated by students' reluctance to embrace lifelong learning. The need for on-going learning seems so obvious, and many of us find learning pleasurable and life-affirming. It seems inexcusable that some of our students seek to avoid learning situations or try to escape from their studies as quickly as they can.

Treating a student's avoidance of learning as inexcusable, however, can quickly limit our ability to change the situation. Students may avoid learning in a number of ways: submitting other's work as their own; attending only those classes required in order to pass a course; taking on only those projects they feel have a low risk of failure; or ignoring feedback received on assignments. When we confront behaviour like this, it is easy to assume that the problem lies with the student, thereby failing to explore how we may be contributing to a situation where these behaviours seem like reasonable strategies. Assuming the problem lies with the student in turn encourages the adoption of short-term solutions that leave the fundamental conditions that cause the behaviour unchanged (Senge, 1990).

In this article, we will explore a common practice in educational institutions: the use of singular measures of student achievement. The authors have come to believe that this practice contributes to situations where students avoid learning, such as those described above. We will explain why we believe this occurs, and describe a teaching innovation designed to alleviate some of the unintended damage we believe is caused by singular measures of achievement.

FLYING ON ONE MEASURE

Imagine you are the pilot of a small aircraft aiming to complete a long journey. Your success depends on more than your ability to fly the plane. Pilots have to learn to aviate (fly the aircraft), navigate (know where they are in relation to where they are going) and communicate (with air traffic control and other pilots). Each of these elements requires skill and attention, and as a pilot you may feel a sense of accomplishment in doing any of them well. However, safe flying requires that you do all three. Giving all your attention to one element only will lead to disaster. Of course, the particular disaster you encounter will depend on what you have been neglecting: failing to aviate leads to an immediate crash, while failure to navigate might get you lost in territory where there is no safe place to land. Completing a successful journey will require you to

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balance the needs for aviation, navigation and communication. What is required for a successful journey of life-long learning?

Gallwey (2000) suggests that sustaining any human effort over time requires that we balance the needs of performance, learning and experience. Gallwey refers to these three elements as the 'work triangle' where:

- *Performance* refers to using the capacities one has available to meet the demands of the day;
- *Learning* refers to actions taken to build one's capacities for the future, in recognition that future demands are certain to be different from present demands; and
- *Experience* refers to the quality of life one has while undertaking the activities that make up the endeavour.

Consider how these elements need to be balanced by someone undertaking the work involved in studying at an academic institution. A course of study will involve completing various assignments or tests. Each piece of assessment represents a demand placed upon the student. Grades students receive represent the assessor's judgement of the student's *performance* against this demand. Successful study necessarily involves performing at an acceptable standard.

Students seldom start their academic careers with the knowledge and ability needed to pass all the assessment activities that await them. Consequently, they need to engage in *learning* activities that build capacity – that is, required knowledge and ability – to meet demands. A student who enters a course of study with an initially high level of capacity but gives little attention to learning may find that their performance on assessment activities is acceptable to begin with, then declines over time.

In order to persist at their studies students also need to value the *experience* they are having as they proceed. A student who is performing adequately while learning substantial amounts of useful knowledge may give up because the quality of life is undesirable. The work may be too stressful or too boring; in either case, it will challenge a student's endurance. Many students choose to persist with low quality educational experiences in order to complete a qualification. Nevertheless, where they endure despite the experience they will be reluctant to return to learning once they are finished.

While the need to balance these three elements may appear obvious, the experience of the authors is that many academics and students reflexively give priority to performance and neglect issues relating to learning and experience. Academics and students are likely to view a student's achievements solely on the basis of grades received. And, when asked to judge the quality of a particular course both academics and students may do so on the basis of the level of demand involved in its assessment, rather than how much students learn or what experience they have while undertaking the course.

A factor that contributes to the emphasis placed on performance is that this is generally the only element measured during a student's academic career. Each time a student is assessed, they receive a grade for their performance but no indication of how much they have learned or what the quality of the experience was like. So, while we might hope that students balance all three elements, there is only a singular measure of achievement available to both academics and students. What are the consequences of this focus on performance?

PROBLEMS WITH SINGULAR GRADES

Reviewing relevant literature and through conversations with students and colleagues, it became apparent to the authors that the 'singular grade' approach has serious negative consequences.

Encouraging unsustainable trade-offs

By having a singular grade, students are encouraged to maximize the one aspect of their work that is measured: performance. While the healthy and sustainable way of improving performance (as indicated by grades) is through learning, this is a strategy that takes time. Students can opt instead for trade-off strategies. One strategy is to trade-off the experience of study; working long hours so study becomes a grind. Another is to cheat – for instance, handing in someone else's work – which increases grades while trading off learning. A singular grade masks these downsides, in that the performance score goes up, but there are no learning or experience scores that come down. Students are not directly confronted with the trade-off they have made. A number of studies indicate increasing levels of trade-offs such as cheating within universities (Walker, 1998).

Encouraging an exotelic approach to life

Csikszentmihalyi (1997) distinguishes between 'autotelic' and 'exotelic' personalities. 'Autotelic' activity refers to that which is done for its own sake, because the individual considers the experience or outcome of doing it valuable. 'Exotelic' activity is that which is motivated by an outside goal or reward system. Csikszentmihalyi's research suggests that young people with autotelic personalities are more likely to have a higher quality of experience than their peers. Grades given for student work generally reflect performance measured against the standards of an external source, the examiner. Experience and learning, on the other hand are best judged by having the individual students assess themselves. Singular grades thus make assessment activities primarily exotelic.

Unproductive competition

The exotelic personality is highly visible in competitive situations. Many students learn to judge themselves, not against any internal standards, but based on where they finish in comparison to others. While competition can operate in a healthy way, spurring people to set goals that are personally important, it can also be practised destructively. This occurs where students seek to 'win' by interfering with the learning of others (for example, hiding library books needed for an assignment). A singular goal allows students to adopt either healthy or unhealthy strategies.

Singular goals

A student who has a singular measure of their work is constrained in setting goals. When students set goals for work on an assignment or a course they are most likely to make it a performance goal such as 'I want to achieve a B+'. Many students internalize their performance history to the point where they say, 'I am a B+ student'. Here past performance is shaping the student's identity and the goals she is likely to set for the future. Providing a mechanism for measuring learning and experience could enable students to articulate goals that they otherwise could not. For instance, a student might make it a goal to 'Increase the quality of my experience to a B+ level, while not allowing performance to drop below B-'.

Increased fear of failure

A key factor in the unhealthy operation of perfectionist attitudes is the fear of failure. Perfectionist students are likely to set unrealistic goals for their performance, and be dissatisfied even with outstanding achievements (Hamachek, 1978). Using singular goals directed toward performance encourages students to treat failure only as negative, and to actively avoid it where they can.

Reduced acceptance of diversity in the classroom

While students might appreciate the learning opportunities created by diversity in the classroom, often they will prefer to work alone in order to ensure that the singular performance measure reflects their own contribution. Working with others may improve the quality of their learning or of the experience they have, but because it puts their performance at risk they may tend to reject it as an option.

Distorting student choice

Fritz (1991) describes the process by which people find themselves working in jobs they hate. Early success (according to singular measures of performance) encourages students to continue with certain subjects and drop others. These decisions tend to reflect performance rather than the student's level of engagement with the subject. Fritz encourages a change of view that many students struggle to make: that if something is worth doing, it is worth doing badly, until you can do it well. Persistence at a task that one is performing poorly is endangered if all feedback involves singular measures of performance.

TOWARD BALANCE

How can students be encouraged to take a balanced approach to the academic process? Directly educating students about the need for balance is likely to have limited effect. Exhortations to students to be honest or to treat mistakes as valuable learning experiences sound vacuous and prissy to students who for years have been taught that education is part of the 'tooth and claw' fight for good jobs, where only the strong (the high performers) survive. In the world view of most students, prospective employers do not care if studying was a good experience – they too are interested in the singular measure of achievement, performance.

The authors decided that the key to changing students' behaviour was enabling them to become aware of their achievements on all three dimensions: performance, learning and experience. Gallwey (2000) suggests that we can bring about change and show respect for the dignity of the person undergoing change, by trusting that people are natural learners. As natural learners, people unconsciously seek to close gaps between where they are and where they want to be, so long as they are aware of the gap. We sought to empower learners by making them more aware of their achievements in the areas of learning and experience. To do this, we had students undertake an exercise prior to receiving back assignments that had been graded. Given that the grade awarded by the marker would represent the student's performance on the assigned work, we designed the exercise to allow them to establish a measure of the learning and experience associated with the work.

Earlier in the course, the class had discussed the need to balance performance, learning and experience at work. The exercise began with a brief explanation of why this was also important in regard to their work on academic assignments. Then students were asked to draw three continuums on a sheet of paper, each with 0 at one end and 100 at the other. One continuum was labelled 'Learning', the second 'Experience' and the third 'Performance'. The class was told that when they received their assignment back they would be able to place the mark (awarded out of 100) on the Performance continuum. This exercise was to enable them to give themselves marks for learning and experience.

Students were then asked to reflect on the following learning-related questions: what did you learn? How big a jump in skill, knowledge or understanding did you make when carrying out the assignment – no progress, a small step, a jump or a quantum leap? How much do you value what you learned? Because some people like to reflect in conversation, opportunity was provided to discuss these questions with others in the class. Each student was then asked to give themselves a mark out of 100 to represent the amount of learning involved in the assignment, and to place this on the 'Learning' continuum. They were told that there could be further learning for them when the assignments were returned – more might be gained from the marker's feedback – so this mark could go up. However, it could not go down, because the feedback would not diminish what they had learned.

Students were then encouraged to discuss their experience in completing the assignment. To help their reflection they were encouraged to think of three words that best represented the nature of the experience. After their discussions, they were asked to place a mark on the 'Experience' continuum, representing the quality of their experience in relation to the assignment. This mark was not one that would be changed by the feedback.

The process was complete when, at the next class, the students received their marked assignments and were able to plot their score on the 'Performance' continuum. Because students were so accustomed to judging achievement against the singular measure, the authors decided it was important to have a time gap between assessing their own learning and experience and receiving the marker's assessment of performance. It was feared that without the gap, students might discount their own learning or the quality of their experience if they were dissatisfied with the grade given to their performance.

To gauge the impact of this process, the authors used this intervention with the second assignment for the course and surveyed students twice: once after receiving back their first assignment (with no intervention), and again after the second assignment (with the intervention described above). In each survey, students were asked to indicate their level of agreement (from 'Strongly Agree' to 'Strongly Disagree') with a series of statements relating to assignments. Table 1 shows the percentage of students either agreeing or strongly agreeing with several of the statements in the surveys. Students were not forced to choose between values of performance, learning and experience: it was

Table 1 *Student responses to survey*

Question	Agree: Survey 1 (%)	Agree: Survey 2 (%)
I judge my achievements on the basis of the grade I receive *[Performance]*	89.5	84.2
I judge my achievements on the basis of how much I learn *[Learning]*	60.5	68.4
I judge my achievements . . . *[Experience]*	50.0	47.4
I felt anxious prior to receiving back my assignment.	83.7	52.7

possible for them to answer 'strongly agree' to all the statements presented.

While fewer students in the second survey strongly agreed or agreed with the statement relating to performance, and more strongly agreed or agreed with those relating to learning and experience, with only 19 students completing both surveys these results were not significant. The only significant change was that students indicated a decrease in anxiety in connection with the second assignment. Of course, the reduced anxiety could be explained by other factors, such as a better understanding of the course requirements.

When asked in the second survey whether they intended to continue to use the process or some variation on it when receiving other assignments, 42.1% responded 'Yes', 52.6% responded 'No' and 5.3% responded 'Maybe'. When asked to give their reasons for answering as they did, there was a qualitative difference between the responses of those answering 'yes' and those answering 'no'.

The eight comments made by students indicating they would continue to use the technique were all relatively long, with an average of 30.25 words, and generally indicated an appreciation of the need for balance. Comments included the following:

> It provides a very holistic view to study and life in general.
>
> I think it quite aptly labels what I have been struggling to define regarding my feeling of dissatisfaction with some papers – even though I may get an A+ grade. Conclusion? I obviously highly rate learning.

Those not intending to use the technique in the future gave shorter comments, averaging just 12.5 words. These generally indicated that the student did not value learning or experience sufficiently to make the process worth the effort required. The 10 comments made included the following:

> Too emotional to think about.
>
> I am not geared at accepting failure. I think I will always rate myself based on the grade that I get.
>
> It only told me what I already knew. Besides, I like to do assignments and once the results are back, I like to move on and forget about it.

The small sample of students involved in the study necessitates caution in drawing conclusions. Still, the comments suggested to the authors that students who already took a balanced approach to their study were more likely to appreciate the process, because it enabled them to assess their achievement more clearly than was possible with a singular measure. On the other hand, students who did not place value on learning and experience were less likely to see the process as worthwhile.

FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE

The results suggested that the process made little difference to students with the greatest need: those who place relatively little value on learning or the quality of their experience while studying. While we may have hoped for more, the limited impact is not a surprise.

The process was introduced because of the authors' belief that the existing academic culture, in their own institution at least, over-emphasizes performance at the expense of learning and experience; and that balance in these areas is important both for individual learners and the institution as a whole. As discussed at the outset, we believe that issues such as student cheating are symptomatic of a culture in need of change. Understanding the nature of culture alerts us to the need for patience and endurance when seeking to bring about change.

Cultures form when groups establish a preference for one value (for example, performance) over its opposite (learning). Eventually this preference slips beneath the group's level of consciousness (Hampden-Turner, 1990). As with anything we repeat often enough, choosing a performance-oriented approach can become something we do without thinking: an assumption regarding the best way to act. Culture thus represents the pattern of unconsciously held values shaping decision-making within a particular community. When the community designs a process, the process will both reflect existing values and etch them more deeply into the collective way of thinking.

Most students have little reason to question existing processes associated with assessment. Gauging achievement on the basis of singular performance-oriented grades appears entirely unremarkable because it is so much a part of the academic landscape. So, while existing assessment processes might create frustrations for both students and academics the pervasive nature of assessment is likely to result in people blaming one another for their frustrations.

We can expect that many students, guided by unconsciously held assumptions about the primacy of performance, will see little value in a process that encourages balance. What, then, is the point of introducing the process?

The results made it apparent that some students did appreciate the process and intended to use it. For these students, the process represents a way of expressing their goals and achievements in ways that they struggled to in the past. Further, we believe that processes such as this can act as a lever for bringing about changes to the assumptions held by students.

Cultural experts Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars (2000) draw on the work of cognitive consistency theorists such as Festinger (1957) in explaining how we deal with conflicts between values. As we have seen, performance and learning have the potential to be regularly in conflict. A student might need to choose between taking a course where they will get good marks and one that promises great opportunity for learning along with the risk of failure. Singular measures of achievement allow students to gain cognitive consistency by repressing one of the values involved, learning. In opting to do the easy course, the student begins to form the opinion that 'I only really care about the grade anyway'. A process that increases the visibility of all the values involved makes such repression more difficult. With the values of learning and experience repressed, cognitive consistency simply requires action in harmony with the belief, 'It is important to get good grades'. When all values are visible, students have the challenge of harmonizing their actions with the belief, 'It is important to get good grades and enjoy my learning by engaging in high quality learning'. Our hope is that regular use of the process will encourage students to seek cognitive consistency by aiming to maximize all the values involved.

Seen in this light, the results indicate to the authors the need to act in two areas. Firstly, there is a need to persist with techniques that make students aware of their current achievements across the range of values necessary for life-long learning. This on its own is unlikely to impact on all students. Consequently, changed assessment processes need to be used in conjunction with education about the need for balance.

By addressing both grading processes and education about the values involved in education, we hope to empower students to successfully manage their own journeys of lifelong learning.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

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Appendix 1i:

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How Consultants Operate: how to help them do their job

How consultants operate and how to help them do their job

By Philip Ramsey and Paresha Sinha

TRADITIONAL consulting practices, based on commercial realities and client expectations, are often at odds with philosophies embodied by the term "learning organisation". This presents a challenge for business consultants working in the organisational learning field.

How do New Zealand consultants handle this? And what does this mean for managers? Recent research based on interviews with New Zealand consultants working in the learning organisation area comes up with some answers.

What is needed is a group of people with diverse perspectives who work together to learn how to face up to the challenge

Interest in learning organisations reflects managers' efforts to deal with the increasing rate and complexity of change. To cope with this turbulence, many organisations see the need for continuous experimentation and learning, and for ongoing transformation of the organisation itself.

Many managers appreciate the need for learning, but struggle to bring it about. Leading writers on learning organisations suggest that the fundamental reason for this is managers' assumptions about learning and work.

Consider, for example, common assumptions about technical rationality and competition.

Many managers assume that work is best done through a process of "technical rationality". This involves finding a person with technical competence in the area of concern, having this person determine the best course of action, and then taking action. From this perspective, learning is a process of individuals' gaining technical competence.

Managers also assume that the best way to determine who has the technical competence they need is through a process of competition: by generating a debate between technical experts, we can determine who has the best understanding and who is best able to help us.

Learning experts such as Senge and Isaacs suggest that these assumptions may hold when dealing with relatively simple issues, but not when confronted with complex change. They say that the challenges facing most managers today are generally too complex for one person to determine the right course of action on the basis of previous learning and experience. Challenges are also likely to be different from previous ones, thus requiring new solutions.

What is needed is a group of people with diverse perspectives who work together to learn how to face up to the challenge. In complex situations, those charged with implementing decisions need "know-why" as well as "know-how" to adjust to unexpected circumstances. This means they need to be part of the group involved in determining what is to be done.

As groups work together over time, the people involved can build their understanding and sensitivity to one another, so that the learning process can accelerate. They grow in their capacity to handle complex challenges that require new ways of acting.

This view of work emphasises building social bonds – through shared purpose and dialogue skills – as essential elements to learning. Learning experts suggest that over time the culture of debate fostered by assumptions of technical rationality and competition destroys the social bonds needed for deep learning.

A further assumption held by managers is the need to be proactive in dealing with problems as they arise. They may feel it is important to be "on top of things", by identifying problems early and responding before they have an opportunity to grow.

This assumption is also questioned by those interested in creating learning organisations. They suggest that we are often too quick to label something a "problem". By doing so, we can leap into actions that make things worse for the organisation in the long run.

A frequent consequence of being proactive is that we deal with symptoms rather than taking time to understand the underlying forces that shape what is happening within and outside our organisations. When we treat symptoms only, our problems keep returning as soon as the "quick fix" has worn off.

Learning is about building our understanding of these underlying and often hidden forces, so that we can take action at a fundamental rather than a symptomatic level.

We have considered two perspectives on learning, each based on its own set of assumptions:

- "Problem solving", based on assumptions of technical rationality and competition.
- "Capacity building", encompassing the assumptions advocated by learning organisation experts.

From these different perspectives, we get very different views of what constitutes a learning organisation. From the problem-solving perspective, it is simply a place where a lot of learning is taking place. From the capacity-building perspective, a learning organisation is one that has adopted a particular culture that makes learning possible.

Where technical rationality places a high value on expertise, a learning organisation represents a "new workplace", characterised by a culture that values "learning" more than "knowing the right answer". Consequently, while people in a learning organisation might use competitive argument from time to time, they are likely to be more open to dialogue and experimentation carried out within groups characterised by strong relationships.

We have discussed some of the assumptions held by managers and seen that these can be in conflict with those held by experts in learning. How are these differences in assumptions likely to affect consultants working in the area?

Consulting and the learning organisation

In his classic 1960 book *The Human Side of Enterprise*, Douglas McGregor described how the assumptions of managers affect the relationships they form with those they manage. We can reasonably expect that managers' assumptions would similarly affect the relationships they form with consultants.

If the problem-solving perspective prevails, managers are likely to respond proactively to organisational problems. They will call on technically competent consultants as experts who can determine the best course of action. Managers are also likely to have consultants compete against one another to establish their expertise.

Differences in assumptions have significant implications for consultants. Consider how these differences shape the purpose, commitment, role and processes used by consultants. Table 1 summarises some of the differences arising from the problem-solving and capacity-building perspectives.

Schein's work on consultation has outlined alternative approaches that involve different relationships between consultant and client as they address organisational problems. In each of the approaches described, the implicit purpose of the consultation is to solve problems. Similarly,

TABLE 1

Alternative models of consulting

	Problem solving	Capacity building
Purpose	Helping organisations to solve problems.	Enabling organisations to pursue visions.
Process	A linear process involving single-loop learning. Problems are defined, analysed and resolved.	A cyclical process involving double-loop learning. Each piece of work provides further insight into the nature of the organisation and how best to pursue the vision.
Commitment	Short-term fulfilment of contractual obligations.	Long-term fulfilment of social obligations, as part of a community of practice.
Role	Provision of expertise that enables organisational problems to be solved.	Building the organisation's capacity to achieve its vision.

Just as purpose affects process, process affects the nature of the commitment the consultant has toward the organisation

Kubr indicates that the initial challenge for consultants is to convince clients of their expertise in the area of the clients' problems. Problem solving as a purpose is consistent with the assumption of proactivity discussed earlier.

Senge, an influential writer on learning organisations, has discussed the limitations of problem solving as an orientation. He suggests that the driving force behind learning organisations needs to be a "creative orientation", involving the pursuit of a compelling vision for the organisation. Such a vision transforms the learning experience for those involved, bringing into play intrinsic rather than transactional rewards.

So, where consultants with problem-solving assumptions might define their purpose as helping organisations solve problems, those with capacity-building assumptions are more likely to frame their work as enabling organisations to pursue visions.

The problem-solving orientation will also affect the process adopted by consultants. A focus on problems lends itself to a linear process that starts with problem identification. It then moves through diagnosis, solution finding and implementation to the point where the project or consulting assignment can be terminated. While the stages of a consulting project have been described in a variety of ways by different writers, each approach views consulting as a linear process with clear starting and finishing points.

When consultants view the purpose of their work as enabling organisations to pursue visions, the process changes from linear to cyclical. Each project or assignment the consultant conducts will generate new information on the true nature of the organisation and what is required for it to move toward its vision.

Argyris and Schon describe the different orientations as "single-loop" and "double-loop" learning. Single-loop learning involves taking some action to solve a problem, assessing the consequences and feeding what is learned back into the process in the form of new actions. Single-loop learning continues until the problem is solved. In double-loop learning, consequences are assessed not only in terms of their effect on the problem, but also what they tell you about the variables shaping thinking within the organisation more broadly.

Single-loop learning might involve asking, "Did the action solve the problem? Did we meet the standards we had set?" Double-loop learning involves the questions: "What made us think this was a problem? Why did we set the standards in such a way?"

A consultant operating from problem solving is more likely to adopt a process of single-loop learning that is linear, leading to the solving of a problem. In contrast, a capacity-building consultant is likely to adopt a double-loop learning process that is cyclical, with each project providing new insights into how the organisation can go about the pursuit of its vision.

Just as purpose affects process, process affects the nature of the commitment the consultant has toward the organisation. With a problem-solving orientation and a process that has definite starting and finishing points, the approach to commitment is based around a contractual relationship. The competitive nature of problem solving also increases the likelihood that a consultant operating in this manner will view the relationship as temporary and focused on fulfilment of a contract.

Both the purpose and processes associated with capacity building are long-term. So, while consultants operating under this model may use contracts to define work they do, their commitment to the organisation is likely to be altered.

Wenger uses the term "community of practice" for the kind of relationship that can form between a consultant and members of a client organisation. While not formally part of the same organisation, they learn together by their regular interaction, creating social bonds and a shared repertoire of resources (common language, sensibilities, etc) that enable them to work together effectively.

Communities of practice do not go out of existence when a contract is terminated or a project completed. Rather, the nature of the community shifts from active engagement to "dispersed", where members keep in touch though they no longer engage with the same intensity.

In this sense, consultants operating under capacity building feel committed to organisations beyond the life of particular contracts, because these represent a community of practice to which they belong. This commitment may be expressed by staying in touch and providing advice outside of contracts.

Finally, the role the consultant plays differs according to the model in use. Under problem-solving assumptions, a consultant could be expected to act as an expert. This may be as a technical expert, helping managers determine what they need to do. Alternatively, managers may know what to do, but need the consultant's expertise to develop the skills required to implement their plans. Or clients may require a consultant to provide expertise in facilitating the process by which members of the organisation solve their own problems.

Senge and Kim describe consultants not as experts, but as "capacity builders". They suggest the role is to create a link between research and practice, helping others to build capabilities and skills through methods and tools that transform concepts into practical know-how and results.

This provides a different role for consultants operating under capacity building. While they may have expertise in a variety of areas, the contribution they make is framed as building capacity rather than providing expertise. This role harmonises with the culture of "learning" rather than "knowing" previously discussed.

Consulting practice

The two models of consulting we have discussed are formed in very different ways. Capacity building is based around a philosophical approach to organisations and work. Problem solving is more practical, in the sense that it is based on what clients are most likely to expect.

Which – the philosophical or the practical – is likely to have the greater impact on consultants? Given that consultants may read philosophically derived work on learning organisations but practice in the world of client expectations, we might expect them to feel pulled between the two models. This could lead to the defensive behaviour described by Argyris, with consultants espousing capacity building while putting problem solving into use.

To begin exploring the impact of this tension on client-consultant relationships, Massey University researchers interviewed seven New Zealand consultants. Each consultant worked with organisations in one of the five disciplines Senge associates with the creation of learning organisations. The disciplines represented were: team learning, shared vision, systems thinking

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Clients may require a consultant to provide expertise in facilitating the process by which members of the organisation solve their own problems

and personal mastery. All worked independently or in firms with 10 or fewer associates. Four were founders and managers of their own consulting companies. Only one consultant from any given company was included in the study.

The consultants interviewed were either known to the researchers or recommended by one of the other consultants in the sample. The small sample was used to generate a rich description of consulting practice, using semi-structured interviews. Such a description would allow us to explore the particular issues relevant to consultants as they deal with the tension between philosophy and practice.

The consultants were asked to think of a particular important client and to discuss how they had carried out critical phases of the consulting process. They described how they had gained access to the organisation; established a contract; collected data; diagnosed needs; implemented solutions; reviewed work; and terminated the consultancy.

At the suggestion of the consultant who took part in the pilot interview, participating consultants were also asked how the relationship with the chosen client differed from relationships with other clients. This suggestion ultimately generated information of particular relevance to managers working with consultants.

Transcripts of the interviews were analysed to establish common themes (**Table 2**). It quickly became apparent that consultants' descriptions of actions they take with clients nominated as "important" are consistent with capacity building. The consultants were making deliberate efforts to conduct themselves in ways that were consistent with a learning organisation philosophy.

TABLE 2

Themes emerging from interviews

Consulting practice based on capacity building

- Use of learning organisation technique: "Reflection"
- Use of learning organisation technique: "Conversations".
- Attitudinal change and "Knowledge Transfer" as benefits to clients.

Factors limiting use of capacity building

- Clients fear of an "overly theoretical" orientation.
- Trust as the basis for productive relationships.

Two themes related to the benefits to clients from consulting projects. Six of the seven participants described benefits in terms of attitudinal changes consistent with learning organisation principles. Rather than discussing solutions to particular problems, consultants mentioned benefits such as "greater self-awareness", "commitment to people issues", "becoming better communicators" and "orienting them to a learning orientation rather than a managing or controlling orientation". One consultant described the benefits to clients in this way: *"I am helping them to work as a team rather than as individuals. So they are benefiting ... partly from my intellectual input and partly from my facilitation skills, and also from my ability to challenge them. They end up better organised, more focused, thinking slightly differently – sometimes a lot differently – which in the beginning they couldn't. Generally speaking, they believe they have done it themselves, which is about right because they have developed themselves. The thinking is theirs. The decision is theirs."*

Similarly, three participants mentioned "knowledge transfer to the client" as an important outcome. This indicated that they viewed their work in terms of building capacity. This transfer included more than simply having clients learn technical "know-how". One participant explained that, as he and the client worked together to solve organisational problems, he sought to pass on his "cast of mind" or his way of thinking about the work.

Another spoke of the challenge of ensuring interventions were designed to generate knowledge transfer, saying: *"One of the requirements of the design is that [clients] are able to perform some of the skills we perform for them and then [the skills] become embedded. So we demonstrate over and over again, so that it is embedded. Otherwise there is no change in behaviour. They have to* *unlearn 30 years of belief and practice and I know how difficult that is. But as the project draws down, we will appear less frequently."*

Along with framing benefits to clients in learning organisation terms, participants spoke of learning organisation principles that they sought to adopt directly into their practice.

Three participants described how they incorporated reflection into their process of review. While this sometimes involved shared reflection with the client, one participant mentioned that personal reflection was often a more intense form of review than client feedback. The consultant commented: *"My experience is we tend to be harder on ourselves than clients [are]. Primarily because they may think it is great, but they do not ... have a sense of what else could be done. Sometimes, you fall short of your own expectations. [That] they are happy does not matter – of course, it makes me feel better. But if [the work] doesn't go as I thought, I would understand there is still a gap. What do I need to do differently to make it work to my expectations?"*

Four participants mentioned use of conversation as an essential part of the consulting process. Brown and Isaacs describe conversation with clients as a core business process contributing to learning. And consultants in the study described using conversation to establish issues to be dealt with, while at the same time building commitment to the change processes being considered. One participant said conversation acted as an alternative to having top managers attempt to sell change programmes to the rest of the organisation.

The themes discussed so far indicate that the consultants were endeavouring to take a capacity-building approach to the work they did with their "most important" clients, with whom they had long-standing relationships.

But two other themes emerged from the interviews that showed the capacity-building approach was not possible in all their work.

Six of the seven participants mentioned clients' fear or apprehension about taking an overly theoretical orientation. Consultants were aware that work in the area of learning organisations may involve concepts that do not appear to have immediate practical value to the client. One participant described it as clients struggling to "find the connection between what we are talking about and the bottom line".

Participants mentioned that they deliberately developed strategies that both delivered practical outcomes and challenged clients to "widen their mindsets". Often this involved starting the relationship with intermittent contacts and small projects, which built into long-term relationships over time. One participant described the consultant's role in terms of making the theoretical accessible to clients, as follows: *"Sometimes we bring the theoretical, the research ... and try to bridge what the [client's] needs are with the good ideas ... showing how [they] can bring them together. People hire us because we ... help to widen their mindsets. We have to be good enough, not just with ideas, but also in bringing them alive, to ... work for the client."*

A further theme, mentioned by six participants, was the importance of trust as the

Conversation acted as an alternative to having top managers attempt to sell change programmes to the rest of the organisation

Consultants consciously built relationships with clients that would make capacity-building consulting possible in the future

basis for relationships with clients. Several participants mentioned that work in the area of learning organisations involves both minds and hearts, along with communication at a deeper than usual level. They said trust was both a prerequisite for such work and an outcome of the work. As trust grew in the relationship, consultants reported feeling bolder in confronting clients about issues that needed to be addressed. One consultant said: *"With a stronger relationship with the client ... I became bolder ... not letting them 'wimp out' and I would say 'Give it a go'."*

Another expressed a direct connection between client-consultant trust and ability to work in the area of learning organisations, saying: *"We can't retreat in the end and say, 'You paid us to do this thing'. So we tend to enter into quite deep relationships with clients because of this. The communication modes and the levels of trust are high and we are working with minds and hearts. When we are doing learning, there is no other way."*

Making best use of consultants

This research was exploratory, involving interviews with a small sample of consultants. Nevertheless, the results were enlightening to those involved in the study. We had suspected that consultants would have an "either/or" approach to resolving the tension inherent in their position. Either they would operate according to traditional models of consulting, with an emphasis on technical rationality, or they would have adapted their practice to reflect learning organisation principles.

We were surprised and encouraged to find that the consultants interviewed had more sophisticated ways of dealing with the paradox. They were able to hold capacity-building assumptions as an ideal, yet work with clients who did not allow them to put this philosophy into practice. At the same time, they consciously built relationships with clients that would make capacity-building consulting possible in the future.

While the focus of the research was on consultants, this finding has important implications for managers seeking to use their services. The results of the study provide a clear challenge to managers in their relationships with consultants, particularly when working within a philosophically based area such as learning organisations.

Consultants reported being able to do their best work within trusting relationships with clients. Such relationships enabled them:

- To more effectively understand the real needs of clients, through deeper insights into the organisation.
- To be bolder in confronting clients with fundamental changes that needed to be made.
- To review and improve their own practice openly and collaboratively with clients.

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The consultants generally talked about their own responsibility in building trusting relationships. They described strategies such as using small, intermittent projects with clear, practical outcomes and deliberately avoiding language and work that appeared too theoretical or conceptual.

As with any relationship, however, responsibility for its development and maintenance lies with both parties. Managers share the responsibility for creating the kinds of relationship that enable consultants to be effective.

Where managers do not accept this responsibility, a Catch-22 situation seems likely to occur. Managers want help increasing the level of learning within their organisations. In selecting consultants, managers – operating with a problem-solving perspective – require consultants to compete with one another for the work. The consultants are being asked to generate learning by acting like experts in an environment in which they feel little freedom to experiment, act openly or confront real issues. The managers may want consultants to build the organisation's capacity for learning, but they reward the consultants who provide short-term, expert solutions to organisational problems.

All the consultants in the study reported working with managers with whom they were able to form long-term relationships. The consultants also indicated that many managers operated on the basis of assumptions that made it difficult to establish long-term relationships.

The challenge this study poses for managers is to seek long-term relationships with consultants that will allow the consultants to act in a capacity-building role. This ultimately impacts on all aspects of the client-consultant relationship, because it is based on a set of assumptions that may feel unfamiliar and unnatural to many managers. Those managers who are able to make this shift in perspective will have an advantage in their efforts to build true learning organisations.

FURTHER READING

For more information on principles of learning organisations, see Senge (1990). Tannen (1998) discusses how the culture of Western business tends to lead to argument rather than learning.

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Appendix 1j:

Book Chapter Published in
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Stories and Learning

19. Stories and Learning

As we discussed early in the book, the world is changing and organisations also need to change, to become communities that will support learning. Considering the importance of community in building healthy organisations, it is remarkable that so much training is based around ***telling*** people what to do. The emphasis on telling reflects the machine model of organisations we considered earlier. We influence machines by commanding them to do what we want. It does not matter to the machine whether our commands are polite or rude: a command is a command.

Telling is so common, that you would think people were finding it successful. Has that been your experience? Most people would agree that they have often been disappointed at how ineffectual telling others what to do turns out to be. In some cases, people so object to being told, that they refuse to do what is in their own best interests.

What goes wrong with telling? Well, think of all the things that have to go right if, as an expert, you tell someone how to do something. You have to know exactly what to do and be able to articulate this clearly; others have to be able to understand what you are saying, translate instructions into actions, and want to do as they are told.[1] None of these things are guaranteed. We discussed earlier the difficulties in communicating clearly when people operate from their own logic bubbles.

You might also wonder why it is that people object to being told what to do. Here is an exercise to try. Have a conversation with a friend, where one of you is allowed to speak only in questions and the other is allowed to make only statements. Then swap roles. Which is easiest to do? What did it feel like to be in each role? Most people report that it feels like the person making the statements has all the power in the conversation – the person asking the questions may feel weak and inferior. It's no wonder that people object to being constantly told things. In a healthy, productive conversation the roles keep swapping between people. This should be true of learning conversations as well.

So, if telling works so badly, why do people keep using it as their primary way of teaching? We might suspect that it is because people love to feel superior – that they love the feeling of power that comes with command. This doesn't seem to be an adequate explanation. Look around at the people who are in a telling mode: many are doing so with good intentions of helping others. They might be shocked at the thought they could be considered power-hungry. While a few people may do it for the power, there seem to be other factors involved. Telling is by far the easiest way of influencing others, in that it requires the least skill. It's easy, and it's getting easier. My computer has a program that allows me to prepare presentations. This program is set up in a way that encourages me to use 'bullet points'. If I use a program like this my presentations look 'professional', with a pleasing layout. Yet while looking good, they are constructed around telling.

Another contributing factor is that people don't know what else to do. How can you influence people without telling? In this chapter we are going to explore the use of an ancient method of influence that has been part of communities for centuries – storytelling. Look around the community in which you live. You will see people telling stories, and using them to influence the way others think. Not only that, even though there is plenty of 'telling' involved in storytelling, you'll see other people listening without coercion. Why the difference between storytelling and regular telling?

The Power of Stories

When we tell stories we are doing two things at once: we are providing information and building a relationship. People enjoy listening to stories, whether they are fables or experiences from other people's lives. So, where telling someone what to do provides information in a way that may endanger relationships, stories provide information while building the relationship.

It is possible to do this with a story because the information we provide is non-judgemental and respectful to the listener. Imagine you are talking about a problem someone is having as he attempts to apply what he has learned in training back at work. Rather than tell him what he should do, you tell him the story of how you faced a similar challenge. Your story outlines the situation you faced, what you decided to do, and the results that occurred. The story could be one that highlights a success, or warns of traps by showing how you fell into one. The latter will often have the added bonus of being humorous.

Inherent in this process is respect for the complexity of the problem the learner faces. Without saying so, by telling a story of what happened to *you* there is an acknowledgement that you are different people and the circumstances are not exactly alike. So, even if the learner decided to do just as you did in your story, there is no guarantee that the results would be the same. By telling a story you allow the listener to decide to accept the information you have provided, or to choose to simply treat your tale as an amusing anecdote. By telling a story you are *giving* instruction, in the sense that it is a gift. It is not something that is being imposed on the learner.

There is a danger that in telling a story you steal the focus, taking it from the learner and putting it on yourself. So do not tell a story until you have done plenty of listening. And don't make the story a long one that disrupts the flow of the lesson. In other words, make sure that your story is a gift.

If you have children, try an experiment with storytelling. Pick an issue that has regularly led to conflict through your desire to influence the child. It may be that you don't like the way the child constantly throws balls inside the house. In the past you may have repeatedly told her not to do this, and perhaps you have even imposed some form of punishment. How has the child responded to the 'telling' approach? Have your remonstrations been received as a gift? We would guess that your answer is no.

Next time you see the behaviour you don't like, try telling the child the story of what happened to you once – how throwing a ball inside the house caused some calamity that has made you particularly sensitive to what can happen. As you tell the story, notice whether the child's reaction is different from the reaction to 'telling'.

Teaching Indirectly

One of the greatest difficulties people have with giving instruction in this way is that it is indirect. The knowledge contained in the story is buried within the dynamics of the tale, rather than explicitly stated. In this way it indicates a respect for the intelligence of the learner. It is tempting to follow up the story by making the knowledge explicit: saying something like, 'So the moral of the story is that *you should*. . . '. Finishing in this way defeats the purpose of the story – it changes the gift into an imposition.

Presenting knowledge indirectly respects the learner's right, as a mature person, to choose whether or not to follow the same course. Even if the learner chooses to ignore the knowledge provided, a story can have an impact. The learner may go ahead anyway, and fall into the traps the story warned about. The awareness the story created may allow him or her to learn from this experience in a way that would not have been possible without it.

This approach to instruction relies on *indirect* communication, where the intended message is different from what is spoken. Hinting, joking, sarcasm and insider-jokes are all examples of indirect communication. For many people, it goes against the grain to rely on an indirect way of communicating to pass on an important message. Many of us have been taught how to say what we mean directly and assertively, and we may assume that direct communication is in some way better than indirect communication. Many of the skills discussed in OJT – in chapters on communication and feedback in particular – are based around direct communication. Is it a problem to use an indirect method?[2]

Indirect communication is all around us. If directness were totally effective, we would probably all be using it. And we wouldn't need so much training in assertiveness. People use indirect communication, because it offers things that direct communication cannot. For one thing, indirect communication is aesthetically pleasing to the people involved. Imagine two young boys playing frisbee with each other. As they grow in skill there is less pleasure in throwing the frisbee directly to one another and seeing the other make an easy catch. They want to have more fun, so they develop tricky throws and try convoluted catches. When the difficult combinations of throw and catch are successful they gain an enormous sense of achievement at the cleverness of what they have accomplished together. So it is with indirect communication. There can be real pleasure in understanding a message someone else sent you indirectly, and it's a pleasure shared by both parties.

Fun is important. And indirect communication can produce more than just fun. Any message you send has two parts to it: it tells people about the subject, and it tells them about your relationship. Again we see a complementary pair of processes bound up together. Unsurprisingly, communication works most completely when you approach it as a 'both/and' rather than an 'either/or'. Direct communication often involves the assumption that we should concentrate on the subject – the task at hand –

and we can deal with relationships later (if we really need to). Indirect communication intertwines the subject and the relationship. It forces people to pay attention to relationships while they are going about the task. This is borne out by what happens in teams. While it might be expected that teams using direct communication are likely to produce better results – there is less chance of them dropping the communication frisbee – research shows otherwise. Effective aircrews, for instance, have a high degree of indirect communication, which apparently helps ensure that crew members are well attuned to one another.[3]

Because stories are indirect they work at their best when the learning relates to a 'paradoxical' relationship. Paradox is where things happen contrary to expectations. So, if a little of something is good, you might think that twice as much of it would be twice as good. Paradoxically, twice as much might be much worse; for instance, when people discern that your praise has turned into flattery, and they decide not to trust you any more. Paradox such as this can be captured beautifully in stories, in ways that help people understand the dynamics at work. No doubt you can recall stories such as 'The Tortoise and the Hare', which show that speed can be a disadvantage in a race. Similarly, 'The Emperor's Clothes' shows that smart people are sometimes more easily misled than a child.

In OJT we teach people skills that can be of real benefit to them. In most situations, they can apply the skills to bring about the results we have described. When people are working in complex situations they will run into paradox. People can be disheartened when they don't get the results they expect. They may be tempted to think that the skills they learned don't work. Situations like this are ripe for stories.

Using Stories

Some people feel that using stories will be too hard, and storytelling is not for them. Some people say 'I'm not a storyteller!' Don't let this thinking get in the way of putting stories to work. Most people tell stories. You don't become a storyteller and then start telling stories; you become a storyteller *by* telling stories. When someone asks you, 'What did you do on the weekend?' the description you give is a story. It doesn't have to have a complicated plot, or be funny or end in triumph or despair. A story can be a simple thing. Listen to people and you'll be amazed at how much of their conversation is in the form of stories.[4]

While most conversation involves people talking back and forward and over the top of one another, when someone starts to tell a story other people listen. Stories have huge power to direct attention, even when they are not 'ripping yarns'.

Storytelling is a natural process that we generally learn tacitly: that is, we tend to pick up the 'how to' of storytelling just by being around others in conversation. Analysing what makes a good story, and knowing the different types of stories people tell, does not necessarily help someone to tell stories. The key is to practise – find as many opportunities as possible to work stories into learning conversations, and notice if they produce a higher quality of listening than just giving instructions.

There are a couple of useful tips that will help your stories. One is to keep in mind the excitement inherent in the tension–resolution process, discussed in Chapter 11. The natural flow of a story is for tension to be created at the start, moving through to a resolution at the end. If, at the start of the story you create a situation where things are not as they ought to be, you will have generated the tension necessary to get the story rolling and hold the attention of your audience. Tension exists whenever there is a gap between what we want and what we've got. A story might start:

> Joan was showing me how to work the coffee machine and I just couldn't get it: the coffee kept coming out weak as dishwater.

The gap between my desired level of coffee-making skill and my actual level of skill immediately sets up the necessary tension. People are engaged – wanting to know how it turned out. The story has to move through to a resolution.

People are also attracted to characters in a story. For this reason it is useful to relate the speech of other people directly. Notice the difference in the following accounts of my coffee-making attempts.

> Joan noticed that I hadn't ground the beans before putting them in the filter. She explained that this meant the water was running through the filter without being turned into coffee.

This time we'll put the words in Joan's mouth:

> Then Joan said to me, "Have you ground the beans?"And do you know, I hadn't! She said, "Well, this isn't coffee. It's just hot water that used to know a couple of coffee beans. Let me show you how to grind the beans."

Isn't it true that the story benefits from having characters talk for themselves? Listeners can flesh out the characters in the story, adding colour that you wouldn't have thought to include. Of course, you may not remember exactly the words used when the event occurred, or the conversation may need serious editing to fit your learning situation. Don't let that stop you – storytellers are given license to dramatise work.

A final tip is to pay attention to what is going on around you, seeing events as opportunities for stories. Build up a repertoire of stories you can use to bring your training to life.

Summary: Stories and Learning

Stories can enhance the learning experience:

- Because they are indirect, rather than 'telling'
- By adding fun to the learning
- By making paradox understandable

Notes:

[1] Dianne Corey and Rebecca Bradley discuss some of these problems with telling in the article 'Partnership Coaching' *The Systems Thinker*, vol. 9, no. 4, May 1998.

[2] Linguistics expert Deborah Tannen has discussed direct and indirect communication in many of her books, including *That's Not What I Meant* (New York, Ballantine Books: 1986) and *Talking from 9 to 5* (London, Virago Press: 1994).

[3] This research was carried out by Charlotte Linde, and published in the article 'The Quantitative Study of Communicative Success: Politeness and Accidents in Aviation Discourse" *Language and Society* v.17, 1988.

[4] Jennifer Coates has written about the power of stories in everyday life in her book *Women Talk* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996). Her book highlights the differences in women's and men's stories. Interestingly, women are much more likely to use stories in conversation than men – a trend that can be valuable to keep in mind when training.

Appendix 1k:

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Reframing the Perfectionist's "Catch-22" Dilemma: A systems thinking approach

Reframing the Perfectionist's "Catch 22" Dilemma: A Systems Thinking Approach

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Abstract

Perfectionist tendencies present a particular challenge to gifted and talented children. The complexity of perfectionism, however, acts as an impediment to agreement on the nature of the phenomenon and on development of strategies to ameliorate its effects. This article uses systems thinking to examine the dynamic complexity of perfectionism. These dynamics are explained as an attempt by the perfectionist to achieve cognitive consistency. The unrealistic World View of a perfectionist generates a "Catch 22" that makes change difficult. Rather than change their World View perfectionists are more likely to attempt to change their behaviour or their levels of self esteem. Fundamental change requires a World View that balances performance and learning, and this involves changing views on performance and failure. The article discusses how such fundamental change might be effectively achieved.

Reframing the Perfectionist's "Catch – 22" Dilemma: a Systems Thinking Approach

Perfectionism represents a significant challenge both to educators desiring to help learners strive for excellence, and to researchers seeking to build an understanding of the phenomenon. It is imperative that we achieve a greater understanding of perfectionism given the dysfunctional behaviour with which it is associated (Burns, 1980; Greenspon, 2000). Perfectionism has been linked to underachievement in education (Davis & Rim, 1994; Adderholdt-Elliot, 1989), depression (Blatt, 1995), eating disorders (Halmi, Sunday, Strober, Kaplan, Woodside, Fichter, Treasure, Berrettini, & Kaye, 2000) and suicide (Delisle, 1990), and its effects are often associated with extremely able students (Adderholdt & Goldberg, 1999). While it has been suggested that perfectionism can be 'normal' (Hamachek, 1978) and 'positive' (Frost, Heimberg, Holt, Mattia, & Newbauer, 1993) we are concerned with the way perfectionism undermines life-long learning and with interventions that minimize its harmful effects.

There is little question that something needs to be done, yet knowing what to do is hampered by the complexity of the phenomenon. Educational literature contains a range of definitions of perfectionism along with a variety of alternative strategies for ameliorating its effects. A significant challenge for anyone wanting to take thoughtful action is to develop a model of perfectionism that integrates existing knowledge into a complete picture. The aim of this article is to generate such a model based on application of Systems Thinking, a tool for understanding complexity (Senge, 1990).

Systems Thinking

Systems Thinking arose during the 20th century as scientists became aware of the limitations of analysis as an approach to inquiry (Ackoff, 1997). Since the Renaissance, analysis has been the preferred approach to scientific thinking in Western nations. The word *analysis* stems from a Greek word meaning 'loosen' or 'undo' and means to break something up into its component parts.

The opposite of analysis is synthesis, the bringing together of parts together into a whole. Clearly, analysis and synthesis ought to be complementary; where something has been broken into parts, those parts need to be brought back together again. However, over time any community forms a culture: a pattern of unconsciously held preferences for one way of thinking over another. Deconstructing those things we wish to understand has become part of the culture of Western nations, in particular of English-speaking democracies such as Britain, the USA and New Zealand (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 1993).

The effect of this culture is that synthesis is often neglected. Having broken something up into component parts the Western scientist who seeks further understanding then breaks the parts up into their components. Analysis produces long lists of elements, all of which need to be considered in establishing what needs to be done in a particular situation. This is what Senge (1990) describes as 'detail complexity': the more we understand the more elements we see, with each element separate from those around it.

Systems Thinking aims to inquire into the system as a whole. It helps synthesis by focusing, not on the elements of something, but on the relationships or interactions between the elements, and between the thing and its environment. Where analysis concentrates on *how* a thing works, synthesis and Systems Thinking seek to reveal *why* it works as it does. This involves shifting from a concern for detail complexity to a concern for 'dynamic complexity': concern for dynamic relationships rather than fine distinctions.

Another fundamental difference between Systems Thinking and analysis is that causality is viewed as circular rather than linear. In analysis we often find ourselves in arguments over whether A causes B or B causes A. For instance, one researcher may investigate the extent to which teacher behaviour influences students, where another investigates how student behaviour influences teachers. Systems Thinking seeks to acknowledge both influences: student influences teacher who influences student who influences teacher. Causal Loop Diagrams (CLDs) are used to graphically chart the relationships in a way that allows complex dynamics to be expressed with greater clarity. A CLD for the relationship between teacher and student described above is shown in Figure 1.

Insert Figure 1: A Reinforcing Loop

The arrows in the CLD indicate the direction of causality. A change in the Teacher's Estimation of Student Potential will cause a change in Teacher Actions to Encourage Students. The 'R' in the centre of the loop indicates that the loop is reinforcing; the interaction between the variables in this loop generates change that reinforces itself. So, if one variable starts to grow, it leads to growth of the other variables, which generates growth of the variable we started with, and so on. Some loops we will encounter are balancing; that is, one variable causes another to grow that causes the original to decline, bringing the system into balance. In our CLDs we will indicate where loops are balancing with a 'B.'

Notice that the variables used in the CLD are broad statements such as 'Teacher Action to Encourage Students.' Analytical thinking might encourage 'inward' exploration to find, for instance, the kinds of actions that might be involved, generating a detailed list of the different strategies teachers use and the effectiveness of each strategy. Systems Thinking is more likely to keep variables broad and inquire 'outward' to find other variables in the environment surrounding teacher and student which influence a teacher's actions.

Inward inquiry provides finer and finer distinctions about the subject of interest, enabling clearer description of its nature. Outward inquiry provides context and meaning for the subject, explaining how it develops and is maintained and where intervention will have greatest impact. These are two different views, each with a contribution to make toward a complete understanding of the subject. Until now, research into perfectionism has concentrated on descriptive 'inward' studies with little emphasis on intervention (Shafran, Cooper & Fairburn, 2002).

Gould, Voyer & Ford (1998) provide an example of how this outward exploration can aid in developing effective interventions. They used Systems Thinking to deepen understanding of anxiety in the workplace. Their approach enabled them to successfully reshape the system that was generating and perpetuating anxiety. Previous attempts to control anxiety had unintentionally aggravated the condition. The systemic, outward view enabled them to find effective, enduring interventions.

Consider what we can learn if we take a Systems Thinking view of perfectionism.

Problems with Definitions

Considerable discussion has taken place in academic literature on how perfectionism is best defined. Some researchers make the distinction between healthy and unhealthy perfectionism (Parker, 1997), where others, notably Greenspon (2000), consider all perfectionism to be unhealthy. According to Greenspon, what some call 'healthy perfectionism' is really the desirable pursuit of excellence, something quite different from perfectionism. Why does this disagreement exist when both are seeking to describe the same process?

One cause of the disagreement lies in their preferences regarding inward and outward modes of inquiry. Both Greenspon (2000) and Parker (1997) agree on the destructive potential of perfectionism. They see perfectionism as characterised by unrealistic efforts to achieve high standards, along with an unremitting search for acceptance through perfect performance. And they agree that perfectionism is linked with outcomes such as underachievement, low self-esteem, avoidance of risk, and burnout. Confusion arises because there is a great deal of commonality in behaviour between people who are bound up in destructive processes and ones who pursue high standards in a sustainable way. Greenspon has responded to the confusion by inquiring outwards, asking 'What else, in combination with behaviour, makes up the system that generates these destructive outcomes?' He sees behaviour as important, yet not sufficient to explain what is happening.

Greenspon's outward-inquiry approach reflects the philosophical base of Systems Thinking, and he states that in psychological terms, perfectionism refers to "the organising principle that unless one is perfect, one is worthless as a person" (1999). We will adopt the extended definition of perfectionism given by Burns (1980), one that is consistent with Greenspon's view:

"... perfectionists... are those whose standards are high beyond reach or reason, people who strain compulsively and unremittingly toward impossible goals and who measure their own worth entirely in terms of productivity and accomplishment. For these people, the drive to excel can only be self-defeating." (p. 34).

Burns' definition identifies behaviour as an important element of perfectionism when he refers to compulsive 'straining.' He also encompasses attitudes when referring to unreachable standards, and self-assessment when referring to measuring one's worth. To understand the dynamics affecting perfectionistic students, therefore, we consider their behaviour, their attitudes and assessments they make of themselves. Work by cognitive psychologists such as Festinger (1957) has established that people seek consistency in their lives. Thus, as shown in Figure 2, perfectionistic students, along with the rest of us, work to achieve consistency between the attitudes making up their World View, observations they make of their own behaviour and their Self-Assessments.

Insert Figure 2: Perfectionist Variables

A number of crucial attitudes contribute to the World View of perfectionists. These include:

- It is important to be a worthwhile person
- To be worthwhile a person must do everything perfectly
- Worthwhile people do not lower their standards.

These attitudes create the context for dynamics that have been described in educational literature on perfectionism. Imagine that a young student holds a World View as outlined above. During the early years of schooling the student might be told that her performance on assigned work is perfect. The student can hold such a World View—indeed, it can become stronger—while maintaining high levels of self-esteem, because her observations of her own behaviour are that she achieves excellence in everything that is asked of her.

Insert Figure 3: The Structure of Perfectionism

As time goes by, however, cognitive challenge of the work intensifies and she is exposed to competition with other high achievers. Instead of getting 100% on tests she gets 90%. She observes that her performance is less than perfect. The result is a degree of inconsistency. She holds as a World View the attitudes listed above, her self-assessment is that she is a worthwhile person, yet her behaviour as measured by the test is less than perfect. The in-built desire for consistency demands that one or more of these factors must change. Figure 3 shows the possibilities.

The loops B1, B2 and B3 represent the different options the student has for dealing with the inconsistency she is experiencing. Each of these is a balancing loop; that is, they are designed to bring feelings of inconsistency back into balance, not allow them to grow. Her first option is likely to be B1, endeavouring to change her behaviour, so that there are fewer examples of imperfect performance to observe and thus reduced inconsistency. For our student, 'action to change behaviour' might mean working harder at the subject to raise her test mark to 100%. In doing that, she acts in the same way as a classmate with a different World View who enjoys striving for high standards, but who does not believe her self worth is determined by success on tests. In other words, our perfectionist student's behaviour may falsely appear to be a healthy concern for excellence. However, 'action to change behaviour' might include dropping subjects where she suspects she will not perform perfectly or withdrawing from activities that involve risk of failure (Adderholdt & Goldberg, 1999).

While activation of loop B1 may provide some temporary respite from the discomfort of inconsistency there is little hope of permanent relief. Our perfectionist student is not in actuality perfect, so will continue to be confronted with observations of her own imperfect behaviour.

Loop B2 provides an alternative path toward consistency. Here, the student changes her self-assessment, deciding perhaps that she is not perfect and therefore she is not a worthwhile person. B2, however, does not offer a permanent solution. Her World View includes the attitude that it is important to be worthwhile. So, she is likely to consider her non-worthwhile state a dreadful secret that needs to be kept from parents and teachers who consider her to be, not only worthwhile, but an excellent student (Reis, 1987). Her self-assessment is that she is not worthwhile but she really wants to be, so she heads back into attempts to change behaviour. Perfectionist students thus oscillate between determined action to be perfect and misery based on deeply negative self-assessments.

The actions the perfectionist takes to make her behaviour consistent with her World View and her self-assessment may become more and more dramatic. It could involve focusing her attention on an area where she can control her behaviour, such as her eating. In some extreme cases, in an effort to bring her behaviour into line with her self-assessment that she is not worthwhile and her belief that it is important to be worthwhile, perfectionists have ended their lives. Is there any way out of this destructive process?

Changing World Views

Fundamental resolution to the inconsistency lies in change to the student's World View (loop B3). And yet, rather than changing the perfectionist attitudes that are at the root of her discomfort, our student continues to oscillate between B1 and B2. What prevents her from working through the process shown in B3?

As shown in loop R1, a perfectionist's World View will also influence her willingness to change her attitudes. In particular, if she believes that worthwhile people do not lower their standards she will resist efforts to convince her that perfect performance is not necessary, that she should "ease up on herself." Perfectionist beliefs thus become a self-perpetuating trap, preventing learners from taking the one action that will bring about fundamental relief from the inconsistencies in their lives. How can people working with perfectionists help them to break free from this trap?

Analytical thinking, with its linear approach to causality, might encourage teachers and parents to work on the self-assessment of a student. Because many of the destructive behaviours involved in perfectionism stem from a student's feeling that she is not worthwhile, it appears appropriate to build up her self-esteem by convincing her that she is worthwhile. The circular causality of the CLD in Figure 3 suggests that this approach is unlikely to bring about a long-term solution. If action was taken to make the 'Level of Self Esteem' more positive, what would result? The CLD harmonizes with Burns' (1980) observations that perfectionists are not helped by encouragement to "ease off" or "lighten up on themselves." According to the CLD doing so would *increase* the Degree of Inconsistency, compelling the student to activate either B1 or B2 once more.

Systems Thinking refers to such action as 'low leverage' because there is little long term result from the effort expended. Effort to increase a student's self esteem might have an immediate impact, but problems soon return requiring even more effort. Where can we act with greater leverage?

The CLD indicates that fundamental change requires action to change the student's World View, but that this is prevented from happening by loop R1. Leverage lies, therefore in finding a way past the blocking effect of R1 and the unwillingness to lower standards. Consider how this might be done.

Performance, Learning and Experience

The student is trapped because she is unwilling to lower her standards. Her World View does not allow her to take this action. If, however, a change can be framed as a *raising* of standards the perfectionist is likely to be more willing—indeed, may feel compelled—to make it. A new World View can be framed as a raising of standards by showing a student that her existing beliefs are incomplete.

This reframing is relatively straight forward because a World View that puts such a high value on performance is incomplete according to research into sustainable work. According to Gallwey (2000) sustainable work requires a balance of performance, learning and experience. Performance involves using whatever capacity one has to meet the demands of the situation. Learning, on the other hand, is about growing one's capacity in preparation for future, more challenging, demands. Experience refers to the quality of the experience people have while they are engaged in the work. According to Csikszentmihalyi (1990) optimal experiences occur when demands and capacity are balanced, requiring that people are able to give attention to both performance and learning.

Perfectionism does not seek this balance. Rather, a perfectionist student will consistently give priority to performing rather than to learning. This is because learning is closely associated with failure (Fritz, 1991), and from a perfectionist's World View failure is an indication that a person is imperfect and therefore not worthwhile. Indeed, fear of failure is consistently identified as a defining characteristic of perfectionism (Greenspon, 2000).

Perfectionists often adopt strategies that enable them to perform without learning. For instance, they may only take subjects in which they have proved themselves capable. They will avoid projects that require them to learn new skills. They will avoid working with other people even though this might provide a rich learning environment. When working in groups they do not feel they are in control of the performance of the group as a whole, and often feel compelled to do all the work of the group to ensure it meets their standards. With each of these strategies, perfectionists trade-off opportunities for learning in order to maximise their performance.

Similarly, perfectionists are prepared to drive themselves through stressful conditions in order to maximise performance. They may go without sleep and deny themselves leisure periods. They may try to motivate themselves by refusing to get satisfaction from work that contains any flaws. These strategies trade-off the quality of their work experience in order to maximise performance.

So, there is a body of literature supporting a belief that error-free or perfect performance is not sufficient for sustainable work. This literature is supported by evidence in the lives of perfectionists themselves who can see that the behaviours they feel compelled to engage in are not sustainable, but rather lead to burnout. The literature and the perfectionist's own experiences provide a basis for saying that *truly* worthwhile people may not only perform outstandingly, but also ensure that they are learning and having a high quality experience.

In work we have done with individual students who manifest perfectionist beliefs, they have been helped to make considerable progress on the basis of the Systems Thinking view discussed here (Ramsey, Franklin, Ramsey, Wells, 2002). In particular, we have encouraged students to view grades as a measure of one aspect of their work: their performance in relation to the demands we as teachers have made. Because students are in the best—and possibly only—position to measure how much they are learning and the quality of their experience, we ask them to give themselves grades in each of these areas for assigned work they complete.

In cases where perfectionist students give themselves grades for learning and experience, to go with the performance grades we have given, they initially report they are scoring highly on performance and poorly in the other two areas. They also report that they feel free to set themselves goals different from any they had set before. For example, they were able to aim to improve the grades they were giving themselves for experience, while maintaining B grades for performance. Previously they had only set themselves goals for improved performance.

Further Research

Perfectionism is a relentless and unsustainable quest for acceptance that often affects students who are gifted and used to performing to the highest standards (Adderholdt & Goldberg, 1999). Further inquiry into how perfectionist students can be helped is vital, and Systems Thinking gives some significant indications as to where we can most effectively target our efforts.

Further work is needed to develop holistic grading procedures that address all three areas of performance, learning and experience. While individual cases show that this method has potential to help perfectionist students out of the trap created by their World View, experience suggests that the technique is difficult to institutionalise in educational settings where learners are consistently told that performance is all that really matters, and where rewards are allocated based solely on performance.

Work with perfectionists needs to go beyond helping them to see the need for balancing performance, learning and experience. While a student may intellectually grasp the need for learning, more work will be needed to help them become desensitised to failure.

Improvisational drama is an area in which the authors are undertaking research. This work in progress holds promise for helping with the process of desensitisation. Improvisational drama disrupts a student's normal reaction to failure in a number of ways. It usually takes place within an environment that expects and even celebrates failure. To be successful, improvisation cannot be scripted or prepared in advance (Newton, 1999). For this reason, participants are encouraged to treat failure as a normal part of the process. Delivering scripted responses—ones that have been thought out in advance—is treated as one of the few things a student can do that is wrong.

"My Word, Your Word" is an example of an improvisational game where players must respond to the events of the moment. In pairs, they alternate turns to create a story, one word at a time. Trying to force the outcome cannot work because each player has no control over the participation of the other. The story is lost if players stop concentrating on what is being said in the present moment. Scripted story-lines become impossible. Perfectionistic attempts to control outcomes immediately backfire so success comes from flexibility and real-time responsiveness.

Participants can be told that failure is a sign that they are approaching the work correctly. In this way improvisational drama, unlike most activities a perfectionist might engage in, *requires* the student to experience failure in order to achieve successful outcomes.

Improvisational drama may appear to be full of risk for some perfectionist students, who may be tempted to withdraw from the activities. Therefore research is required to establish procedures that invite participation and introduce students to the area in measured amounts that limit the amount of risk they must tolerate.

Systems Thinking is a discipline that encourages researchers to be expansive in their thinking. Such an approach is evidently needed in addressing the complex challenges of perfectionism. As we have seen, the view of perfectionism presented in the article focuses attention on the fundamental inconsistencies inherent in the World View of perfectionists. Educators are encouraged to explore strategies that help perfectionists break out of the Catch 22 dilemma this world view creates.

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Figure 1: A Reinforcing Loop

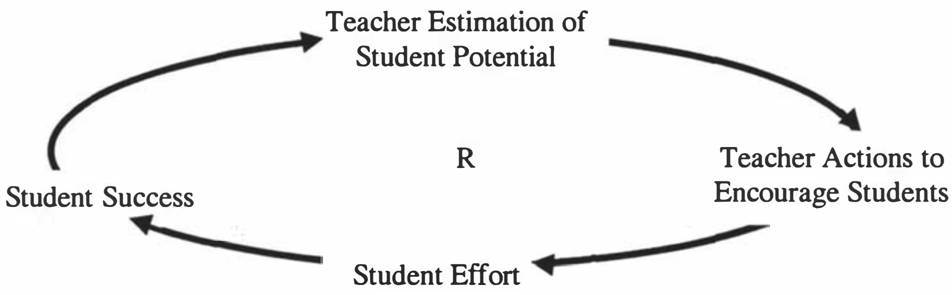

Teacher Estimation of Student Potential
Teacher Actions to Encourage Students
Student Effort
Student Success
R

Figure 2: Perfectionist Variables

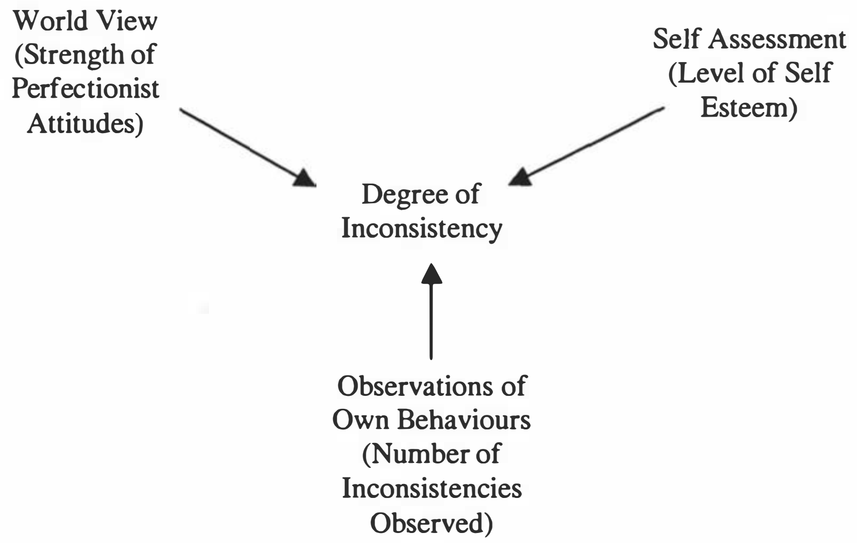
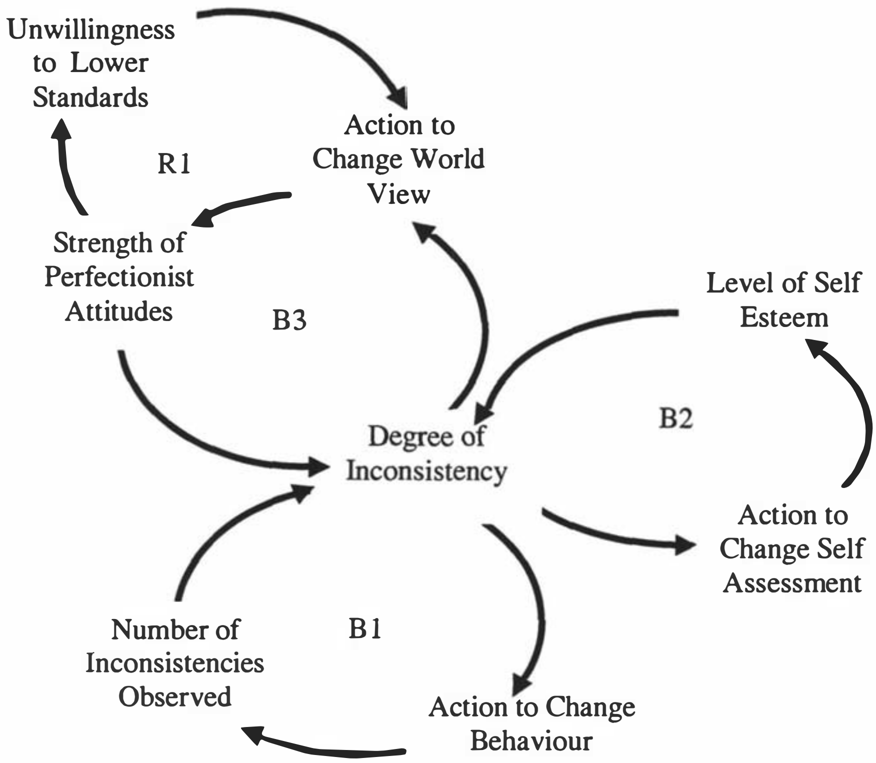

World View (Strength of Perfectionist Attitudes)
Self Assessment (Level of Self Esteem)
Degree of Inconsistency
Observations of Own Behaviours (Number of Inconsistencies Observed)

Figure 3: The Structure of Perfectionism


Unwillingness to Lower Standards
Action to Change World View
R1
Strength of Perfectionist Attitudes
B3
Level of Self Esteem
Degree of Inconsistency
B2
Action to Change Self Assessment
Number of Inconsistencies Observed
B1
Action to Change Behaviour

Appendix 2:

The Delphi Process

Appendix 2: The Delphi Process

Appendix 2a: Initial Message of Invitation

Dear [Expert] ,
I'd like to invite you to take part in research I am conducting into the nature of learning organisations in New Zealand. More specifically, the research aims to explore the way in which culture shapes the meaning people attach to the term 'learning organisation' and the impact this has on their organisational learning efforts. The research will involve case study work with several organisations identified as committed to becoming learning organisations.

This invitation is for you to be part of a group who will identify New Zealand organisations that are appropriate candidates for case study exploration. Sixteen experts, including yourself, have been invited to take part in this process. All are academics and consultants who have worked with organisations, who have published in this area, or have presented at conferences on organisational learning or related sub-disciplines (systems thinking, etc.).

The intention is to identify appropriate organisations using what is known as the 'Delphi Technique'. If you choose to take part, I would like you to send me your nomination(s) of one or more organisations (business or non-business) that you believe continue to demonstrate a commitment to being learning organisations. With your nominations please list reasons to support your choices.

I will compile all nominations and feed these back to the group of participating experts, asking you to take further steps in order to refine the list. The process will be designed to generate agreement on the criteria to be used and organisations that are exemplary in this area.

Anonymity:
A key feature of the Delphi Technique is the anonymity of participants. In this regard, I will be the only person involved who will know the identities of the participating experts. This is done as a way of encouraging people to consider all views presented without making judgements as to the authority of their source. We will be conducting this process via email with messages sent to people individually rather than to a list. The process will ensure that those involved are kept fully informed of the progress of this part of the study. Participants will also receive a summary of the research project as a whole when it is completed along with copies of any publications arising from the study.

Consent:
If you would like to take part in the study, please reply to this message with your nomination(s) by Friday August 10. If you do not wish to take part, you need do nothing more. If you

wish to take part in the process of determining the exemplary organisations, but do not wish to make a nomination, reply with a message to that effect.

If you would like any further information please let me know either by email, are phoning me on (06) 3503799 Xt 2384

Phil Ramsey

Appendix 2b: Nominations and Reasons Provided by Experts

E1

I'd like to propose Org 1 as one example on the basis that we are developing a business system, usage of which is intended to become self-replicating on a global basis. In this sense the whole business project is itself about designing the business as an emergent learning system, intended to jump through several scale iterations to ultimately function as a global supply chain infrastructure for inventory within the travel and tourism industry.

I'd like to add in Org 2, because I know someone who has been working in there to introduce team based learning systems [redacted] quite a few years. Org 2 designs, develops and manufactures outdoor clothing and equipment, primarily for export. They have been successfully competing internationally in an industry that has typically moved off-shore, whereas they have recently built a new factory here in NZ. Org 2 has evolved a culture which values people and their ongoing development more than most. They have talented people actively promoting and encouraging a learning orientation over the long term. This focus is being actively led in their core design and development value creation processes.

I'd also like to drop in the Org 3 because I know *[named individual]* has been helping introduce the learning cycle into the way they deal with cases as well as their organisational systems, particularly those related to the way the organisation manages performance and links it to remuneration. [Org 3 illustrates] the evolution of a learning orientation in a larger organisation, particularly given common public sector funding constraints. This evolutionary process was intentionally initiated several years ago in performance management, but I believe that it has subsequently permeated other aspects of the functioning of the organisation.

The implicit criteria I'm valuing here is less having a CEO making a fuss about organisational learning and more someone dedicated to operationalising organisational learning over relatively long periods of time, with some support from the organisation.

E2

In my way of thinking there are no true LO in New Zealand or anywhere else. There are some who are trying different elements of the concepts. So I agree that the criteria is important and needs to be developed. Having said this, my nomination would be Org 4.

E3

Org 5 is a group of 120 people, who have intentionally set off on a process of learning, they call the "Learning Journey". They have undertaken a team-based process incorporating reflection, that has transformed the way service is delivered throughout the organisation.

E4

Throughout Org 6 there is an appreciation of LO concepts and challenges, based on structured initiatives over a period of years. This has contributed to internal transformation, with staff moving from largely clerical to being a professional, credientialised workforce.☐ Org 6 was rated as one of the 10 best places to work in New Zealand by 'Unlimited' magazine. There is a readiness to address external challenges that required change to the business focus, even where this involves education of external suppliers.

E5

Org 7 operates a team based approach to manufacturing, with each team managing and organising its own operating functions. For example, the teams are self-managing, including advertising for and interviewing replacement team members, and establishing their own schedules for maintenance and production. The company executives have strategic roles only, including responsibilities for planning, and product and market development. Org 7 has an extensive library of books and journals that are available for all staff to use. Every effort is made to put into practice current thinking in terms of manufacturing management and systems. Org 7 can appropriately be called a "Learning Organisation".

Org 8 is a leading edge company specialising in innovative design of specialised furniture. In this regard, it is notable that the company initially contracted a professional designer to work with them, then took the designer on as a full-time director of the company. He was able to encourage a completely different way of thinking within the company that lead to a focus by everyone on design and quality. This led to wide-ranging trust, empowerment and synergy throughout the organisation. There is certainly no "them and us" attitudes within Org 8.

Org 9 was originally a family business which was sold to one of the senior managers. While it is a small company it is considered to be highly innovative in regard to the types of products it produces. The company has a culture of empowerment and involvement, with information on its operations openly discussed.

E6

I thought Org 10 might've been one but there're not even on the starting blocks...tho their Org Lrg person is wonderful.

Org 11 is doing some stunningly good stuff...and again just at the beginning of their journey...they've come from a fear based culture to an 'empowered one...

Org 12 - definite starters... CEO imaginative, hugely big vision for changing the world and getting out of the 'grievance' mode...and they've got lots documented on their learnings to date but not huge u'standing outside the CE of what a learning org is .. so good candidates (also they have a willing board)...

I'd put Org 13 in as a goer ... as 'what not to do' and lots of lessons on stop start learning....but you'd have to talk to *[named individual]* she's the inspiring light there…we started and then backed out fast when there was no snr mgt commitment to change anything!!!!!!!

E7
Org 14 would have been the obvious choice a few years ago, but they have turned away from LO concepts recently.

Appendix 2c: Criteria Derived from Expert Responses to Round 1.

Criterion 1: Engaged in learning processes that focus on change to the organisation's fundamental business concept.

Criterion 2: Senior management commitment to learning efforts, including an executive level champion.

Criterion 3: An empowered culture that blurs traditional organisation roles and boundaries.

Criterion 4: Engagement of staff throughout the organisation in conversation and experimentation with products and services.

Criterion 5: Intentional process of organisational learning sustained over the long haul.

Criterion 6: Developmental resources and opportunities available to a wide range of staff.

Appendix 2d: Second Message; Extending Criteria

Dear [Expert],
Thanks for your contribution to the first part of the Delphi process. Nine of those originally invited indicated that they were prepared to take part in the research, and 10 organisations have been nominated for consideration. I am delighted with this response and the quality of thought that went into people's nominations.

At this stage I would like to put aside consideration of the particular nominations and concentrate on the criteria being used to determine what constitutes a commitment to being a learning organisation. From people's comments it was clear that people recognise that defining a learning organisation can be problematic; at the same time there was a good deal of overlap in the reasons people gave for nominating organisations.

I have summarised reasons given by the group into a set of 6 criteria. In some instances I have changed wording to represent several comments, or to generalise from comments about a specific company. In doing so, of course, there is a danger that I am no longer truly representing the criteria people had in mind when writing their responses. Also, there is a good chance people mentioned only some of the criteria they use.

So, as the next stage in the process, please do the following: Look over the list of criteria shown below and decide if there are any criteria that need to be added. Reply to this message by Friday, August 24, letting me know of additions you wish to see made.

Learning Organisation Criteria:
1: Engaged in learning processes that focus on change to the organisation's fundamental business concept.
2: Senior management commitment to learning efforts, including an executive level champion.
3: An empowered culture that blurs traditional organisation roles and boundaries, e.g. use of self-managed teams.
4: Engagement of staff throughout the organisation experimentation with products and services.
5: Intentional processes of organisational learning sustained over the long haul.
6: Developmental resources and opportunities available to a wide range of staff.

Note, at this time you do not need to comment on criteria on the list that you think should not be there. The opportunity to refine the list will come at a later stage. To safeguard the quality of the research process, I would like to keep you involved in the process. To this end, if I haven't received a reply from you by the 24th I'll endeavour to contact you by telephone. Of course, you are still able to withdraw from the Delphi process if that is your desire. I look forward to hearing from you, and thanks again for your participation.

Appendix 2e: Responses to Round 2

E1

1: Engaged in learning processes that focus on change to evolution of) the organisation's fundamental business concept (value proposition - not all necessarily businesses).

2: Senior management commitment to learning efforts, including an executive level champion.

3: An empowered (information sharing and development oriented) culture that (values people taking shared ownership for driving outcomes) blurs traditional organisation roles and boundaries, e.g. use of self-managed teams.

4: Engagement of staff (directly involved in creation and delivery of the fundamental value proposition) throughout the organisation (in high leverage positions in) experimentation with products and services.

5: Intentional processes of organisational learning sustained over the long haul.

6: (Strategically focused) Developmental resources and opportunities available to a wide range of staff (people who want them).

7. Experimental and/or action learning type processes that enable tacit learning (about core business processes) to become explicit and be accessed by others involved in related contexts

8. Formal and/or informal recognition for those people contributing to learning processes

(I think it is important to consider weighting these criteria for
organisations at different stages of development.)

E3

These look good Phil. I am only concerned about the reference to self managing teams. I have seen very few of what I think could be defined as such. Most do not really understand the term, or operate as such. I saw one in a major Dairy Co, and once seen never forgotten.

E4

I should have acknowledged this email - very happy with the list of criteria. The only comment I would make is in relation to "integration of learning strategy into strategic and business planning processes" - but number one on your list may capture that.

E5

Sorry it has taken me a little longer than expected to get back to you and provide input on your Delphi Research. In addition to the 6 Learning Organisation Criterion that you have listed, I suggest you might like to include Systems (holistic) Thinking and Strategic Thinking. There is little point in an organisation working intensively on learning and development in one area without thinking about the impact that such initiatives might have on other areas in the organisation and how these change over time. This is the traditional linear "laundry list" approach to problem solving; ie. "perfect" solutions in one area exacerbate issues in another with the result that the organisation is worse off overall. In this situation it would have been better if the company had retained the status quo.

I have included both systems and strategic thinking because learning within an organisation must recognise and take into account the "spatial" (cross-functional) as well as the time-dependent (dynamic) relationships between the various factors that make up an organisation and determine its business outlook, culture, innovativeness, attitude to risk, etc. A Learning Organisation thinks and acts systemically and strategically in space and time.

I have the feeling that with more thought we could add more criteria to your list, but I am unable to identify them at the moment. What I am trying to do is to not only think about the approaches used by existing organisations that I know about, but also to extend the concepts that they apply. I hope this make sense to you.

E8

I see the LO concept as just part of a conversation about Organisational learning. I don¹t think there is a Œgenuine¹ article except in terms of a given speaker e.g the Senge related literature tends to say that it is an OL when one of the Senge-related consultants has worked there. LO then become basically a brand.
What I can talk about then is the aspects of the LO idea that as part of an academic community I think are distinctive and valuable.
… The main distinction I would want to add to the list perhaps relates to 1 above but with a different twist. This is that learning should be systemic and that this includes the organisational competencies to keep on facilitating learning from WITHIN the organisation. Many 'LO' organisations seem to actually mean that individuals have lots of training, and they often rely on outsiders to 'train' or educate members. This kind of training may be a part of having individual mastery, but it is not enough alone to have lots of highly trained individuals. The LO idea also opens up major questions about what knowledge is and how it is created. The whole idea is to intentionally generate knowledge within the organisation. I think Schon¹s ideas of reflective practice and also the processes of action learning are critical here.

… I also favour the idea that there should be no limits on what can be questioned. I like the Argyris idea of the Œundiscussable¹ here see Dick (1997) below for a great approach to this. I think not just business concepts, products services etc should be up for grabs but also processes and values, membership, and boundaries.

… 5 and 1 above point to transformation versus improvement. I think this is a crucial distinction in organisational practice and also at espoused theory level people often collapse the two.

Appendix 2f: Criteria Derived from Responses to Rounds 1 and 2

Criterion 1: Engaged in learning processes that focus on change to the organisation's fundamental business concept.

Criterion 2: Senior management commitment to learning efforts, including an executive level champion.

Criterion 3: An empowered culture that blurs traditional organisation roles and boundaries.

Criterion 4: Engagement of staff throughout the organisation in conversation and experimentation with products and services.

Criterion 5: Intentional process of organisational learning sustained over the long haul.

Criterion 6: Developmental resources and opportunities available to a wide range of staff.

Criterion 7: Efforts made to generate new knowledge, make it explicit and share it throughout the organisation.

Criterion 8: Recognition, both formal and informal, is given to those contributing to learning processes.

Criterion 9: Effort is made to consider in advance the likely consequences of learning initiatives on the organisation as a whole, e.g. on other parts of the organisation, culture, attitude to innovation.

Criterion 10: The organisation seeks to build its own capacity to facilitate future learning.

Appendix 2g: Third Message: Invitation to Qualm

After an extended break I am keen to take up the research yuo have been helping me with. The demands of university life at this time of year plus a variety of other projects have kept me from it for some time. Please excuse the delay--I hope you will be able to continue to contribute.

Where we got up to:

As a group, you had generated a list of criteria that formed the basis for nominating companies as exemplary in their efforts to become learning organisations. In the last round people had the opportunity to fill in gaps they saw in the list. Some people also suggested changes that might be made to phrasing of items.

What now?

Listed below are the criteria to emerge from the process so far. To safeguard the integrity of the process I have not made any of the phrasing changes suggested so far. My preference is to use this round to have the group as a whole comment on each of the criteria in a stage some people refer to as "qualming." As the name suggests, this involves expressing any qualms you have about the criteria as currently stated. You may wish to comment on any or all of the items. Changes suggested earlier will be incorporated when compiling this round of responses.

The process of qualming recognises that establishing a list of criteria such as this is complex, presenting those involved with dilemmas. These dilemmas are also relevant to the organisations pursuing the goal of becoming learning organisations.

Our criteria are:

1: Engaged in learning processes that focus on change to the organisation's fundamental business concept.
2: Senior management commitment to learning efforts, including an executive level champion.
3: An empowered culture that blurs traditional organisation roles and boundaries, e.g. use of self-managed teams.
4: Engagement of staff throughout the organisation experimentation with products and services.
5: Intentional processes of organisational learning sustained over the long haul.
6: Developmental resources and opportunities available to a wide range of staff.
7. Efforts made to generate new knowledge, make it explicit and share it throughout the organisation.
8. Recognition, both formal and informal, is given to those contributing to learning processes.
9. Effort is made to consider in advance the likely consequences of learning initiatives on the organisation as a whole, e.g. on other parts of the organisation, culture, attitude to innovation.
10. The organisation seeks to build its own capacity to facilitate future learning.

What next?

Please review the criteria above and respond with your comments/qualms within by November 23rd. (You may notice I have no problem setting deadlines for others while excusing delays in my own activity--while I'm aware of my inconsistencies, they don't seem to go away.) My next message will outline both a set of criteria that incorporates the dilemmas organisations must manage as they seek to become learning organisations. The final stages of the research processes will be to have each of you indicate your level of agreement with each of the criteria, and then to use the criteria to assess the organisations nominated at the start of the process.

Appendix 2h: Responses to Round 3

E1

1: Engaged in learning processes that focus on change to the organisation's fundamental business concept.

- Change can add or remove value
- Concepts are only one layer, eg ability to embody enhancements to concepts matters to from a learning perspective

2: Senior management commitment to learning efforts, including an executive level champion.

3: An empowered culture that blurs traditional organisation roles and boundaries, e.g. use of self-managed teams.

- Empowering is itself a disempowering and archaic concept, especially in knowledge intensive organisations where staff know they can work in other places already, often for more money, but choose to work where they are. We can't empower them. They already have the power.
- Examples of peoples ideas changing the business, specially not the CEO etc, may provide better evidence than such phenomena as self-managing teams

4: Engagement of staff throughout the organisation experimentation with products and services.

- Maybe more precise to ask what happens when experimentation goes awry; what happens when it is successful?
- Is whatever engagement there is by decree, by latest programme or by choice/part of the culture - ie is there coercion underneath?
- What about frequency of breakthroughs, as evidence of effective experimentation, given that they require challenging norms - ie generative learning?

5: Intentional processes of organisational learning sustained over the long haul.

- I'm worried that focusing on learning does not in itself enhance learning - its a bit neurotic for my tastes - the energy for learning just comes from caring about a shared vision in increasingly inclusive and potent ways. We don't talk about it, we do it instead.
- Might be more helpful to focus on whether real reflection happens, especially on critical incidents such as things working well or really stuffing up.
- Might also be helpful to question how major irreversible decisions are made - how much intelligence is engaged, how are trade off's addressed - ie how are avoidable errors avoided, how rigorous is due diligence?

6: Developmental resources and opportunities available to a wide range of staff.

- Where are the biases in developmental resource allocation in terms of department, seniority, type of development? This seems like a map of the values to me.
- Informal development may need reflection - not just formal - the water cooler, lunch/coffee breaks, willingness to stop work to help in problem solving, freedom to ask challenging questions

7. Efforts made to generate new knowledge, make it explicit and share it throughout the organisation.
- Lots of new knowledge does not need to be shared. Can knowledge be shared without a process of discovery - isn't it just info sharing otherwise?
- How about what is done to focus knowledge creation in relation to shared vision, and on today's most pressing challenges in relation to creating the current picture of our preferred future.

8. Recognition, both formal and informal, is given to those contributing to learning processes.
- Why does this matter? If it is allowed to happen it is its own reward, particularly in association with better results.
- If the culture values learning then this will happen in all sorts of ways, none of which will necessarily be explicit; if the culture does not value learning then these forms of recognition may be everywhere and mean nothing.
- In a culture where you have really good people they already know what adds to their future value, and aren't looking for someone's pat on the back unless it contributes materially to this, unless they are feeling insecure.
They just want the best work available, and the freedom to do it in whatever way to get on with it works best for them and those they rely on. I guess there is a bit of a gulf between baby boomer centric workplaces that think signals about security are important and gen x centric work places where job security is something you manage yourself.

9. Effort is made to consider in advance the likely consequences of learning initiatives on the organisation as a whole, e.g. on other parts of the organisation, culture, attitude to innovation.
- Don't know what is meant by "learning initiatives" in this context
- If it means specific initiatives to enhance learning then I suspect it is "programme of the month" type thinking which carries the seeds of its own recycling
- Boundaryless organisations operating within a dynamic global context exist because of their capacity to translate generative learning into relevant and profitable value. Learning is not what we do in this context, learning is who we are. Fish don't discuss swimming. Anything less than this is grist for tomorrows mill.

10. The organisation seeks to build its own capacity to facilitate future learning.

- I think capacity building has to be squarely focused on the core business model within its ecological context. Learning cannot usefully be separated from this without getting stuck up its own asshole. Learning is how to approach the challenge of creating a preferred future. Right now there are only potential futures, and variable capacity to create those futures. Sure I can work to increase capacity, but if I focus on learning rather than creating a preferred future I've lost contact with my vision; I've also lost
all the people who only feel engaged by our shared vision. What I've got left is all the touchy feely's, who no matter how much I might like them can't create that future... well this is a little overstated but you get my drift.

Reflections

I have the sense having got to this point that we should be asking questions about game playing and about politics, performance and shared vision, attention to weak signals and industry leadership, and especially about evidence of global competitiveness. I can see that in our business there really is very little attention to inside and outside, little energy for politics, a strong shared sense of global industry vision and stuff all explicit focus on learning. But then we are playing to a particular type of game plan, and are at a particular stage of development. Again, it comes back to me that their will be different styles of learning for different stages of development and different types of organisation. Any assessment **tools that do not account for this are going to be flawed in my view.**

E3
Our criteria are:
1: Engaged in learning processes that focus on change to the organisation's fundamental business concept.
NOT SURE OF WORDING "CONCEPT". CHANGE TO THE ORGANISATIONS FUNDAMENTAL....NOT SURE OF THE WORD, BUT CONCEPT DOES NOT DO IT FOR ME!
2: Senior management commitment to learning efforts, including an executive level champion.
GREAT
3: An empowered culture that blurs traditional organisation roles and boundaries, e.g. use of self-managed teams.
"BLURS"...BLENDS?
4: Engagement of staff throughout the organisation experimentation with products and services.
CONCEPT RIGHT, NOT SURE OF GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURE
5: Intentional processes of organisational learning sustained over the long haul.
GOOD...
6: Developmental resources and opportunities available to a wide range of staff.
WIDE RANGE...I THINK SHOULD BE ALL STAFF

7. Efforts made to generate new knowledge, make it explicit and share it throughout the organisation.
THERE ARE THREE IN THIS ONE, WILL THIS MADE ANSWERING/ASSESSING DIFFICULT?
8. Recognition, both formal and informal, is given to those contributing to learning processes.
GREAT
9. Effort is made to consider in advance the likely consequences of learning initiatives on the organisation as a whole, e.g. on other parts of the organisation, culture, attitude to innovation.
GREAT
10. The organisation seeks to build its own capacity to facilitate future learning.

GREAT, DOES THIS OVERLAP WITH 7? THE ONLY GENERAL ISSUE THAT I HAVE IS WITH THE JARGON BUT IT DEPENDS ON WHO THE CRITERIA ARE FOR. SOME MANAGERS WOULD STRUGGLE WITH PHRASES

E4
Qualms (please note that they are not in any particular order of importance)

1. In relation to the wording in some of the criteria which imply the whole organisation needs to be engaged. In medium to large organisations it would be difficult at any one time to meet the criteria. Is there some way to soften this slightly. For example in number 4. Significant numbers of staff engaged.

2. In relation to number 2 - as they say - one swallow doesn't make a summer - could this be expanded to include multiple champions at senior level.

3. Another one that occurs to me - would be significant efforts over time to measure organisational cultural issues and evidence of shifts and initiatives.

4. I think we also need to tease out the performance indicators or measures to be associated with each one. Sometimes for me anyway - doing this helps me test if the criteria will run.

Otherwise I pretty comfortable with where we have got to with this.

E6 (via telephone)
Learning efforts in some ways need to be both internally driven and externally driven.
Also, in my experience change doesn't happen unless the senior management team recognises the need, has the will to change and has the skills to change. Skills are represented in the last criteria. Having the executive level champion is very important.

E7

1. Taken together they are not exciting - and do not capture the dynamics that I envisage in a learning organistion - which is one of energy, experimentation and some individual and colective risk taking for an uncertain but anticipated and appreciated future.

2. I believe too that learning organisations have to have a strategic view - criterion 5 might encapsulate this - but the wording could perhaps be stronger around intentionality - what are the values that stimulate/excite such commitment to the long haul?

3. There is a general blandness about the wording at the present. If one were trying to assess against these criteria, **how much** ' engaging(1) championing (2) blurring (3), experimenting (4) , intending (5), availability of resources (6) efforts (7); recognition (8) efforts (9) seeking and or building (is it both and /or ?) (10) would count for the criteria to apply?

4. Would there be indicators of progress towards being/becoming a LO? I have the feeling that these criteria try to 'quantify' separate elements, but perhaps you are also seeing them in dynamic relation to each other. How could one judge these dynamics in making a nomination?

E9

I've been through the items pretty carefully and they seem to me - taken together- to satisfy my criteria.

Appendix 2i: Summary of Qualms

Qualms expressed by the expert group fell into the following areas:

Qualm #1: Wording of Criteria

Qualm #2: Criterion gives misleading impression of the nature of learning

Qualm #3: Criteria too short to give a full picture of what is meant, or the stages that an organisation would go through in the journey to being a learning organisation

Qualm #4: Criteria are discussed in an emotionally neutral manner, giving a misleading impression about the nature of learning organisations.

Appendix 2j: Fourth Round: Using the BARS Instrument

Dear Expert,
I hope that you had the opportunity for a break and that you are refreshed to face the challenges of 2002. We are in the last phase of the Delphi process. This phase involves using a tool developed from the criteria generated in earlier rounds to audit the efforts of the organisations nominated at the beginning, and to comment on the usefulness of the tool.

First, let me discuss the results of the last round and how this has affected the tool, which you will find attached.

In the last round, you were asked to comment on qualms you had regarding the criteria generated by the Delphi process. In the main people were satisfied that a comprehensive and challenging set of criteria had been developed. Several people expressed the view that they did not know of any organisation that met all the criteria, and that this was a good thing; the criteria should encourage further effort rather than giving the impression that the organisation had made it.

There were a number of qualms expressed about the criteria. Some qualms were to do with the wording or nature of particular criterion. These included:
a. That 'rewards' were an expression of the value an organisation put on learning rather than a driver of learning.
b. That efforts to 'empower' people can be thinly disguised attempts at controlling. People are empowered by actually having the power to do things.
c. That commitment to learning is really commitment to a vision that requires learning.

While I was not prepared to drop criteria that have been endorsed by the group as a whole, I have made amendments to the way criteria have been expressed to reflect the concerns expressed.

Several qualms related to problems created when we attempt to express complex criteria in short statements. These included:
a. It is difficult to express the idea behind the criteria clearly.
b. The criteria are not easily understood by people not involved in its formulation.
c. Statements end up being emotionally neutral. Those involved in efforts to create learning organisations are moved by a passion that is absent from the criteria.

All of these qualms convinced me that the criteria needed to be expressed differently. Attached you will find the tool I developed to meet these concerns. It is set out as a Behaviourally Anchored Rating Scale (BARS). There is a scale from 0 to 10 for each of the criterion, and four descriptions of what you might find occurring within an organisation. Using four descriptions enables us to create a clearer picture of what is meant by each of the criterion, to give a sense of how an organisation might progressively develop in a given area, and to inject more passion into the description.

The instrument has a feature that may be confusing. The description associated with the highest ratings is designed to be less attractive than the preceding description. In other words, and organisation achieving a rating of 9 appears to be worse off than one getting a rating of 7. I have done this to reflect the views of several in the group--a viewpoint I share--that organisations can over-emphasise any of the criterion to their detriment. For example, too much effort to encourage learning using rewards can damage the organisation's learning effort.

Making the highest scores unattractive also emphasises the dynamic nature of the journey to be a learning organisation. Too much effort on one criterion will result in a worse score on one or more of the other criteria. It also becomes impossible for an organisation to achieve a score of 100%. Hopefully this will help us avoid the pitfall of having people think simplistically that maximising their score on the measurement device is all that is required to have "made it."

What To Do From Here.

1. Please look over the BARS tool ***(See Appendix 3)***. If there is anything on it that you do not understand feel free to contact me for clarification.

2. Use the BARS tool to get a rating of the organisation(s) that you nominated at the start of this process. You may wish to generate a rating for an organisation that was not nominated at the start of the process.

3. Note down your thoughts regarding the value of the tool. You might like to comment on how useful it is likely to be in generating feedback for organisations, whether the ratings it generates are a reasonable reflection of the organisation's efforts, how the tool might be best used and how it could be improved.

4. Send me your rating, along with your comments regarding the tool. Please name the organisation, and show your rating on each of the criteria. I will ensure that any rating you give remains confidential, unless I have your express permission to share it with others.

In your original message, you nominated…

Thanks for your help with the process. Once I have people's responses I will get back in touch to discuss what you would like done with the information generated by the research process. This will include a discussion of intellectual property rights in relation to the BARS tool.

Appendix 2k: Comments on the BARS Instrument

E1

I have just been through my first road test of your tool in conjunction with the CFO from Org 1 and our results are as follows:

1 - 7
2 - 6
3 - 3
4 - 5
5 - 5
6 - 6
7 - 7
8 - 2
9 - 8
10 - 7

A couple of comments

I found it interesting that in Org 1 there is a powerful expectation that everyone will be focusing on learning, and as a result there is basically little or no recognition for learning efforts. It would be like acknowledging someone for showing up each day. I think this is quite unsatisfying for individual employees at one level, but perhaps also an indicator of what happens when learning is culturally embedded.

Really enjoyed the over the top element! Could perhaps be a bit more
ambivalently framed.

I think that it would be helpful to have a profile of the organization attached to each assessment - not the name necessarily - just age, size, type etc

I also have the sense it may be important to define key terms, particularly the term learning. For example if learning just means adding a reflective loop into business processes, at increasingly profound levels, then resourcing means one thing, but if learning means capability development, and matching this with business strategy and objectives, then resourcing means something else. Of course I'm not suggesting its either or, but the scoring may vary considerably depending on the emphasis.

Org 2 results as follows:

1. 6
2. 6
3. 5
4. 5
5. 2
6. 4
7. 6
8. 3

9. 6
10. 8

Org 3 Results:

1. 3
2. 3
3. 2
4. 3
5. 3
6. 6
7. 3
8. 3
9. 3
10. 5

E3 (Phone Call)
Ratings for Org 5:
1. Pervasive Learning: 7
2. Executive Commitment: 7
3. Empowerment: 7
4. Engagement of Staff: 4
5. Permanence: 7
6. Resourcing: 7
7. Knowledge Management: 6
8. Recognition and Reward: 7
9. Systematic Awareness: 6
10.Self Reliance: 7

Comments: The fourth column (downsides of criteria) is a good idea, very innovative. While some wording on the BARS tool could be reworded it was easy to pick up the sentiment. The tool avoids HR-speak or academic speak making it usable in an organisation. It is also practical. Would like to see a couple of changes made to the formatting. Lines in columns can be extended to the top so that it is clear which box each rating is associated with. Also, make it clear where the score should be recorded on the document.

It will be interesting to compare ratings from the nominated company with own. The BARS instrument looks like a valuable basis for case studies.

E4 (Telephone Call)
I am happy with the tool, in particular the way it extends the criteria. The tool reflects the discussion that has been held so far. It is hard to say how useful the tool will be until it has been more thoroughly tested on organisations.

E5
I enjoyed using your BARS tool but found it a little confusing with the roll over between 8 and 10. The issue for me was the nonlinearity and defining where the maximum value might be for each of your categories. It was almost as though the first 3

boxes (ie 0 to 8) were on a different dimension to the 4th box (8 to 10). I question whether the 4th box is simply an extension of the first 3 as is conveyed in your spreadsheet. You might like to have addressed the questions in the 4th box to each of the issues in the first 3 boxes. For example, chaos and confusion can apply to learning and its development at all levels.

Although I have had some problems with assigning appropriate values to "my" organisations, my results are as follows:

Category	Org 9	Org 7	Org 8
1	7	8	6
2	8	8	8
3	7	7	7
4	7	7	6
5	7	7	8
6	6	7	6
7	6	6	6
8	7	7	7
9	7	8	7
10	7	7	7

You will see that my scores are very similar for each of the organisations. Although the three organisations are markedly different in terms of products and processes they have similar goals in terms of learning, innovation and production. In many cases I could have given the same score for each organisation, given the nonlinearities and uncertainties in the ratings and definitions in your spreadsheet. Therefore, do not read too much into the alleged differences between the organisations within the different categories.

E7

I think you have done a great job in constructing a coherent matrix.

Intuitively, at one level, it holds together well and could be a useful tool for mapping progress or current situations. I understand about the 'overblown' unmitigated scores but what worries me/puzzles me (since I am thinking about the 'shadow side') is how to articulate the theoretical insights that make the shift from box three to box four across (6-8 and to 9-10)tenable. Thus I cannot readily articulate for myself what it is about the behaviours in 1. Pervasive learning "Learning efforts able to address fundamental issues shaping the organisation: the business concept, culture, etc." that transmutes into "constant questioning of everything generates chaos and confusion. Loss of organisational identity (spelling) and coherence". If there is constant questioning (by whom?) then why doesn't that questioning also lead to insight and realisation that unmitigated concern leads to chaos? Can you help me undertand your thinking and purpose? I am genuinely interested in this and seek to find ways in which to name aspects of endeavour that become counterproductive. In systems terms these are virtuous circles turned vicious -

growing/declining to point of entropy. But wouldn't there also be balancing factors? Wouldn't the interaction of some of the other elements provide this? If balance isn't part of the equation, how can we explain the shift between addressing fundamental issues (how is this done?)and constant questioning (at what level? Does this mean the organisation has moved into existential despair, to use Tim Dalmau's phrase?
I don't know how to apply this to any of the organisations with which I work, other than by guessing.

Appendix 3:

Behaviourally Anchorred Rating Scale

Learning Organisation Assessment Instrument

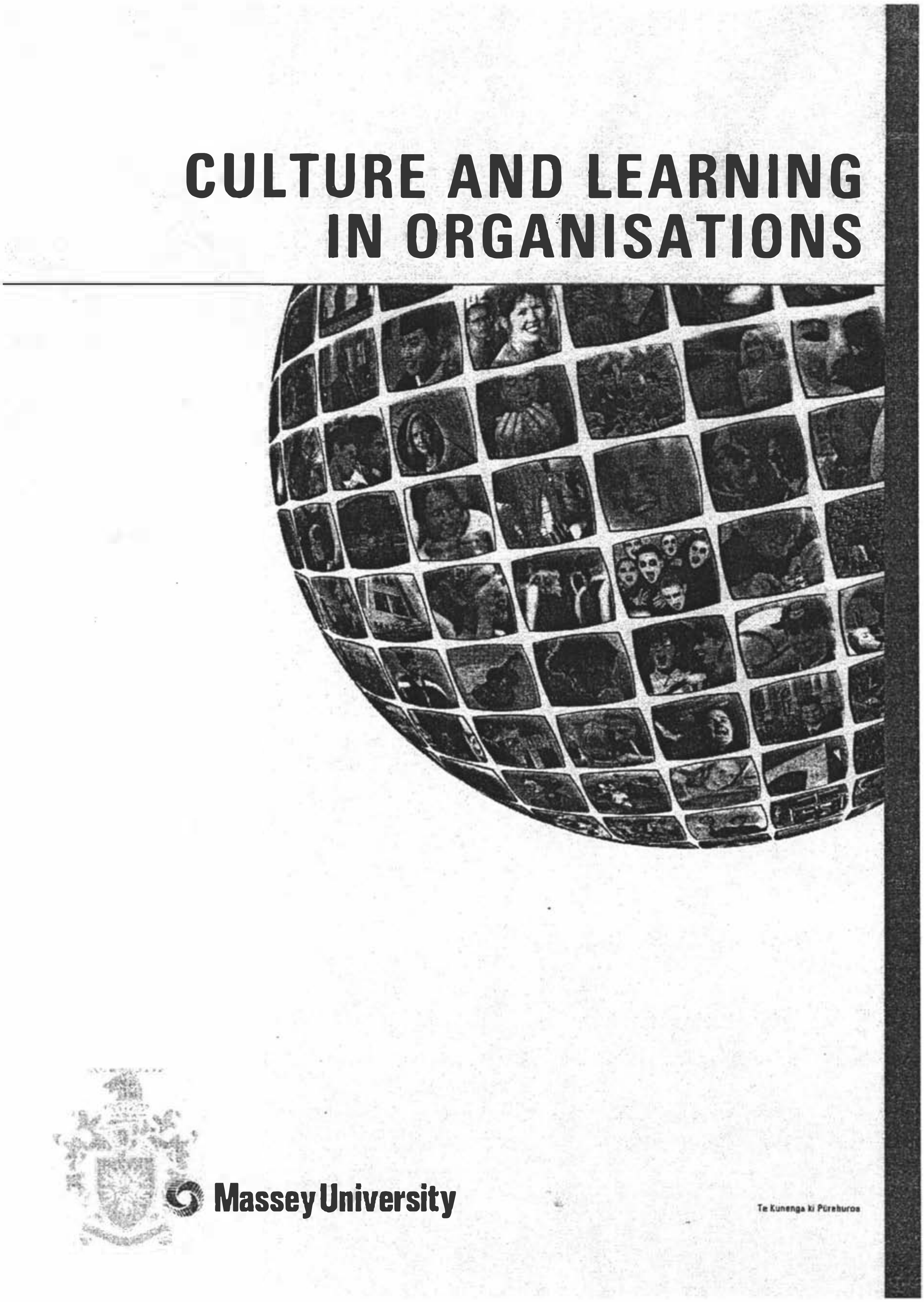
Appendix 3: The BARS Learning Organisation Assessment Instrument

	0 1 2	3 4 5	6 7 8	9 10
1. Pervasive Learning	Learning efforts restricted to a small number of "tame" issues.	Learning is able to affect products and services. More fundamental issues are not affected.	Learning efforts able to address fundamental issues shaping the organisation: the business concept, culture, etc.	Constant questioning of everything generates chaos and confusion. Loss of organisational identity and coherence.
2. Executive Commitment	Learning efforts championed by lower level enthusiasts. Little or no evidence of commitment from senior managers.	Senior management commitment evidenced by regular consideration or learning issues.	Senior management commitment to learning efforts evidenced by executive or board level champion and vigorous executive consideration.	Organisation treats learning as abstract, executive-driven process. Managers attempt to engineer and control learning.
3. Empowerment	People restricted to change within their own roles. Initiatives subject to managerial approval.	Efforts made to empower people; encouraging them to make changes to own role with minimal managerial control.	People throughout the organisation act with power; contributing with gusto to learning, both within their own roles and across organisational boundaries.	'Empowered' staff are so busy attending to other people's work they neglect their own roles. Opportunities for improvement are missed.
4. Engagement of Staff	Experimentation and innovation with products and services carried out by designated experts.	Staff involved with learning activities related to product and service innovation. Involvement focused on implementation issues.	Staff throughout the organisation engaged in conversation and experimentation. Evidenced through regular breakthroughs and failures.	Staff learning efforts immobilised by inclusion in areas beyond their ability or interest.
5. Permanence	Learning efforts fluctuate over time.	Medium term commitment to learning; commitment provisional on direct contribution to organisational results.	Deep commitment to on-going learning. Learning understood to be a crucial means of pursuing shared vision.	Dogmatic insistence on the priority of learning undermines ability to respond to day to day demands and challenges of the vision.

	0 1 2	3 4 5	6 7 8	9 10
6. Resourcing	Few resources available to support learning, or available only to select individuals or groups.	Developmental resources and opportunities available to staff identified as likely stars.	Developmental resources and opportunities available and accessed by a wide range of staff.	Resourcing not able to keep pace with escalating demands of staff determined to maximise own learning.
7. Knowledge Management	Knowledge gained through learning stays in the head of the original learner; little done to make it accessible or shared.	People encouraged to share knowledge, though efforts result in others gaining only a surface understanding.	Systematic efforts to manage knowedge; includes work to generate, share and store knowledge throughout the organisation.	Efforts to document and share all knowledge overwhelm and immobilise staff, undermining self-reliance.
8. Recognition and Reward	Little or no recognition of those contributing to learning processes.	Occasional recognition of outstanding contributions to learning processes.	Recognition, both formal and informal, given to those contributing to learning processes. Rewards reflect the organisation's valuing of learning	Chasing rewards and applause, staff direct their efforts to short term projects with visible pay-offs. Rewards turn learning into a game.
9. Systematic Awareness	Learning tends to be event-based with little thought given to consequences of change.	Consideration given to impact of learning-based change on other parts of the organisation.	Consideration given to impact of learning-based change on the organisational system. Impact on attitudes, culture and relationships included.	Learning initiatives paralysed by attempts to predict unforeseeable consequences. Units unwilling to advocate their own interests.
10. Self Reliance	Reliance on external experts to facilitate learning processes.	Internal capacity to facilitate learning resides in central group of experts, providing service to the rest of the organisation.	Capacity to facilitate learning developed throughout organisation; efforts made to build capacity within all units.	Self-reliance of units leads to rejection of knowledge generated outside the unit; units becoming insular and blinkered.

Appendix 4:

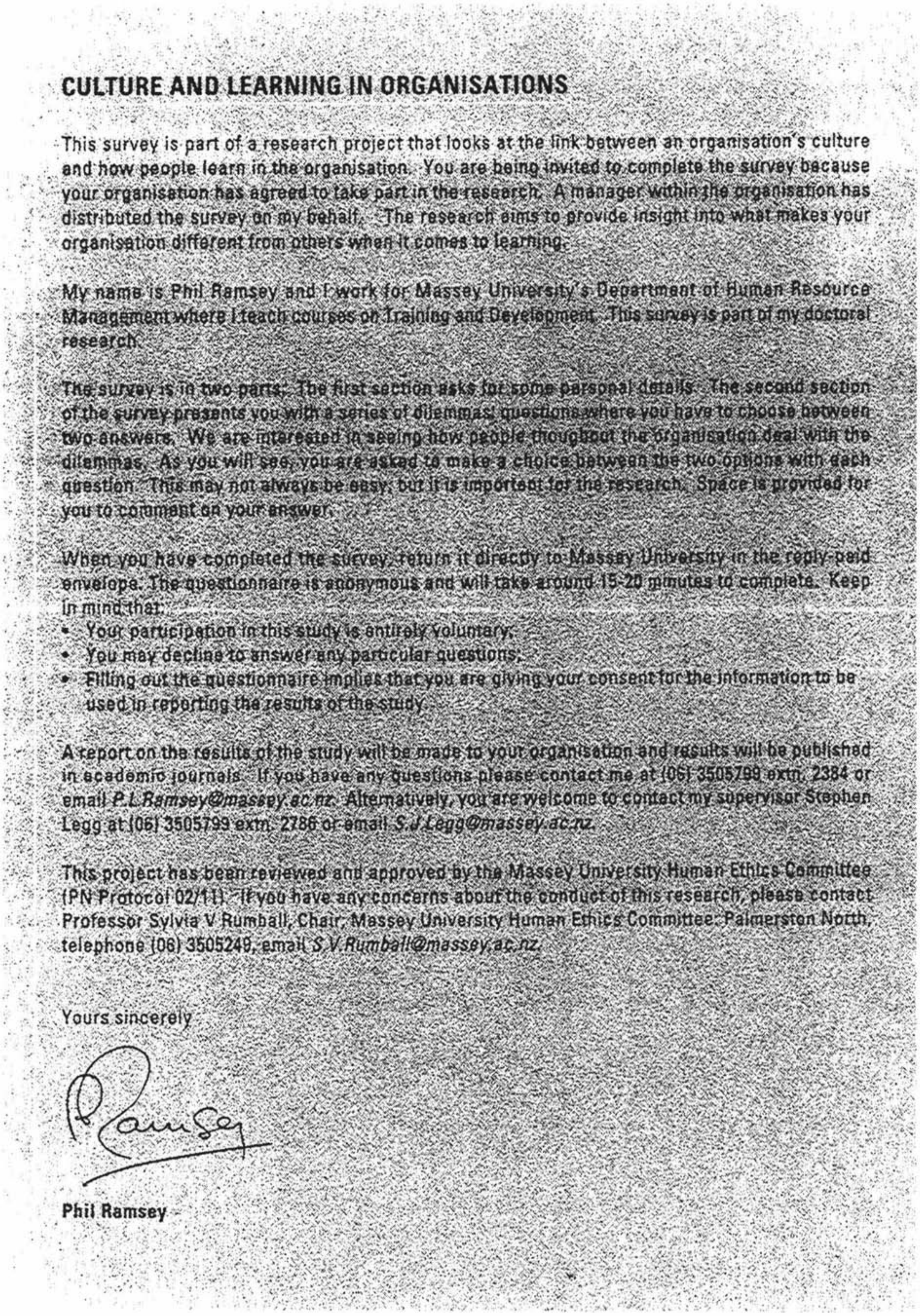
The "Culture and Learning in Organisations" Instrument



CULTURE AND LEARNING IN ORGANISATIONS

Massey University

Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa



CULTURE AND LEARNING IN ORGANISATIONS

This survey is part of a research project that looks at the link between an organisation's culture and how people learn in the organisation. You are being invited to complete the survey because your organisation has agreed to take part in the research. A manager within the organisation has distributed the survey on my behalf. The research aims to provide insight into what makes your organisation different from others when it comes to learning.

My name is Phil Ramsey and I work for Massey University's Department of Human Resource Management where I teach courses on Training and Development. This survey is part of my doctoral research.

The survey is in two parts. The first section asks for some personal details. The second section of the survey presents you with a series of dilemmas: questions where you have to choose between two answers. We are interested in seeing how people thoughout the organisation deal with the dilemmas. As you will see, you are asked to make a choice between the two options with each question. This may not always be easy, but it is important for the research. Space is provided for you to comment on your answer.

When you have completed the survey, return it directly to Massey University in the reply-paid envelope. The questionnaire is anonymous and will take around 15-20 minutes to complete. Keep in mind that:

- Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary;
- You may decline to answer any particular questions;
- Filling out the questionnaire implies that you are giving your consent for the information to be used in reporting the results of the study.

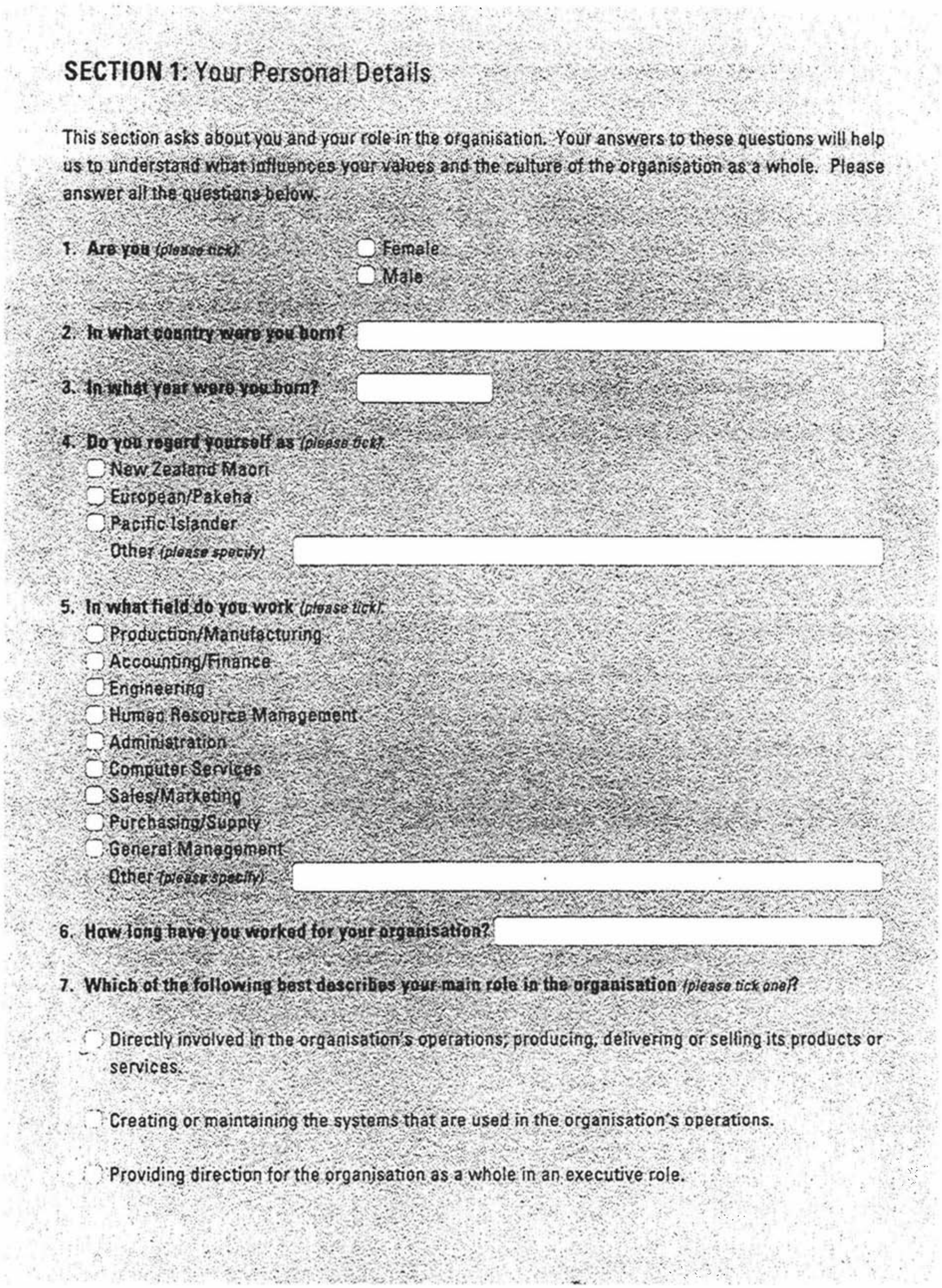
A report on the results of the study will be made to your organisation and results will be published in academic journals. If you have any questions please contact me at (06) 3505799 extn. 2384 or email *P.L.Ramsey@massey.ac.nz*. Alternatively, you are welcome to contact my supervisor Stephen Legg at (06) 3505799 extn. 2786 or email *S.J.Legg@massey.ac.nz*.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee (PN Protocol 02/11). If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Professor Sylvia V Rumball, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Palmerston North, telephone (06) 3505249, email *S.V.Rumball@massey.ac.nz*.

Yours sincerely

P Ramsey

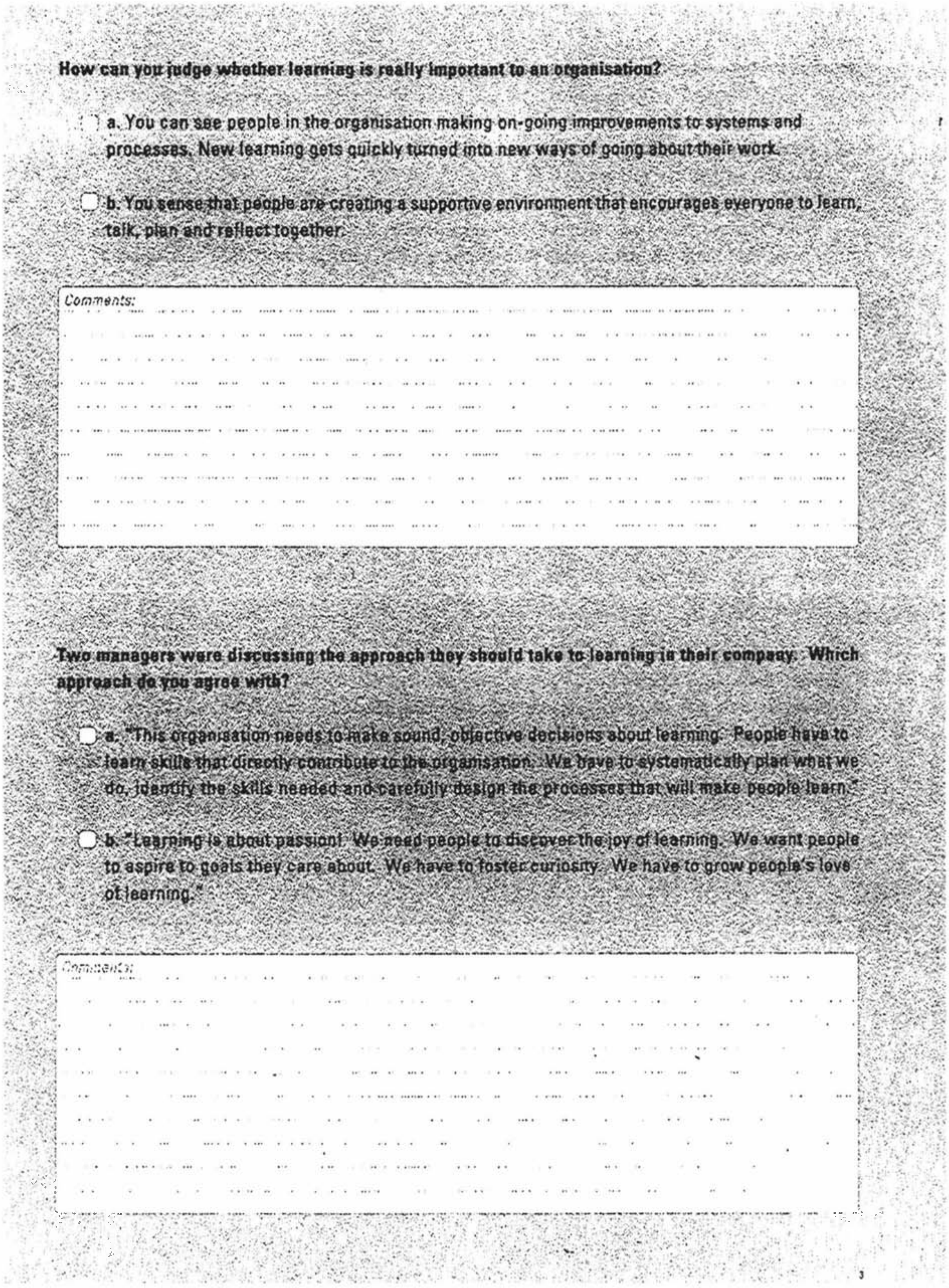
Phil Ramsey



SECTION 1: Your Personal Details

This section asks about you and your role in the organisation. Your answers to these questions will help us to understand what influences your values and the culture of the organisation as a whole. Please answer all the questions below.

1. **Are you** *(please tick)*
   - ☐ Female
   - ☐ Male
2. **In what country were you born?**
3. **In what year were you born?**
4. **Do you regard yourself as** *(please tick)*
   - ☐ New Zealand Maori
   - ☐ European/Pakeha
   - ☐ Pacific Islander
   - Other *(please specify)*
5. **In what field do you work** *(please tick)*
   - ☐ Production/Manufacturing
   - ☐ Accounting/Finance
   - ☐ Engineering
   - ☐ Human Resource Management
   - ☐ Administration
   - ☐ Computer Services
   - ☐ Sales/Marketing
   - ☐ Purchasing/Supply
   - ☐ General Management
   - Other *(please specify)*
6. **How long have you worked for your organisation?**
7. **Which of the following best describes your main role in the organisation** *(please tick one)***?**
   - ☐ Directly involved in the organisation's operations; producing, delivering or selling its products or services.
   - ☐ Creating or maintaining the systems that are used in the organisation's operations.
   - ☐ Providing direction for the organisation as a whole in an executive role.



How can you judge whether learning is really important to an organisation?

☐ a. You can see people in the organisation making on-going improvements to systems and processes. New learning gets quickly turned into new ways of going about their work.

☐ b. You sense that people are creating a supportive environment that encourages everyone to learn, talk, plan and reflect together.

Comments:

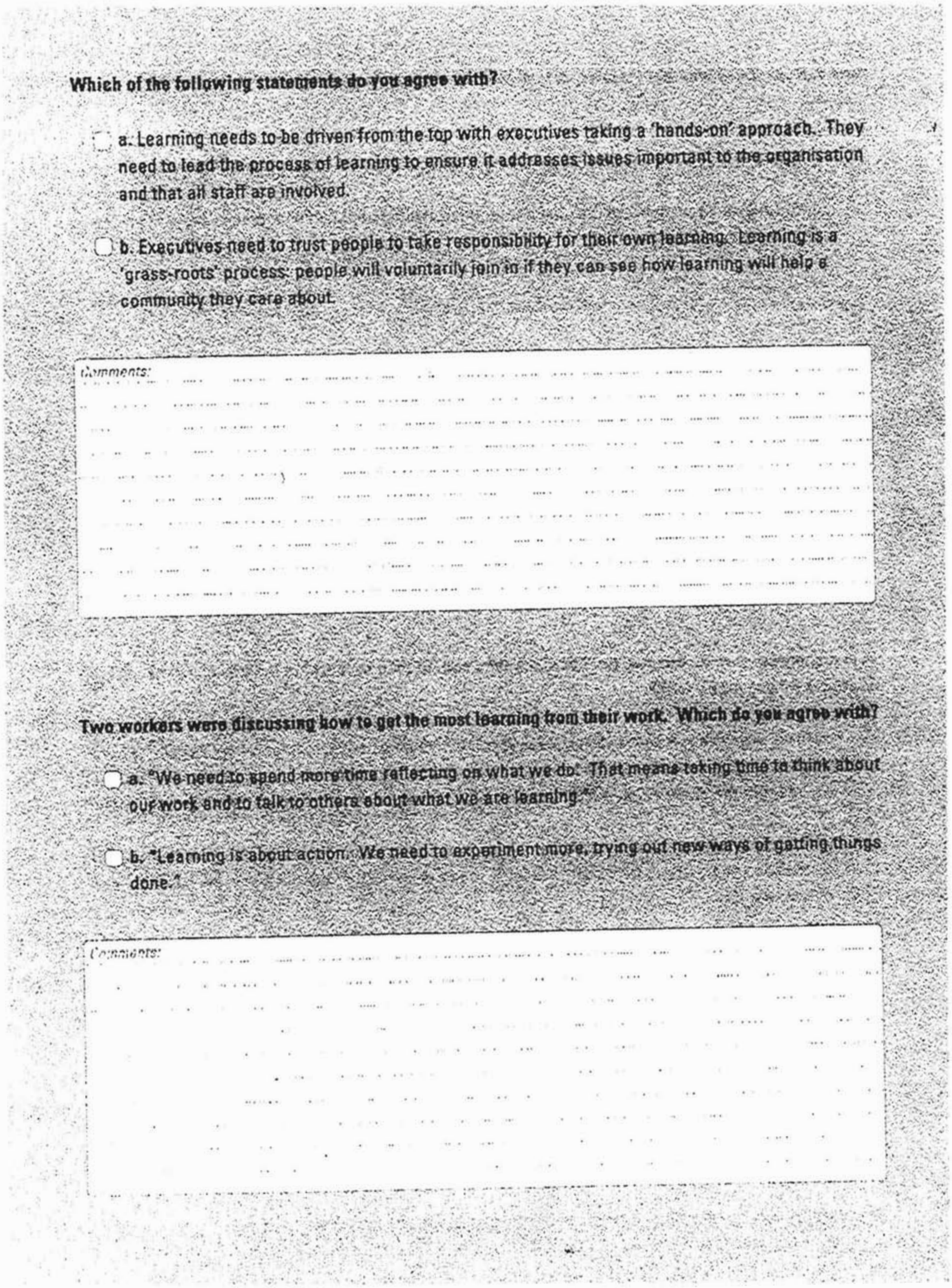
Two managers were discussing the approach they should take to learning in their company. Which approach do you agree with?

☐ a. "This organisation needs to make sound, objective decisions about learning. People have to learn skills that directly contribute to the organisation. We have to systematically plan what we do, identify the skills needed and carefully design the processes that will make people learn."

☐ b. "Learning is about passion! We need people to discover the joy of learning. We want people to aspire to goals they care about. We have to foster curiosity. We have to grow people's love of learning."

Comments:

3



Which of the following statements do you agree with?

○ a. Learning needs to be driven from the top with executives taking a 'hands-on' approach. They need to lead the process of learning to ensure it addresses issues important to the organisation and that all staff are involved.

○ b. Executives need to trust people to take responsibility for their own learning. Learning is a 'grass-roots' process: people will voluntarily join in if they can see how learning will help a community they care about.

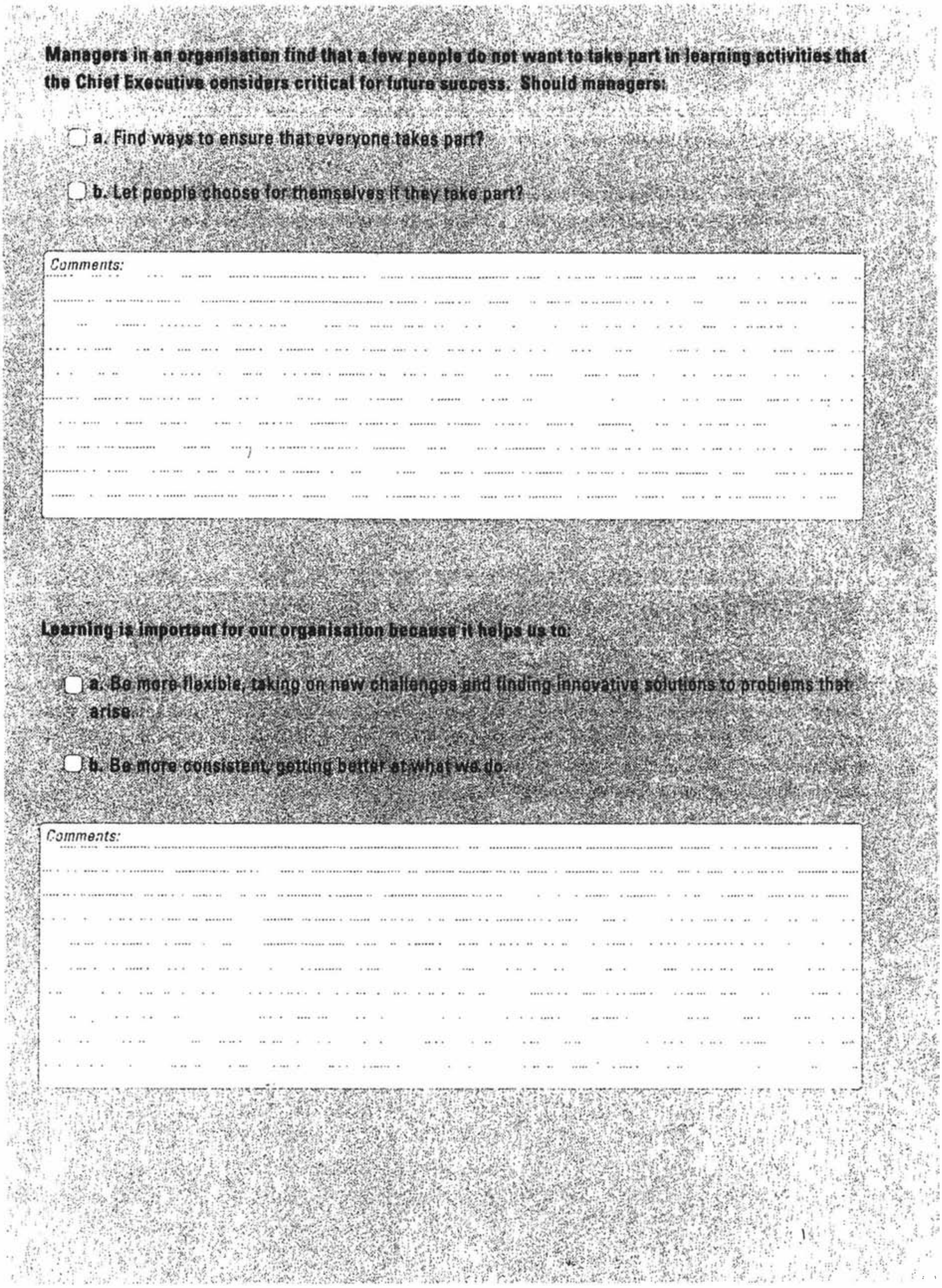
Comments:

Two workers were discussing how to get the most learning from their work. Which do you agree with?

○ a. "We need to spend more time reflecting on what we do. That means taking time to think about our work and to talk to others about what we are learning."

○ b. "Learning is about action. We need to experiment more, trying out new ways of getting things done."

Comments:



Managers in an organisation find that a few people do not want to take part in learning activities that the Chief Executive considers critical for future success. Should managers:

☐ a. Find ways to ensure that everyone takes part?

☐ b. Let people choose for themselves if they take part?

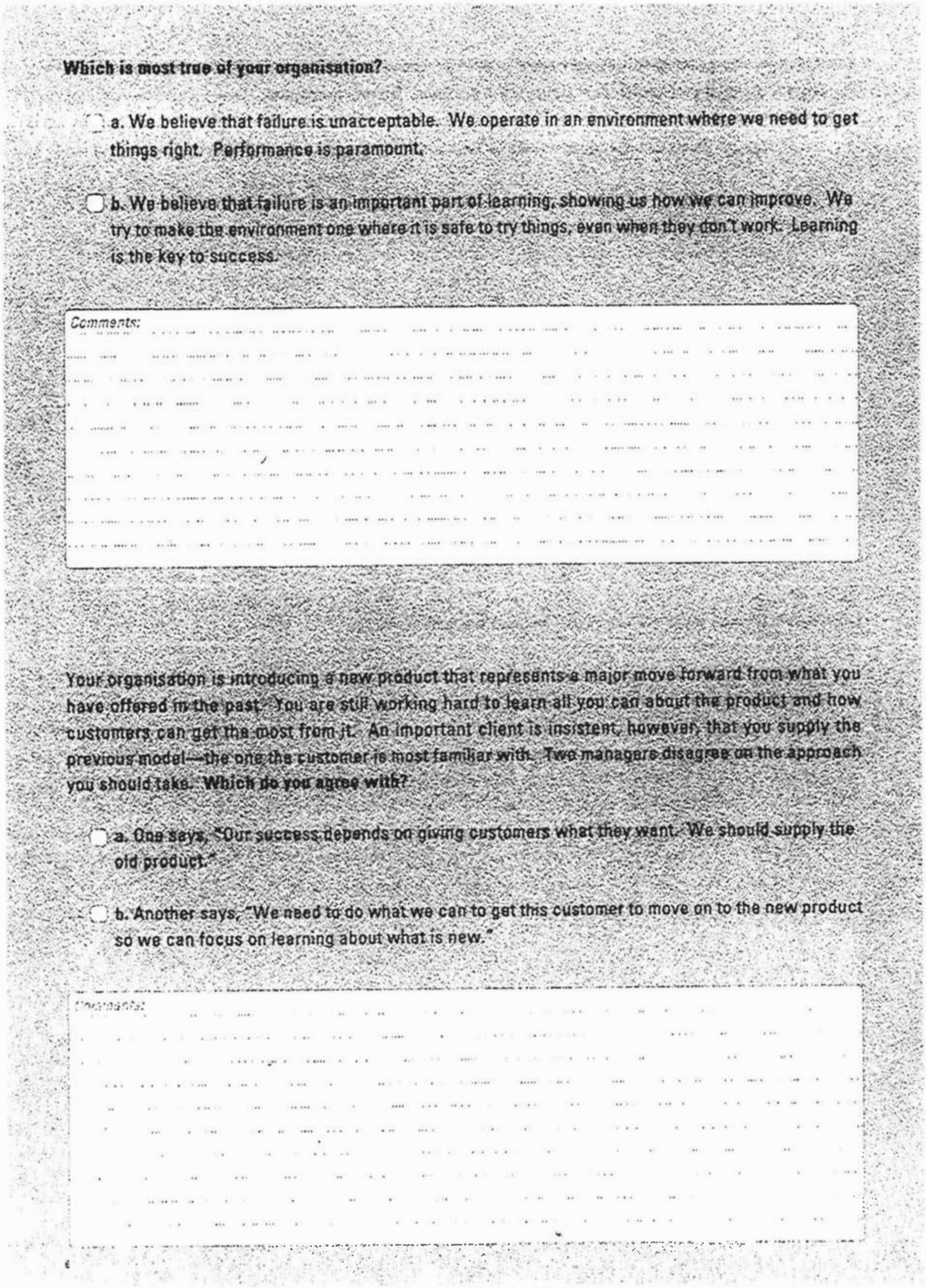
Comments:

Learning is important for our organisation because it helps us to:

☐ a. Be more flexible, taking on new challenges and finding innovative solutions to problems that arise.

☐ b. Be more consistent, getting better at what we do.

Comments:



Which is most true of your organisation?

☐ a. We believe that failure is unacceptable. We operate in an environment where we need to get things right. Performance is paramount.

☐ b. We believe that failure is an important part of learning, showing us how we can improve. We try to make the environment one where it is safe to try things, even when they don't work. Learning is the key to success.

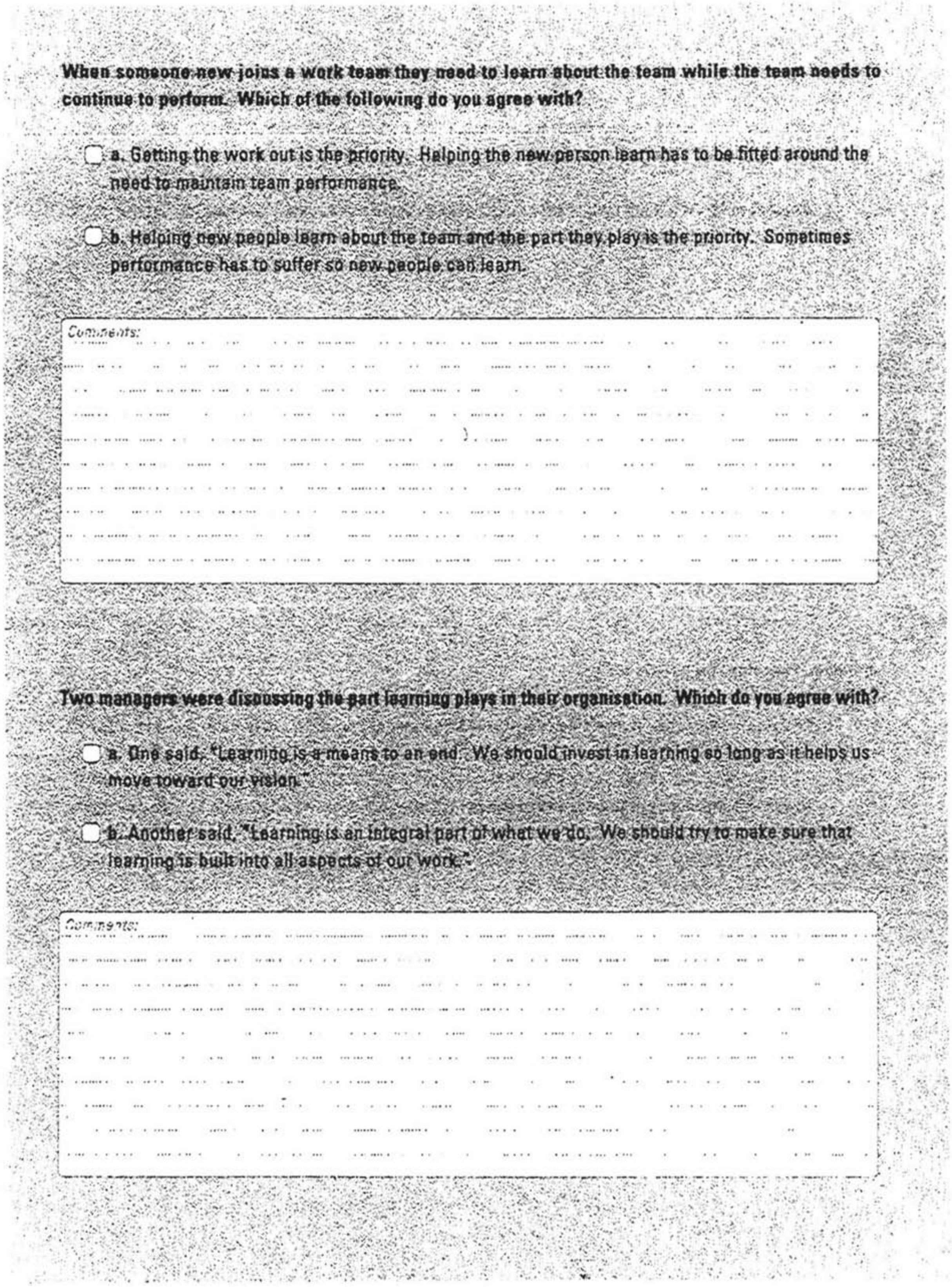
Comments:

Your organisation is introducing a new product that represents a major move forward from what you have offered in the past. You are still working hard to learn all you can about the product and how customers can get the most from it. An important client is insistent, however, that you supply the previous model—the one the customer is most familiar with. Two managers disagree on the approach you should take. **Which do you agree with?**

☐ a. One says, "Our success depends on giving customers what they want. We should supply the old product."

☐ b. Another says, "We need to do what we can to get this customer to move on to the new product so we can focus on learning about what is new."

Comments:



When someone new joins a work team they need to learn about the team while the team needs to continue to perform. Which of the following do you agree with?

☐ a. Getting the work out is the priority. Helping the new person learn has to be fitted around the need to maintain team performance.

☐ b. Helping new people learn about the team and the part they play is the priority. Sometimes performance has to suffer so new people can learn.

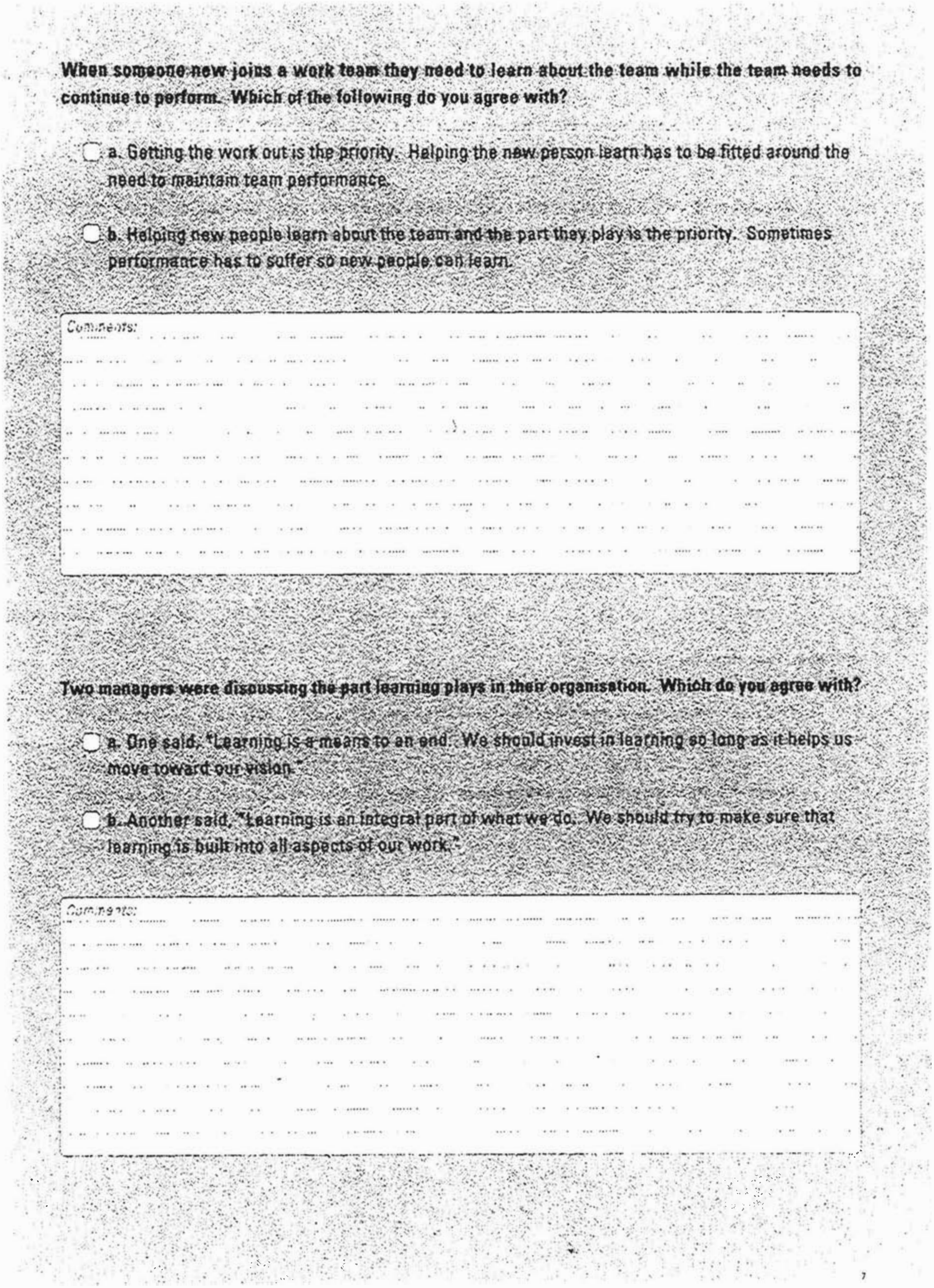
Comments:

Two managers were discussing the part learning plays in their organisation. Which do you agree with?

☐ a. One said, "Learning is a means to an end. We should invest in learning so long as it helps us move toward our vision."

☐ b. Another said, "Learning is an integral part of what we do. We should try to make sure that learning is built into all aspects of our work."

Comments:



When someone new joins a work team they need to learn about the team while the team needs to continue to perform. Which of the following do you agree with?

○ a. Getting the work out is the priority. Helping the new person learn has to be fitted around the need to maintain team performance.

○ b. Helping new people learn about the team and the part they play is the priority. Sometimes performance has to suffer so new people can learn.

Comments:

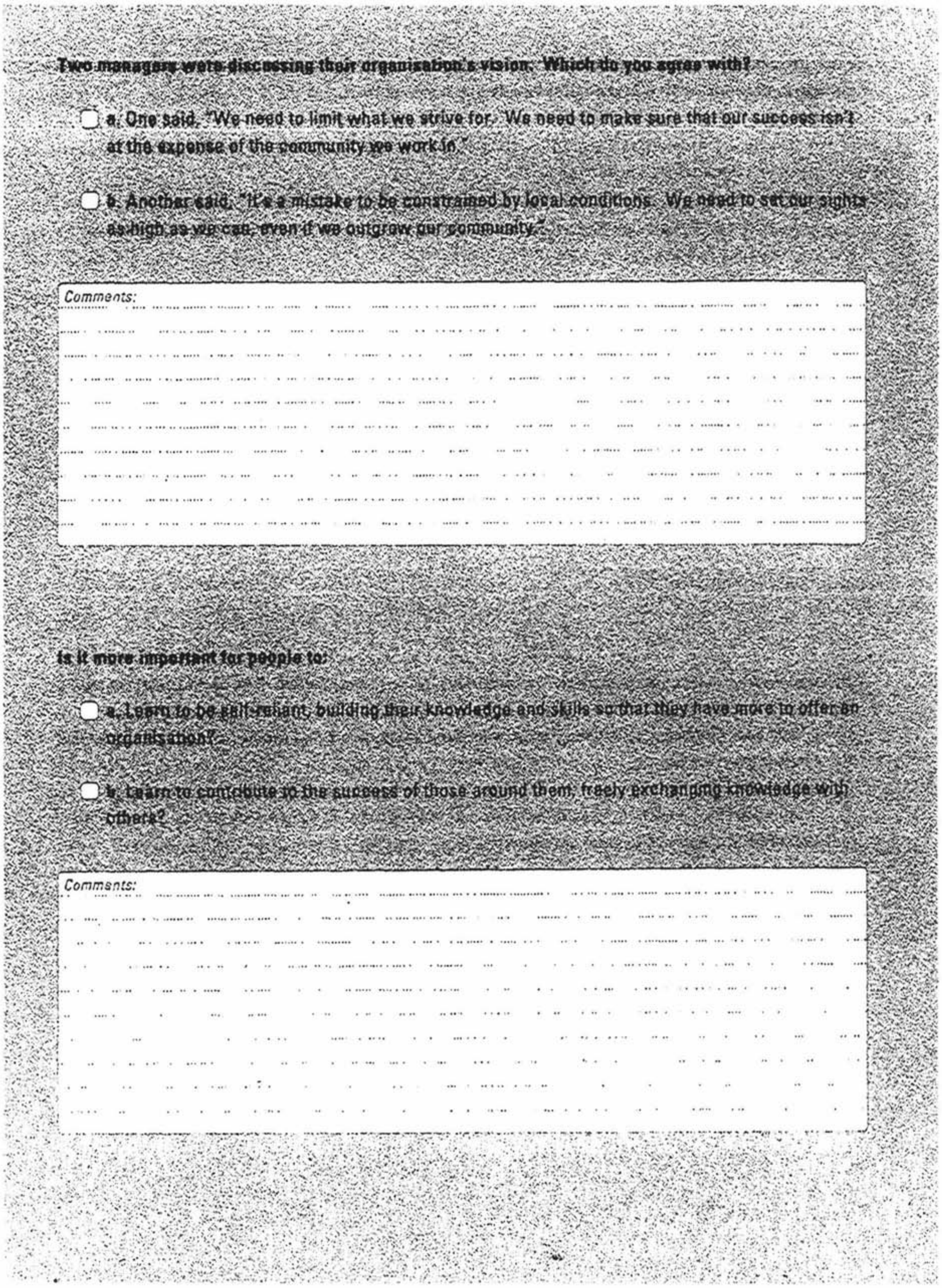
Two managers were discussing the part learning plays in their organisation. Which do you agree with?

○ a. One said, "Learning is a means to an end. We should invest in learning so long as it helps us move toward our vision."

○ b. Another said, "Learning is an integral part of what we do. We should try to make sure that learning is built into all aspects of our work."

Comments:

7



Two managers were discussing their organisation's vision. Which do you agree with?

☐ a. One said, "We need to limit what we strive for. We need to make sure that our success isn't at the expense of the community we work in."

☐ b. Another said, "It's a mistake to be constrained by local conditions. We need to set our sights as high as we can, even if we outgrow our community."

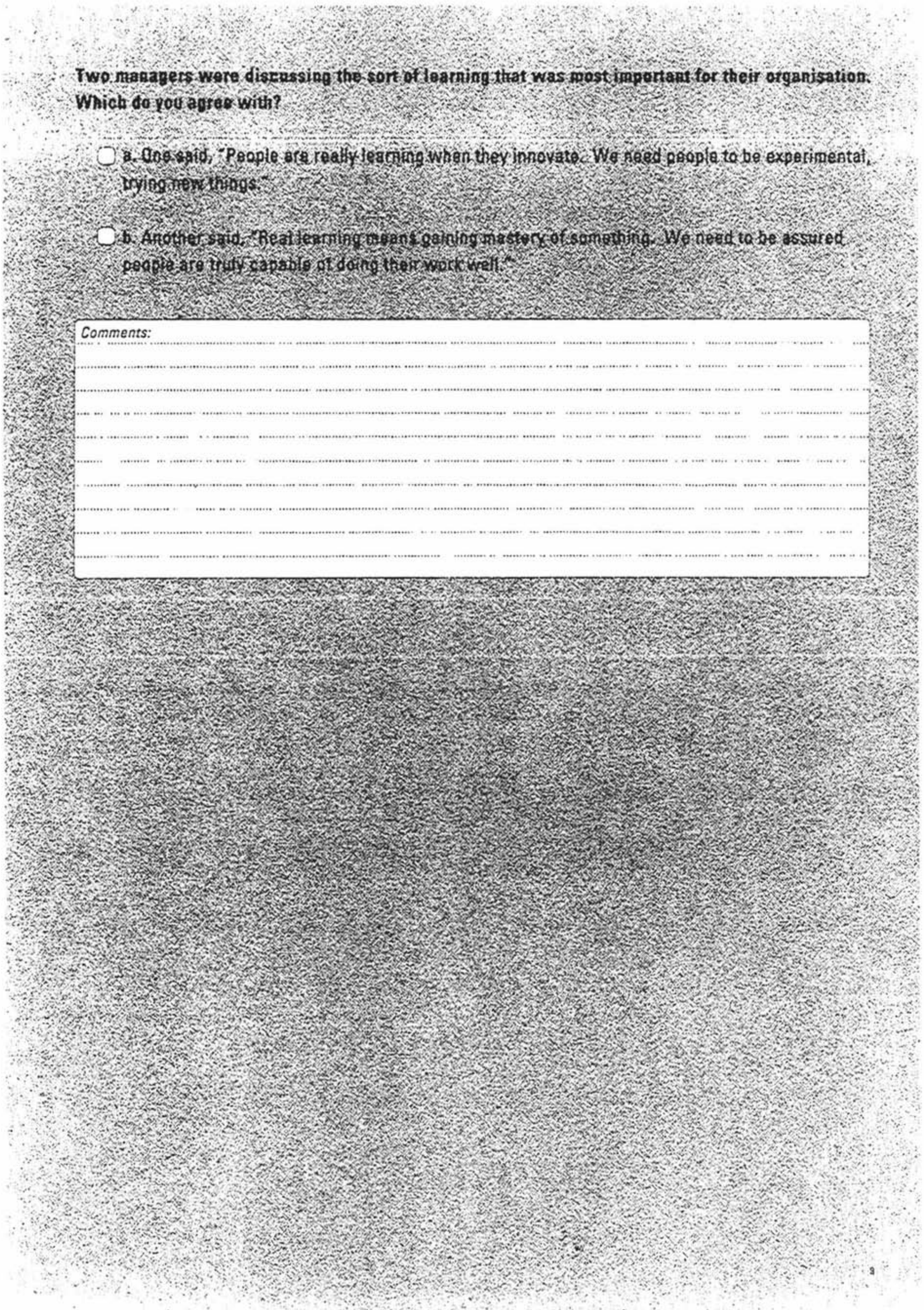
Comments:

Is it more important for people to:

☐ a. Learn to be self-reliant, building their knowledge and skills so that they have more to offer an organisation?

☐ b. Learn to contribute to the success of those around them, freely exchanging knowledge with others?

Comments:



Two managers were discussing the sort of learning that was most important for their organisation. Which do you agree with?

☐ a. One said, "People are really learning when they innovate. We need people to be experimental, trying new things."

☐ b. Another said, "Real learning means gaining mastery of something. We need to be assured people are truly capable of doing their work well."

Comments:

3

Appendix 5:

Summaries of Respondents' Comments on Dilemmas in the Survey

Appendix 5a: Comments on Dilemma 1 Technical--Social

Comment	Number	Percent of Total
Upside of Investing in Technical Skills		
Keep up with technology	1	1
This is the need in our organisation	3	2
People should focus on their own job; own accountability	6	4
Better for customers	2	1
Total	**12**	**9**
Downside of Investing in Social Skills		
Social skills are faddish	1	1
Social skills are a personal responsibility	1	1
Social skills are difficult to address effectively	5	4
Total	**7**	**5**
Upside of Investing in Social Skills		
Social skills are harder to master	3	2
Make up for a lack of technical skills	1	1
An area of common need in the organisation, often overlooked	5	4
Teamwork is essential	9	7
Important in our work	1	2
Total	**19**	**14**
Downside of Investing in Technical Skills	**0**	**0**
Values are Complementary		
Both are needed	45	33
Technical is the basis for Social	11	8
Social is the basis for Technical	20	15
Social skills are technical skills	4	3
Depends which is lacking	5	4
Depends on other variables, e.g. the situation	13	10
Circularity of values described	1	1
Total	**99**	**73**
Dilemma is Flawed		
Don’t like the term “investment in learning”	1	1
Focus on ‘Relationship Management’ skills	2	1
Focus on Generic skills, e.g. Learning to learn	3	2
Total	**6**	**4**

Appendix 5b: Comments on Dilemma 2 Balance--Committed

Comment	Number	Percent of Total
Upside of Balance		
People are naturally selfish, self-interested	22	25
Aim to develop portable skills	6	7
Learning is a life-long process, so a personal responsibility	2	2
Learning rewards the individual	5	6
Learning is an individual process	2	2
Self-interest brings benefit to the organisation	10	11
Total	**47**	**53**
Downside of Commitment		
Commitment is unrealistic where there is no job security	9	10
Total	**9**	**10**
Upside of Commitment		
Organisations must benefit from learning	1	1
Importance of commitment increases as one matures	2	2
Total	**3**	**3**
Downside of Balance	**0**	**0**
Values are Complementary		
Both are needed	13	15
Self focused learning leads to greater commitment	4	4
Contributing to the organisation is a personal benefit	9	10
Commitment to an organisation is the basis for a balanced life	3	3
Depends on other variables, e.g. relationship with organisation	3	3
Total	**32**	**36**
Mismatch Between Personal and Organisational Values	**2**	**2**
Dilemma is Flawed		
Contribution/ commitment should be to Society, not Organisation	**1**	**1**

Appendix 5c: Comments on Dilemma 3 Systems--Environment

Comment	Number	Percent of Total
Upside of Systems		
Organisations need demonstrable results	1	2
Improvements = Learning	1	2
We need an integrated view of the organisation	1	2
Training/learning must lead to application, learn by doing	4	9
Improvements bring real benefits	1	2
Total	**8**	**18**
Downside of Environment		
Too much support leads to inactivity	2	4
Some ideas are bad, shouldn't be supported	1	2
Total	**3**	**6**
Upside of Environment		
Human relations are critical to success	1	2
Need to be skills focused	2	4
Benefits of learning are not always obvious	2	4
Organisation needs to go forward as a team	1	2
The right environment is needed for change	1	2
Total	**7**	**16**
Downside of Systems		
Systems are the problem, need to be circumvented	1	2
Systems can change without learning, imposed by management	2	4
People don't like change	1	2
Total	**4**	**9**
Values are Complementary		
Both are needed	10	22
Supporting people leads to systems improvement	10	22
The right environment can be groundbreaking	1	2
Depends on other variables, e.g. type of organisation	1	2
Total	**22**	**49**
Mismatch Between Personal and Organisational Values	**1**	**2**

Appendix 5d: Comments on Dilemma 4 Neutral--Engaged

Comment	Number	Percent of Total
Upside of Emotionally Neutral		
Organisation has to be results focused	6	7
Objectivity brings better design	1	1
Total	**7**	**9**
Downside of Emotionally Engaged		
Not possible in the 'real world'	5	6
Passion should be for the job	1	1
Passion is an issue for the individual	1	1
Total	**7**	**9**
Upside of Emotionally Engaged		
Generates personal drive for learning	2	3
Encourages innovation	1	1
Organisation should encourage passion	3	4
Produces better learning	4	5
Organisations are dynamic, chaotic	2	3
Any learning is good	2	3
Need life-long learning	1	1
Total	**15**	**19**
Downside of Emotionally Neutral		
You can't control learning	**6**	**8**
Values are Complementary		
Both are needed	17	22
Both makes learning better: relevant + exciting	3	4
Good design, quality training lead to passion	5	6
Passion, engagement is the basis of good design	8	10
Depends on other variables, e.g. organisation, workforce	5	6
Total	**38**	**48**
Mismatch between Personal and Organisational Values	**2**	**3**
Dilemma is Flawed		
Don't like the term "growing people"	1	1
Don't like language of the neutral option	2	3
Managers don't plan	1	1
Total	**4**	**5**

Appendix 5e: Comments on Dilemma 5 Executive Led—Community Driven

Comment	Number	Percent of Total
Upside of Executive Led		
Careful design needed	1	1
Learning isn't taken seriously without leadership	3	4
Leadership gets learning started	8	12
Learning needs to be relevant to the organisation	2	3
Executives must lead, set an example	5	7
Human capital is an asset needing to be managed	1	1
Total	**20**	**29**
Downside Community Driven		
Community is apathetic	**1**	**1**
Upside of Community Driven		
People have a personal responsibility for learning	3	4
Empowered people can decide their own needs	3	4
Learning is natural	1	1
Learning is largely informal	1	1
Trust people	2	3
Total	**10**	**15**
Downside of Executive Led		
This should be a support role only	6	9
Executives are afraid to empower	1	1
You can't 'manage' learning, can't force people to learn	3	4
Executives don't know people's needs	2	3
Total	**12**	**17**
Values are Complementary		
Both are needed	16	23
Executives provide direction, people volunteer	5	7
Community needs to link actions to organisational goals	1	1
Without direction grass roots die	1	1
Depends on other variables, e.g. organisation, purpose of learning	2	3
Total	**25**	**36**
Dilemma is Flawed		
Organisation is not a 'community'	**1**	**1**

Appendix 5f: Comments on Dilemma 6 Reflect--Act

Comment	Number	Percent of Total
Upside of Reflection		
Learn more as a result	1	1
We need to do more	1	1
Suits my personal style	1	1
Experimentation can be centralised	1	1
Makes for better teamwork	1	1
Total	**5**	**8**
Downside of Action		
Trial and error is inefficient	**3**	**5**
Upside of Action		
Experimenting is the best way to learn	7	11
Learning is active	2	3
Learn from mistakes	2	3
Risk taking is necessary	1	1
We need to encourage experimentation	1	1
Action suits my personal style	1	1
Total	**14**	**22**
Downside Reflection		
Pointless and time wasting without action	3	5
Reflection isn't always needed	1	1
Total	**4**	**6**
Values are Complementary		
Both are needed	21	34
Reflection provides a context for safe, effective action	5	8
Reflection must lead to action	3	5
Reflection is the basis of action	1	1
Action is the basis of reflection	1	1
Action learning advocated	1	1
Depends on other variables, e.g. the situation, the person	7	11
Total	**39**	**60**

Appendix 5g: Comments on Dilemma 7 Inclusive—Voluntary

Comment	Number	Percent of Total
Upside of Inclusion		
Ensure essential learning happens, with consistence	12	12
Use with care	2	2
Need to be non-coercive, get buy-in, not forced	25	24
Learning is too important to be optional	3	3
Equal Opportunity issue, people get left behind	4	4
Fosters teamwork	3	3
In people don't want to learn they shouldn't be here	1	1
Total	**50**	**48**
Downside of Voluntary	**0**	**0**
Upside of Voluntary		
People volunteer if learning is relevant and they are informed	3	3
Choice means better learning	7	7
If managers create opportunity, choice will snowball	3	3
People are different	3	3
Learning is an individual responsibility, choice has consequences	5	5
Based on respect for executives	1	1
Total	**22**	**21**
Downside of Inclusion		
People who are forced disrupt learning	5	5
Managers don't know needs	3	3
If forced, people don't learn, inclusion is pointless	7	7
Total	**15**	**14**
Non-Volunteers must have reasons, other issues	**5**	**5**
Values are Complementary		
Both are needed	5	5
Get learning started, volunteering follows	2	2
Total	**7**	**7**

Appendix 5h: Comments on Dilemma 8 Flexibility--Consistency

Comment	Number	Percent of Total
Upside of Flexibility		
Try new things to learn and improve	4	8
Important for competitive advantage, survival	4	8
Learning = evolving, changing	2	4
Need flexibility for changing circumstances, society	10	20
Growth is based on what is new	2	4
Multi-tasking is needed	1	2
Important to manage change, deal with new situations	2	4
Prevents boredom	1	2
Fits with a continuous improvement philosophy	1	2
Doing the right thing is of primary importance	1	2
Total	**28**	**56**
Downside of Consistency		
Consistency occurs naturally, can be taken for granted	**1**	**2**
Upside of Consistency		
Learning should make work easier	1	2
We need consistency in our organisation	1	2
Total	**2**	**4**
Downside of Flexibility	**0**	**0**
Values are Complementary		
Both are needed	12	24
Innovate while measuring against consistent standards	1	2
Flexibility produces consistency	1	2
Find new ways to be consistent	2	4
Consistency incorporates flexibility	1	2
Depends on other variables, e.g. the organisation	1	2
Total	**18**	**36**

Appendix 5i: Comments on Dilemma 9 Perform--Learn

Comment	Number	Percent of Total
Upside of Performance		
Organisation can't afford mistakes	7	10
Need to get it right for stakeholders	3	4
Don't celebrate failure	1	1
Total	**11**	**16**
Downside of Learning	**0**	**0**
Upside Learning		
Organisation is improving, learning to tolerate failure	1	1
We need to take risks	3	4
Tolerating failure creates a safe learning environment	5	7
People make mistakes, failure is natural	2	3
Need to reflect on mistakes to learn, failure is part of learning	4	6
People dislike failure, don't fail unnecessarily	2	3
Need to tolerate failure for better teamwork	1	1
Total	**17**	**25**
Downside of Performance		
People will hide their mistakes	4	6
Performance only is a harmful attitude	1	1
Total	**5**	**7**
Values are Complementary		
Both are needed	4	6
Failure needs to be managed, learning shouldn't cost too much	10	14
Learning leads to improved performance	5	7
Performing at your best leads to mistakes, therefore learning	1	1
Depends on other variables, e.g. the organisation	3	4
Total	**23**	**32**
Mismatch between Organisation and Personal Values		
Espoused policy is different from Actual practice	4	6
Organisation has a 'blame culture'	5	7
My standards are higher than the organisations	1	1
Total	**10**	**14**
Dilemma is Flawed		
'Failure' is an inappropriate word	2	3
Wrong to link performance with failure	1	1
Total	**3**	**4**

Appendix 5j: Comments on Dilemma 10 Customers--Aspirations

Comment	Number	Percent of Total
Upside of Customers		
Customer comes first, is always right	14	13
Don't offer untested products	5	5
Customer is our lifeblood, will leave	3	3
Total	**22**	**21**
Downside of Aspirations		
Avoid fads	**1**	**1**
Upside of Aspirations		
Need to educate, convince customers	4	4
Have faith in the product	1	4
Products are going to get dropped	2	2
Change is inevitable	2	2
We need to learn about the new product	1	1
Encourage growth	1	1
Total	**19**	**18**
Downside of Customers		
Don't get left behind, stuck in the past	6	6
Lose in the long run if you give in to customer fears	1	1
Can be better to lose a customer	1	1
Total	**8**	**8**
Values are Complementary		
Both are needed	5	5
Give customer what they want, educate about new product	24	23
Educate, but let customer choose	5	5
Build loyalty as a basis for change	1	1
Give customer a limited time	2	2
Find out more, what customers really want	3	3
Experiment but don't lose customers	1	1
Show customer what hasn't changed	2	2
Show customer how new product is an improvement	2	2
Depends on variables: e.g. product, customer, cost, situation	10	9
Total	**56**	**53**

Appendix 5k: Comments on Dilemma 11 Get Work Out—Orient New Person

Comment	Number	Percent of Total
Upside of Getting Work Out		
There are deadlines to meet	1	1
Not an option in our area	1	1
Performance is a priority	1	1
Hire people who swim, rather than sink	1	1
Pointless to let performance suffer	1	1
Customer comes first	1	1
Teach new people expectations by sticking to standards	2	3
Total	**8**	**11**
Downside of Orienting New Person		
Orientation is a luxury, not practical in real world	**4**	**5**
Upside of Orienting New Person		
Orientation pays off in the long run	18	24
Builds commitment of new person	3	4
This is a priority	2	3
Orientation takes time	2	3
Good for the team	2	3
Orientation is a safety issue	2	3
People need the big picture	1	1
Total	**30**	**40**
Downside of Getting Work Out		
If we don't, there will be waste, low morale, poor performance	2	3
Could lose the new person as well, have to start again	1	1
Total	**3**	**4**
Values are Complementary		
Both are needed	5	7
As long as core business doesn't suffer	3	4
Well designed orientation shouldn't disrupt performance	8	11
Requires innovative thinking	1	1
Need to get the balance right	5	7
Performance can suffer within reasonable limits	1	1
Assign someone to act as mentor	1	1
Depends on variables, e.g. business, consequences, circumstances	5	7
Total	**29**	**39**
Mismatch between Espoused and Actual Values in Organisation	**1**	**1**

Appendix 5l: Comments on Dilemma 12 Instrumental—Integrative

Comment	Number	Percent of Total
Upside of Instrumental		
Learning is best when the purpose is clear	1	3
Have to pay the bills	1	3
Total	**2**	**5**
Downside of Integrative		
Wasteful, expensive to try to learn everything, people leave	**3**	**8**
Upside of Integrative		
Learning is part of the culture	2	3
There are always new situations arising	3	8
Learning is built into work	2	3
You can't restrict learning, can't predict outcomes	5	13
Infinite range of things to learn, no end to learning journey	8	20
Gives the best results	1	3
Learning processes may not directly lead to vision	1	3
Need a long term view of learning	1	3
Learning is continuous	1	3
Total	**24**	**60**
Downside of Instrumental		
Without learning people go stale	**2**	**3**
Values are Complementary		
Both are needed	4	10
Vision can encompass learning	1	3
Learning leads to the vision and changes the vision	4	10
Total	**9**	**23**

Appendix 5m: Comments on Dilemma 13 Localness--Aspirations

Comment	Number	Percent of Total
Upside of Localness		
Helps in the long run	1	2
Keep the local community happy	2	3
You are never bigger than the people you serve	1	2
Community is the reason for organisations	6	10
Community is the principle stakeholder	1	2
Total	**11**	**19**
Downside of Aspirations		
Ambition leads to excesses	1	2
Growth is not sustainable	4	7
Pointless striving for results you don't need	1	2
Total	**6**	**10**
Upside of Aspirations		
Best way of life for organisations and individuals	1	2
Success encourages others	1	2
Need to aim high, think strategically	8	15
Grow or stagnate	1	2
Total	**11**	**19**
Downside of Localness	**0**	**0**
Values are Complementary		
Both are needed	5	9
Localness is the basis for aspiration	2	3
Vision includes the community	1	2
Grow, but not at the expense of the community, not too fast	3	5
Encourage the community to grow	12	21
We belong to a global community	6	10
Total	**29**	**50**
Mismatch between Personal and Organisational Values	**2**	**3**
Dilemma is Flawed	**1**	**2**

Appendix 5n: Comments on Dilemma 14 Self Reliance—Knowledge Sharing

Comment	Number	Percent of Total
Upside of Self Reliance		
Individual responsibility	1	2
Important for personal success	1	2
Organisations are built on individual excellence	2	3
Total	**4**	**6**
Downside of Knowledge Sharing		
Loyalty isn't valued	1	2
Knowledge sharing is idealistic	2	3
Total	**3**	**5**
Upside of Knowledge Sharing		
Learn from others	2	3
Teamwork, synergy the basis for organisational success	11	18
Need to be systemic about work	1	2
Suits my personal style	1	2
Creates a supportive environment	2	3
Individuals leave, we need to capture knowledge	2	3
Everyone can be a teacher	1	2
Requires that rewards are shared	1	2
Total	**21**	**34**
Downside of Self Reliance		
Danger of cliques	1	2
Leads to destructive competition	1	2
Total	**2**	**3**
Values are Complementary		
Both are needed	18	30
Self reliance is the context for knowledge sharing, more to offer	9	15
Knowledge sharing leads to self reliance	1	2
Depends on other variables, e.g. context, organisation, others	3	5
Total	**31**	**51**
Mismatch between Personal and Organisational Values	**2**	**3**

Appendix 5o: Comments on Dilemma 15 Innovation--Mastery

Comment	Number	Percent of Total
Upside of Innovation		
Key to success	1	1
Basis for real learning, continuous improvement	4	5
Makes learning challenging and fun	1	1
Total	**6**	**8**
Downside of Mastery		
When mastery is achieved learning stops	1	1
Skills mastered become obsolete	2	3
Mastery is unnecessary	1	1
Mastery happens automatically	1	1
Total	**5**	**6**
Upside of Mastery		
Keep expanding your abilities	1	1
Gives assurance	2	3
Our work and our success is about doing things well	3	4
Total	**6**	**8**
Downside of Innovation		
Not everyone can be innovative	2	3
Innovation can mean never doing things well	1	1
Total	**3**	**4**
Values are Complementary		
Both are needed	24	30
Innovation the basis for mastery	4	5
Innovation needs to be managed	1	1
Mastery the basis for innovation	16	20
Depends on other variables, e.g. organisation, individual's role	9	11
Total	**54**	**68**
Dilemma is Flawed		
Wording of Innovation option too idealistic	**1**	**1**

Appendix 6:

Interview Transcripts

- **Max Kerr, CEO, Skill New Zealand**
- **Murray McAllister, HR Manager, South Waikato District Council**
- **Sue Arthur, Director—Community Services, South Waikato District Council**
- **Doug Ducker, General Manager, Pulp Division Pan Pac Forest Industries**

Interview with Max Kerr, General Manager, Skill New Zealand

PR: As you know I've been talking to people about the processes of learning, and about Skill NZ's journey towards being a learning organisation. [One SNZ staff member] asked: "Are you saying that Skill NZ is a learning organisation?" I said, "Well it depends on your definition of course, which is what my research is all about. If you went off my definition, unfortunately, no organisation would qualify" Some people are more generous. So, instead we've been talking about organisations that are on a learning journey, rather than...

MK: I much prefer that formulation to saying we're a learning organisation; it's a much bigger claim.

PR: Is there a meaning that you attach to the term 'Learning Organisation'?

MK: For me it's about the way in which we use knowledge and reflect on what we are doing so that we can improve what we are doing. So it's the process of being a reflective practitioner, that's what I think of. So that's about skills and the skills of staff and the learning staff do and all of that kind of stuff, but it's also about a way of thinking about the world, as in, "I know I'm doing this now, but I'm sure I can do it better. And let me just think about what I've done and analyse that and talk to other people about that and then come up with something new." That's what I think of as a learning organisation, which therefore means that it's not necessarily about people rushing off and doing some learning in a formal sense, in a study sense, although that may be part of it. I mean you may expect to see that going on in an organisation that was a learning organisation. It's a sign of intellectual curiosity.

PR: So some of the other things that you'd see going on?

MK: I'd see lots of people asking questions. I'd see people challenging the way we're doing things. I'd see people wanting to.... thinking in advance of doing something, how are we going to find out how this has gone? So kind of setting up the questions ahead of time.

PR: In some ways quite a research-oriented...or it sounds like you are describing an experimental...or rigorous experimentation.

MK: Yeah...well, depends how rigorous...

PR: Yeah, rigorous in the sense of, not just trying stuff...

MK: And not just looking back afterwards and saying, what can we think about the story, which is the anecdote, but thinking a bit more about, can we measure the difference we have made in what we have done. Could we have made a bigger difference doing it another way?

PR: Can you tell me about Skill NZ's history in terms of learning: why you started on this journey, and how you got into thinking about learning as an organisational process?

MK: That's really quite difficult. I'm not sure if the beginning was deliberate as your question might imply.

PR: Or how it emerged. Play with the question if you like.

MK: Well certainly one of the things that was quite seminal, I think, is that a number of us got ... Skill NZ to work and there was a lot of talk about that and what integration might mean. So I'd say if there was some intellectual idea to pin point, that's what it was.

PR: Was this about 1990?

MK: Yes, although I guess it would have been two or three years before we started thinking, what is this going to mean for the company? But I think we started working quite a lot with the ideas from about 1995, it might have been one of the people who was involved, and there were another two who were involved as well. So we workshopped it quite a lot and just asked questions about what that might mean. Quite a lot of people did organisational learning [university] papers, and they came back with even more questions, which really rounded the organisational behaviour. And so the starting point really was that set of ideas, and with discussion of those kind of ideas and talking about how might this work for us. One of the things that I found enormously attractive about this really is that it said this is not easy; it is complex. There aren't simple solutions; it's not just a matter of ticking the box. And that for me rang true. I'm very mistrustful of "ten point ticks" school of management book. And so that seemed...it seemed as though he was talking about an experience that I knew, which was that one about groping towards the future and just asking yourself questions as you go along. Rather than the model that implies that you've got it all sussed.

PR: And is that part of your reluctance to say 'We're a learning organisation.'?

MK: Well, the way that I described it, we're still not there. And in fact I don't know that you ever get there. It's more in the nature of a journey; it's not a destination. It's a little like – I do a little bit of work outside this job in the mental health area, and we talk a lot about the concept of recovery, which is actually a concept that has been taken from alcohol and drug counselling. And it's not about getting there, it's about recovering, endlessly, like you're always recovering.

PR: It's like, you're not a 'recovered alcoholic'...

MK: That's right, you're a '*recovering* alcoholic'. So, a learning organisation, for me, is about the present participle, *learning*, rather than using it as an adjective.

PR: As you look back, what are some of the milestones where you thought...were significant milestones in both the development of Skill NZ and maturation?

MK: Well I'd say the first few years were really years of getting ready, because we started essentially, with a group of people who are clerically oriented, and with a job that was a very clerical job. And into the first few years, we were about moving away from that kind of model, to something where people were required to exercise more of their own judgement. One of the big things that we thought a lot about in those early days, was the challenge associated with exercising judgement. So it was about the quality of the decision-making and the quality of the analysis and judgment which went into decision-making.

PR: Is it particularly in relation to funding?

MK: Yeah. Our funding decisions. When we started off the funding decisions were made by an external body that we serviced. That was the first big change: that they were gotten rid of and we took on that role. And I had never been an advocate for lots of rules, and instructions, because I don't believe they work, and so the approach that I wanted to see was an approach that focused on discussion about the principles and values. I always thought if we get those right, we don't need to give instructions. They'll make broadly the right decisions most of the time. And if occasionally it goes wrong, then that's just one of the things that we'll learn from. So I'd say that was probably the first step, as we started to think about, how do we get that kind of thinking into the organisation? And I guess associated with that is that face-to-face discussion is critically important. And so talking about the ideas rather than sending people written messages about them, is certainly...I normally think about that as the aide memoire after the discussion rather than the substitute for it.

PR: Do you recall particular discussions or particular processes you've developed to make that happen?

MK: There have been...I can't recall specific ones, there have been so many. I try to visit each region, three times a year if I can, and I will always go out with a theme in mind to talk to the staff about. And I tend to do them in a fairly concentrated period of time, so it's a month, or five weeks. And that's the opportunity to explore that set of ideas, and then to leave that there, and maybe the next time I'm going round I'll ask, well how's it going in relation to what we last talked about? So it's not as though there's one single event. That's just the style.

PR: In terms of milestones, you talked about shifting from the clerical...

MK: Yeah, well the next big upheaval for us was the restructuring we went through in 1994. That was really around the skills of the staff to do the job. That was what we said, we've actually got to get more focused on that analysis and judgement required to do the job effectively. That involved a lot of rebuilding after that. And that was the time when the Learning Initiative was introduced. That was a very deliberate attempt on my part to say, let's see if we can develop something that actually engages people in exercising some responsibility for their own learning, rather than thinking someone else will do it for you. And it turned out to be enormously successful. Even before than I had hoped. People got really fired about it. So that would certainly be a milestone event. I guess another one was the decision to set up the evaluation unit here, with a specific brief to try and encourage a culture of evaluation throughout the organisation. So again, more of that focused on asking questions and the idea that it should be something that is owned by everybody not something which is done by others.

PR: The evaluation unit owned by everybody?

MK: Well, the concept of evaluation owned by everybody. So we've got a central unit that does some evaluations, but actually, part of what they are supposed to do is talk to others about how everyone should be involved in evaluation in some way or another. It should just be part of the job description, as it were. In the same way that I think learning and personal development is part of everyone's job description. It's not an optional extra.

PR: And any more recent milestones or significant accomplishments? Are there any experiments you tried that didn't come off, that you might have hoped would, which may have also helped the process?

MK: Perhaps I can answer the question in another way. I was thinking recently that some of the biggest developmental leaps we have made have been, not ones that we've initiated, but ones that have been initiated externally, and have often...well, if they haven't caught us by surprise, then at least, taken us off in a direction we hadn't expected. That goes back, right to the beginning, and the setting up of the organisation. And then with the decision to ... trim the organisation, which meant we had to rethink our role. Previously we'd just assumed that we had to be out there doing stuff, pick up information as they got going. Well if we weren't going to be doing that, what do we do? So we had to rethink what kind of things we could offer that they were interested in. It happened again with the decision to set us up with Work and Income, the same kind of thing, where it certainly hadn't been something we had looked for. In fact we fought tooth and nail to try to prevent it happening, but in fact I think the organisation was stronger at the end of it, because of the rethinking about, what's our role here? What are we meant to do? How can we best secure what we think is important for the future? And it has also encouraged us to do a lot of thinking about what is important for us and what's peripheral. I think we're kind of going through that, that sort of exercise now, with the setting up of TEC. Obviously it wasn't something we thought would be a great idea in this form, but now that's what's happening. We've got to think about how we make the best of it? So it's the same kind of idea. So I think those kind of external challenges have been important in forcing us ...to help us reinvent ourselves.

PR: What sort of internal conflicts have you had to work through as part of the learning process? When have people not jumped in whole-heartedly, or been divided about the best way to proceed?

MK: I honestly can't think of too many conflicts like that. There have sometimes been tensions around the more formal study undertaken. I have a pretty relaxed view about that; I know that some of my colleagues have a more utilitarian approach. They are looking for study, which is totally related to work. My view is, anything that stretches the mind has a relation to work, really. I don't care very much about what it is.

PR: Or about the nature of learning and for instance, the learning initiative is quite self-directed and therefore not necessarily utilitarian. There's always potential for it to be applied differently in different regions, or by different managers. Has it given rise to any particular issues? The reason why I'm asking is that I'm wanting to explore the different meanings people give for learning, and so...I'm looking for situations where some people might be saying, hey we've got to do this, because this is what learning is, and others are saying, no really if we were serious about learning, we'd be doing that instead.

MK: No I can't recall anything like that kind of conflict. Can I just go back to an earlier question? You were asking about the things that mightn't have worked so well. One area that I have been disappointed in, where we could have done better is sharing ideas across regional boundaries. I think there is a lot of sharing of ideas and talking about what our experience means, within regional teams, but I've been disappointed with not being able to get more of that across boundaries.

PR: What do you put that down to? Do you have any theories?

MK: I think that part of it, actually, there is a consequence that is a slightly competitive feeling about how...from regions say, we want to be the best, or we want to share our ideas with others. Not quite as nakedly as that, and it is not something that I've particularly encouraged. I'm told from time to time that people do behave that way. They like to be the best, and so that's a downside of it.

PR: Are there any areas where you would like to have seen more progress in terms of how the organisation has developed? Areas where you perhaps have been impervious to learning?

MK: In terms of the way I've been describing it, I guess the area that I would have liked to see more progress has to do with collaborative work with other organisations, outside of this one.

PR: Such as?

MK: Such as other government organisations, or even with training providers. The problem that we have with the training providers is that we're writing cheques, so that establishes a relationship which you can't ignore. But it's not actually one which is necessarily constructive for learning, and I think the obligation is on us to try to make that work well, because after all we're the ones with the power. And I think there are certainly staff who have tried really hard to do that. But I think we could have done better than we have. I'd like to think that.

PR: And, when you are TEC, that is no doubt going to be even more challenging. Can you tell me then about challenges you see for the future?

MK: Yes, it's slightly murky really. One of the things that has helped us hugely with our development, is that there has been a lot of emphasis on individuals having the power to be able to get on and do their jobs, with help. So the learning initiative is part of that structural delegation, designed to reinforce that. And so people feel as though they got a lot of control over the work that they do, they've got a real capacity to make a difference. And I think those are essential ingredients before you can have people asking questions about well, how can I improve my work? If they don't feel that they can make a difference, then they're not going to bother asking those questions. And so one of the really big challenges for the future is for us to see if we can carry that set of values and that culture into the new organisation. That doesn't mean that everything should be done the way we do it in this business, that would be silly, but it does mean that I hope that there will be a similar view about the way in which individuals are taught to be empowered to operate. If not, I think in fact a lot of people in this organisation will say, I don't think I want to work here. So, it will be a very important part of the new organisation, how it responds to the challenge.

PR: It's in some way a challenge of identity, saying in the new situation with a new group of people, we need to have some connection, or coherence with the past.

MK: I'm really trying to be very careful to say, well, look it's going to be very different. It's not going to be Skill NZ with another set of partners; it is going to be a new organisation. And of course, it will be a new organisation finding its way. And so there will be a lot of learning to do. And that probably means that this issue of decision-making, initially, will be a bit more centralised. But I guess it depends on how quickly those things are sorted out. If it takes a long time to sort them out then I think that the culture that we've created here will not be able to thrive. Does that make sense?

PR: Yes, it makes very good sense.

Interview with Murray McAllister, HR Manager, South Waikato District Council

PR: What I'd like to do first of all is track the history of South Waikato's efforts with this learning journey. When did you see South Waikato District Council getting interested in learning? What were the roots of it all?

MM: I guess it was originally, perhaps, as far back as 1995, when the management team at that time decided that we needed to think about where were we moving as a team culture, as much as anything. It was probably fairly topical in the early 90s. How could we benefit as an organisation by working more as a team? We engaged a consultant to throw round some ideas about how we might do that, and we came up with the concept of the organisation being broken down into groups of teams. We actually decided that we would do our learning by way of teams of people who did their own learning. We came up with this notion that people should be put into groups, a cross-section of people, either - both, rather - across the organisation and up and down. So you've got senior staff, junior staff, and peers all mixed up there in learning groups as we called them. Those groups would meet on a regular basis, and literally thrash around things they wanted to learn about. They would either go about learning those things themselves, as a group, deciding how they were going to do it, or they would come up with projects they felt would both enhance their own learning, and projects that would help the organisation. I guess at the front end of it was really an acknowledgement that anybody that works for Council has got a certain amount of technical skills. What we were looking for as an organisation was a programme that backed up those technical skills, with particular emphasis on personal development. We wanted people to get together in groups and use their technical skills to enhance their personal development. And we did that, we created a list of competencies that we believed everybody who worked in the SWDC needed to have. And we came up with six of those competencies, which were developed by the staff. In these groups...we went away, we did the whole 90s thing, I suppose at that stage and we rushed off in groups to Mt Parongia for three days and a couple of nights, and the groups basically looked after themselves and did the whole gambit of providing their food and all the rest of it...and off we went, with the consultant's help, to Mt Parongia. With the objective being, let's thrash around what sort of competencies we think the organisation needs. We came up with half a dozen of them, and they were a variety of things, such as providing quality service, and how to communicate effectively, implementing plans, managing yourself. So there was a generic list of competencies that we felt everybody in the organisation should have. And we came up with a number of elements under each of those competencies that were designed to allow me to reach that competency. And I would actually aim to, if I can just take one of them, perhaps use the one we have: communicate effectively. We have a range of six or eight elements, under each one. Such as: the ability to listen actively, use appropriate language, produce clear, accurate correspondence, that type of thing. And what we were saying was, if Murray in his group of eight or nine or ten people, did he have this competency already, and if he didn't, how can we help as a group to get him to do that. So Murray would work on his active listening skills or his correspondence skills, and then he would literally be signed off by his peers in that group. I may stand up in front of my particular learning group and give a presentation on something, with the aim being that someone at the end was going to sign me off, and say "Yeah looks good", the emphasis being on that, not being on "well nah, you didn't do it very good at all."

PR: Tell me about the response to that.

MM: Pretty mixed. I think it would be fair for me to say, largely very positive, but there's no question that there was an element of opposition to it. Mainly, I guess from people who, if you take that scenario I just described, people who were anyway a bit wary of group situations and standing up in front of anybody, let alone their peers. So there was a certain amount of opposition to it. It really was quite radical, particularly in local government. I couldn't find any of my colleagues in any other organisations, in local government who were doing the same type of learning, where you were literally saying, look, once a month, ten of you need to get together and go wherever you're going to have your meeting and do it. So I had the opposition from managers of course, who were seeing their staff go out for, not really work, and all that sort of thing. And particularly from the areas of the organisation where time is money. We have a couple of business units in the Council, and their managers, if I go and say, "Can I borrow Fred for half an hour?" they want a number, you know, where do I debit this to? And that's quite reasonable. So there was that sort of challenge from management, who needed to actually give me all of their support, but they were really...it was a bit of a struggle there. And some staff, yes, they felt it was just a waste of time, which you'll always get. As somebody said, learning is voluntary, and so I wouldn't say it was a 100% embraced idea, but, it was largely embraced by most staff. What we found, and it's only in the last year or 18 months, is we've actually officially disbanded those groups. They were always only intended to be there for two or three years, and a lot of people were opposed to the idea of the disbanding. They had become such a close knit little group.

PR: And how often would the groups meet?

MM: Monthly. Most of them would meet once a month. Most of the groups felt that they could do that learning best by coming up with some sort of project that each of them could get involved in, and play their part in. But a project that was going, at the end of the day, to benefit the organisation as much as it was going to benefit them personally.

PR: Can you give me an example of an outstanding project or where things worked they way you'd hoped?

MM: I suppose one of them might have been something as basic as changing the district's signage for when you enter this district, the South Waikato district. We had these extremely ordinary road signs that were covered in green slime, just at every exit. And one of the learning groups decided that they would take it upon themselves to convince Council, at not inconsiderable cost, these things, to...Well it finished up with that group fronting a council meeting, with a power point presentation, with all the bells and whistles and noise that goes with that, and you had a group of people...yeah, who very clearly decided from, putting it down on paper to actually going out and banging the new signs into the ground after the council had signed off on the new road signs. So it was that type of thing that produced – well the signs are still out there – produced a real end result that was very tangible, they all felt they'd had a really big part in it.

PR: And less tangible, but a more lasting effect was that people had to learn, how to communicate with Council, how to work together to see through a project...

MM: The learning groups, and the process of going to Parongia...because not everybody did that, of course, once staff started changing it became impossible, frankly, for us to start finding enough people, or indeed was it worth the effort and money? So we had to sort of do mini-Parongias down here. But yeah, what the name of the game was was to change people's perception of how they learned, and that was really, really a dramatic success. A lot of people just had no idea that they were learning. I have absolutely no doubt, and I could name a number of staff now, who have learned and benefited so much from this programme it's not funny. When we started you would never have got, whoever, to stand up in front of anybody and talk, and as I say, I could name a number of our staff now who would very confidently waltz into a management team meeting, or indeed the council chamber, where a lot of us hardly see our elected members from one day to the next, and they could talk quite confidently to these people and I am absolutely certain that is a direct result of our learning programme, which they have picked up. Intangible it may be, except for somebody, perhaps like me, who knows what some of these people were like. They were just so, so...no way was I talking to anybody. So huge successes that a lot of people never even realised they were having. That's been a big plus. And hugely portable. At the beginning, I tried to sell it on that basis. What have you got to lose? a) Council's paying you to do it, and b) you can take it with you, you don't have to leave it behind when you go. Anything you pick up in this regard, like most learning I guess, you can take it with you.

PR: How has the Council changed as a consequence? What are you capable of now as a result of the learning process?

MM: I think for me the biggest change has been, without doubt, the way we deal with the main customers, the ratepayers. Part of the concept for the learning group was very much having every group work out a) their team style, using a particular Belbin model. The consultant who works with us is actually a certificated gentleman who deals in Belbin a lot, so we used the Belbin process for people to define both their team and individual styles. And I think a lot of people still talk about it, they still say, I am one of these or I am one of those. And I think where Council has benefited has been particularly, that the staff have been prepared to acknowledge, hey, I know somebody who would be good at that, and so they grab that person. Both our staff climate surveys and our ratepayer surveys, are just huge pluses in the way Council staff generally deal with the ratepayers out there. And I again have little doubt that it's this sort of learning programme that's helped that. So that would be the biggest plus I suppose. The perception the public has of this Council has changed quite dramatically. That's the main thing.

PR: Going back to 1995, as well as teams being a fashionable thing to work with, what told you that there was a need?

MM: Staff survey - the first major staff survey we undertook, was the main reason.

PR: Pre '95?

MM: Yes, it was just pre-95. Some staff indicated a desire...yeah, they felt we weren't gelling as well as we could in teams. But I think it was more a feeling, perhaps, of the CEO at the time, who...his concern was...

PR: Can I just check, the CEO felt at that time, or it was a different CEO?

MM: It was a different CEO, yip. The CEO we had at that time effectively started, well he was one of the driving forces behind this. Partly his perception...maybe a little bit vague at the outset, but we weren't sure what it was that was wrong, but we knew that the organisation needed something to, yeah, if nothing else, to jolly it up a bit. It just wasn't quite right, and I know that doesn't sound really clear, but I think it was that simple, you get a bit of a feel. Something's not quite right, what can we do about it? We knew the consultant that we used had been involved in this type of programme, only one other major place before us to be honest, and it wasn't a local authority. And we took a bit of a punt really, and decided, well...and when I talked about Parongia, what we did was send three groups there initially, and again it was very much a trial. We could have said at the end of it, we really don't know that we're liking this idea too much and canned the whole thing. The three groups who went were really enthusiastic about the whole thing and so we ran with it. Because not only the CEO at the time, but the other people involved in those first three groups thought, this is, yeah...this looks like something the staff could really run with. And most people did, so it was great. They ate a lot of food.

PR: Well since that time then, what would you say are some of the major milestones along the learning journey, for the organisation?

MM: I guess, we've changed it really...I suppose there have been two major changes since '95 when we implemented it. Going back to what I said earlier, that the intention of having our groups, and we'd set up nine or ten groups, the intention always was that they probably wouldn't be there after two or three years, because by that time the whole thing would have just been part of this organisation, it would just be the way we did things. We did things in groups perhaps, but we didn't have to any longer specifically name them, it just became part of the culture. They hadn't died a death by then, and our next staff survey very clearly started to indicate, that the learning journey needed something, and it was beginning to look a bit tired. You had groups who were struggling to get all the members there and one of the more common reasons was, well we don't do anything anyway. And so after that initial three years or so, a number of the groups were wavering a bit, and it wasn't right, it needed something. So we chose, actually it's the first time that John Hornblow became involved with us as well; we actually used John and our original consultant in tandem to run a series of...

PR: And they are separate firms, separate organisations?

MM: Yes, quite separate organisations, and we used them to...we decided the next phase of what we would like our staff to gain from, was to use some of the, again, those wonderful HR tools, I suppose, training tools, how to use Pareto charts and how to do all the good, the technical little helpers...simple as things like, learning about brainstorming, fish-boning, flow-charting, Gantt Charts, all these things that a number of the staff had never even heard of.

PR: So, quality focussed?

MM: Yip, well, exactly. We moved into the quality focus area. That was the second major phase, we decided...and of course, it's a bit like the old, "What is quality?" thing, of course that came out in a big way, but quality is the word. It was at that time, and it was still our previous CEO, again, led the charge on this and decided that...what we were really talking about was how can we use this sort of thing and some other learning modules...conflict management, all the good HR modules like communication. Going back to using a bit of what we started with, building on it by using the quality tools and at that time we created a quality team. It was the first time we'd ever had a quality team. And the objective of that exercise was we wanted people to pop up and tell us about examples of what they saw as quality service, or, at the end of learning about some of these quality tools, give us some examples of how you saw Fred or Mary use one of these wonderful tools they've learned all about to actually achieve some major change in the organisation. And so we set up a quality award, which I have to say, personally, I was a bit wary of. I was instrumental in getting rid of the photocopy paper cardboard box wrapped in some coloured paper and called a suggestion box that we used to have here, and it was just too seventies. And I was a bit wary that a quality award would be thought of in a similar way; that people would be just a bit cynical about something like a quality award. So we built up a quality team anyway, CEO-driven, real mix of people on this quality team. The object of the exercise was quite simply to get nominations from the staff and to sift through them and say we think that's the best one and we'll see what happens and we'll run with the idea of the quality award. Well, it's been a huge success hasn't it? Everybody loves it, and the quality team makes a point of acknowledging anybody who gets nominated. That's done personally, privately, rather than publicly but if Murray gets nominated then Murray will get a letter from the quality team saying, "you didn't win but..." and his manager will get a copy of that. The winner is publicly acknowledged in the CEO's staff meeting and we have a formal little trophy, a formal certificate and some vouchers or whatever, to go with it. That's currently issued four times a year.

PR: So there are four rounds of that process? It's a quarterly award?

MM: Yeah that's right, it's a quarterly award. Seemingly, that's what popped out of, and I guess that's what was the second major phase of the learning journey where we decided we needed to create quality culture. They were the two major ways we did it. We created a quality team, we undertook organisation-wide training on the use of quality tools, and yeah, the more basic models.

PR: Did the learning groups, did that process mesh with the quality...did nominations tend to come from people's own learning group or did projects come from learning groups...?

MM: A bit of both. The learning groups were still certainly behind a number of the nominations. They were still, however, yes, suggesting projects at the same time. So it did mesh, because we made a conscious decision at that time, again looking at the results we got from next staff climate survey, not to disband the learning groups. Most people had indicated at that time still they did not want those original learning groups disbanded, which was quite interesting, because a number of people had felt that...having been told it was getting a bit tired, you would have thought that they would have said, hey let's get rid of it, this has done its dash. And they didn't at that point. Still didn't. So the quality journey, for want of a better word, started at that time, I suppose. And that is still going pretty strongly, well, it is still there. The quality award is alive and well.

PR: And other milestones?

MM: The next milestone I suppose was the most recent change. The learning groups have been officially disbanded, and that's only happened in the last twelve months. And we replaced that with a project team culture, perhaps as much as anything. We had to acknowledge that we, a large group of people, this time led by our current CEO, sat down and said, ok well we can get rid of the learning groups, what's that going to do? Because a number of people still didn't want them to go. But overall, there was a very strong feeling creeping in that they really had done their bit. But what were we going to replace them with? If we just said, there's no more learning groups, where's all that learning going to go then? So we decided to introduce a culture of projects, and the idea behind the current process is that we look to staff generally...they can do it in groups, they can do it as individuals, recommending, still to the quality team, why don't we get a project going to look at: XYZ. The quality team, in a nutshell, looks at that and decides, that's not such a silly idea, runs it past the management team, and at that point, nominations are called for...we say to the staff, we're going to undertake this little project, would you like to be part of the project team? And we go from there. If we don't get enough nominations we tap shoulders and we have undertaken again...it's still pretty new...we've undertaken some project management training for staff generally; we're hoping to put...three or four of us, myself included, went on a little two or three dayer on project management, the object of the exercise being we'd come back and we'd try and pass that on to other people...but we're going to put a lot of people through a project management type training programme again. So at this stage, that's I guess the latest milestone. Sadly, for a lot of people it actually, formally finished when the original concept, those learning groups have gone. But they've been replaced with...going back to what I said earlier, there's undoubtedly...culture's there, through the place anyway. People still talk about the learning journey because they know what it meant, and a lot of them do appreciate what they got out of it. I'd still say some of them don't even realise the benefits they got out of it. And we've replaced it with something that, if I was really fair, it's not yet working as well as it could; I'm not quite sure why. I've got to talk to the boss about that. Some of the projects are just not quite right, and I think we were expecting something a little more dramatic out of it, than we've got. It may just be it's a bit early yet.

PR: What do you hope that the projects will give you that the learning groups didn't?

MM: I think from my point of view, the projects could be a little more substantial, some of the projects that came out of our learning groups, particularly towards the end, didn't necessarily benefit the organisation to a great degree. Having said that, part of the reasoning behind the original groups was personal development, as much as anything. But we felt that some of the projects were not...they were perhaps nice to do but they weren't necessarily...we'd got a little bit away from them being of particular benefit. And we felt that making it a more specifically structured management type programme, we could perhaps make those projects a lot more meaningful. As well as continuing to give the staff more skills, project management skills: pretty short supply, well, not a lot of staff have them. And we thought two things would come out of it I guess, a) we would finish up with a lot of staff being pretty skilled at project management, following a very structured approach to it, how do you run a project? At the end of the day, the projects themselves would be pretty useful.

PR: Is the term 'learning organisation' used? You do speak of having a learning journey; do you think of SWDC as being, or aiming to be a learning organisation?

MM: Yes we do, we certainly talk about it at a senior level in the organisation: the management team is pretty good at constantly referring to ourselves as a learning organisation. And I would though...again, I think to be fair, qualify that by saying that I don't know that the staff, generally, would think in terms of 'learning organisation'...as opposed to the way they'd think about 'learning journey'. So, yeah, there'd be a bit of selling to be done yet on the concept I think.

PR: And what do you understand by it? What does the term 'learning organisation' mean to people?

MM: For me I guess it means constantly finding better ways of what I'm doing now, I think would sum it up for me. Looking at finding more efficient ways of doing my job, not necessarily cheaper ways, but certainly more efficient ways, which hopefully would be cheaper ways. So I guess it's looking at what I'm doing and figuring out how can I do it a bit better?

PR: And it sounds as if it's not just people focusing on our own jobs, and how this can be done better, but having opportunity to talk to others who have a perspective, is what you're doing.

MM: The beauty of those learning groups was that they were up and down, and across the organisation, so we had people like, the treasury officer, in a group with a wastewater treatment plant operator. And we had people meeting people for the first time, who may have belonged to the organisation for the last three or four years each, and they'd never met [each other]. Their learning group has to meet, so that was one of the big pluses, was quite clearly, you'd find yourself sitting in a group with the CEO, and it goes back to what I said earlier, that a lot of these people wouldn't have said 'boo' in the first two or three, but when they realised they could actually say, "Chris I disagree with that." And Chris was the CEO, yeah, big plus for a lot of people. And of course it all needed a big commitment from the top and it got that commitment,...

PR: Tell me about the change of CEO and how that affected the journey that you'd been on.

MM: About two years ago, and it was most unfortunate because the previous CEO unfortunately died. Chris Hammer was our CEO for five years I think. He died in the October, and I think it was perhaps April or May in the next year before we had a successor. How did that affect it? Not very much at all, and mainly because our new CEO had worked for us before, but he hadn't in fact been part of the learning journey. He had left just about the time we were thinking of putting the learning journey into place. He went as far as Rotorua, and came back to us as our new CEO. He has constantly maintained that in the time that he was away, during that break, to come back it was just very, very obvious to him the changes in the organisation. He's also in no doubt that it was that programme that had brought about a lot of those changes. So, very committed to the programme of learning, and our new CEO is in fact now focussing on the issue of, if you wanted another milestone, it's the leadership styles...that's where we are right now, I guess, at the present day. That's where John Hornblow is again involved with us. So it didn't affect our programme in any way, adversely. It was only positive because our new CEO was extremely supportive of it.

PR: Chris had been here for five or six years, then really the learning journey started with his tenure.

MM: Correct. He was the driving force behind that. And that would be right, yeah, '95, yeah, that's when he kicked in with his support. Well it carried on as well as it did because of his support for it. It did falter, I have to say, probably from the time he became unwell, and that was of course some months before he died. And that's when I was really thinking about this, almost, being without a CEO, for nearly a year. He perhaps got unwell in the middle of the year. So, it did a bit of a falter there, but all things being equal, and all credit to the management team who were left: Acting CEO and other directors. There was an accusation or two that we were treading water for a little while, and I guess we were to some degree.

PR: Treading water generally, or with the learning journey?

MM: I think generally would be fairer, yeah. It suffered a bit from not having Chris, the original creator, driving it. It was easier perhaps for some of us not to support it quite as strongly when he wasn't there waving his arms and telling them to. But for me it was more of a blip than anything. And it gave us time to look at it and then the new CEO arrived. He got the feel too, straight away of course, that it had reached another stage, and he was getting the feeling from what he was hearing that oh, yeah, it was alright but... So he knew it was time for another look, and that's where we moved on again.

PR: You spoke, about some people not being immediately enthused by the programme, some people not being thrilled by the idea of the groups disbanding. Were there any other particular conflicts related to the learning processes that people worked through?

MM: If I take myself personally, first, one of my biggest learning curves over the years has been to stop worrying about the fact that I need to get 100% staff totally committed to everything, and that I've always got to remind myself about the old 80/20 rule; there will be people...I have to say I am forgetting about them, that's a problem I'm not going to spend time on any longer. So I guess for me one other major issue over the time has been one that I guess everybody has, there are *x* number of people who aren't going to be too interested in learning, and the problem that comes out of that end is that *x* number of them will still go off to the training courses, so you have a bit of conflict when Fred or Mary or Harry or Bill really aren't there to learn anything, they're just there to create a bit of agro. So that is probably the only major...that issue of how do you convince people of...like I said earlier, what have you got to lose here? We're offering you a portable skill, you can take it away with you, it'll cost you nothing, why don't you just come on and learn? Because we do...In some areas, we will say yes, we expect everybody to participate in this. And of course the moment you say that, there will be some people who immediately get their back up and say, what do you mean, you're telling me I will go to this training? I don't want to go to this training. I've done all that twenty years ago, or whatever. So, that's the only real challenge, to a) try and convince everybody that it's got to be good for you, and if you perhaps really have a problem with it, saying to those people, yeah, maybe you shouldn't bother coming anyway. And hoping that perhaps everybody else will not jump on that bandwagon and say, well, he doesn't have to go, I don't have to go. I think that it's fair to say that we generally have found very few people who are only there for the lunch. The vast majority of our staff acknowledge what I mean about learning...I'd have to say, particularly if they've come to us out of private enterprise...and certainly I undertake exit interviews with departing staff: very, very consistently, I receive nice words about our council's training programmes. A lot of people can't believe how much effort we put into it. And it doesn't have to be huge amounts of money, although we've had a couple of years where we've spent between 4 and 5% or our wage budget on training, which, by any standards, is pretty good, and the last couple of years it's more like the traditional 2.5% or something. But even so, it is a commitment that a lot of organisations don't make, and I've certainly seen a lot of staff leave here who, no doubt, have just loved it, and picked up all sorts of skills that they didn't expect to pick up. Perhaps particularly the young graduates, who come in...we might hang on to the them for a couple of years, and we've also got past worrying about that, just acknowledging the fact that yes, you are a training ground, and on they'll go. A lot of them have been particularly effusive in their praise, because they've picked up skills they've never imagined. They'd just come here and do a bit of cleaning or whatever for a couple of years and then go away. But in between time, they've picked up all this good stuff on quality tools and how to stand up in front of groups of people and...good stuff.

PR: And it's still early days in terms of...six or seven years is not a long time in somebody's career, so you might see some of them back.

MM: Yeah, we might, you never know. That has been one of my issues to worry about whether our staff turnover is too high and at the end of the day I don't believe it is. We're pretty much about the middle of the road in staff turnover.

PR: Are there any parts of the organisation, or aspects of organisation where you have seemed to pour in effort but not really gotten the progress that you'd like?

MM: The one failure of our training programmes, the biggest failure anyway, for me was that we haven't been very good at measuring just what achievements it has made. And some of that is a bit intangible. We can send, as we do, staff off to Outward Bound as a personal development type programme, and when the council asks me if it's worth it, I traditionally tell them, I wouldn't have a clue actually. But I do tend to suggest that they just observe Fred or Mary, and just look at the difference, and if they're exhibiting that sort of difference in their desk then chances are the ratepayer is benefiting and all the rest of it. So many areas, that people really haven't improved in is difficult for me to say in the sense that I don't think we've done a very good job of measuring that. We intend to address that very much through our current leadership development programme where managers are going to, not only be asked to nominate people...or rather staff who've said to us: this is what I want to be trained in, they will have to, not only talk to their manager about that, and get nominated for a particular programme, but right from the outset, the manager if going to have to say to me, or to whoever, this is what I expect to happen, and then of course three months later I'll be asking, well, did it? So I guess the short answer...my gut feeling would be yes, some of the training probably hasn't been too successful. But that, I think, you'd have to blame more on the organisation than the individuals. If we followed that up better, maybe we'd have found that it had worked. But if you haven't measured it too well, it's a bit hard to say.

PR: With a view to the future, in terms of the challenges you've mentioned in the leadership programme you're embarking on: tell me a bit more about the nature of that, how it's going to differ from the quality focus or the other bits that have come before.

MM: I guess this one, whilst again there is a similarity to the degree that we're looking at a personal development; it's a personal development as much as anything. What – again - that has come out of the most recent staff survey, and it's not the first time that has happened, there's been a suggestion by a number of staff that a lot of our leaders, our supervisors, still don't have some of the more basic skills in communications styles, in managing teams, in realising their role as a leader, rather than as just another member of that little team. The object of this exercise is to have people realise that they've really got to try and separate themselves a little more from being one of the team, to actually running the team and giving them the skills as a leader. We're looking for a consistency in that area; while we acknowledge that everybody's different, all the leaders are going to do certain things differently, we still realise too there needs to be some degree of consistency in how our leaders approach performance appraisals, for example, or recommendations for rewards, or whatever, and we haven't got that sort of consistency in some areas. Well the staff have been telling us that we haven't. And right down to almost, no, literally, some saying that it actually depends on which division I'm in: if I was in that division I would actually do better than if I was in that division. Now, to me that's as much about we need to make sure each that those two leaders in those divisions are doing...what are they doing so wrong that somebody...not wrong, what are they doing so differently that makes one person think, hey I'd rather be over there, under Murray, than over there under Phil. And we know it shouldn't be like that. So I guess we're hopeful of producing a consistency in the way our senior staff lead other staff. We are looking to nurture possible leaders – that's a big idea behind this. Succession planning has never been something we've been strong in. To some degree, in an organisation of this size, it is a problem. Who do we look to in the organisation to replace me, if I left? There's probably nobody, realistically. But there are some areas where we could be doing that and we're not doing it at the moment. We see that coming out of the leadership programme. I guess they would be the two big things that I'd be hoping for, a) consistency and a bit of succession planning here, finding who wants to be a leader. For example, we'll ask the question, we're hoping during this programme to involve staff to the degree where...who would be interested in being a trainer? About 20 staff put their hand up, yeah, I'd like to give that a crack, several of those I wouldn't let near anybody. So that's going to be a challenge, but again, the idea behind it was to develop...yeah, if we can get a group of people – it may only be four or five – who really do feel that they have got some skills in that area and we agree, by putting them through, getting a trainer to do a bit of the old psych test on them or whatever, what a plus! To have your own in-house trainers, an organisation *this size* to have their own...we can't just employ a trainer – I mean they won't even employ anyone to help me so they better not employ a trainer. Whether in reality you can do that, I don't know, because the same person, or people, still have the same job to do, so that creates its own challenges. It's another area we're really looking at developing.

Interview with Sue Arthur, Director—Community Services, SWDC.

PR: What was the initial impetus for the learning journey within the Council? Where do you think the journey came from?

SA: A consultant that had worked with us for a long time suggested that it might be something that we'd like to take a look at. We didn't really know anything about it at that stage but he'd been working with Shell in New Plymouth so we took a carload of people down for a couple of days and actually talked to them about what it had done for them and came back and sold it to the Chief Executive and the management team and away we went. It wasn't that easy obviously but a bit of different, quite a different thing to anything we'd tried before.

PR: So what were some of the differences that you noted, that stood out for you?

SA: Well when I first came to work here in about October 1991, that was two years roughly after amalgamation, and the Council was still fairly traditional in the way it managed itself internally, at least, and, you know, very hierarchical and quite conservative and, in terms of training, all they'd really done was look at technical training, never done any of the non-technical stuff at all before. If it happened, it happened because somebody might have seen a brochure on a course and thought "Oh, that looks interesting" and gone to it. So, you know, it was all about getting an engineering qualification or a typing certificate or something very technical, a library qualification, and we'd never done anything on stress management or conflict management or anything else like that before. So we decided that we'd do some work. Performance appraisal had never been anything that was here before and one of my first jobs, when I first came, was to work out the system and get it implemented. And we did a little bit of training as part of that. It was a complete shock to a lot of the staff who worked here to have training on how to manage people, how to manage the interaction between people, and how to resolve conflict, how to sort out a problem with a staff member if you'd had that. We had a couple of presenters, who are based in Te Awamutu, who were fondly named the Bobbsie Twins because they were so over the top compared to the very conservative, dry sort of training people had had in the technical end before. At least half the staff had never done anything like that before. We've come a long way since then, I think if we got them back now they'd probably be seen as old hat but that told me a lot about the learning style of the organisation.

PR: So, initial efforts were in that area of opening up the idea of training.

SA: And initially it was very patchy. We didn't start doing our corporate non-technical training until probably about three or four years ago and if it did happen it happened because people needed it to happen. I was probably one of the few in a management position that actually implemented it internally as a programme. I managed the Planning and Regulatory division that's now called Environmental Services, and that's inspectorial people, building inspectors and so on, and decided that it would be good to have a service type programme for them, so I did conflict management and stress management -- that kind of stuff -- over a period of time and again they'd never done anything like that before. They'd got their building inspector's qualification or their animal control qualification and hung it on the wall but never really done anything like that. So that was quite different, that would have been about '95, '96.

PR: Tell me about the emphasis on teams and how that developed?

SA: As part of the learning journey introduction here we decided that cross-functional, cross-divisional integration -- with a mix between the upper and lower levels -- of the organisation needed to happen because we were very bound up in the hierarchy. When I first came here in '91, I came from the private sector and I got a huge shock, as I knew I would probably. But, if you were the director of another division and I was one of the minions in another division, I sort of had to crawl my way up to get a message to you to make a decision, and that had to sort of filter down, or if we were both at the lower levels, of the front line staff, in two different divisions and I needed a decision from you on the other side, I had to go through my director, who went to your director, who went to you, back to your director again and back to my director and back to me. And we needed to break all of that down because it doesn't get you, a) very good decision-making and b) very quick and efficient decision making. So, I think one of the big agendas for us was to actually break down that cross-divisional thing. Of course we run a number of sites here as well. The geographic distances are not great but they're significant when you're managing an organisation.

PR: And how do you think that went?

SA: The main objective for the learning journey was to get people learning together, but, the big benefit that the staff saw from the surveys that we ran was it was cross-functional, intermingling if you like, of people. That they got to know somebody and they knew what they did for a job, and knew what that job entailed. And so, if they ever needed to refer to that person then they knew instantly which person that was going to be, and so there has been a huge amount more of cooperation across the divisions and in the geographical sites as well; a lot more than we'd ever get with just having a couple of social functions a year. And when we disestablished the system some people said, they really missed it, particularly people who worked outside of this building, because it gave them links with the people here. They felt more of a sense of a team and they knew what was going on in the organisation. I think a lot of people missed that.

PR: And what are you doing to keep it going?

SA: During the learning journey system, we had everybody involved in a team, from the person who fixes the sewers to the chief executives, so everybody was in a team. Now we don't have everybody in a team, but we look more for a team approach to solving problems. We had two project teams set up for the first year, so you've only got ten people in a team each, that's only twenty people involved. We've got 110 staff, so the other 80 or 90 people weren't really involved in a team, and they've missed that. It's been difficult to get the right people involved and enough people involved. So I'm not sure whether we should do something about that or just keep working with what we're doing. We have a few more teams established now to do different things, but it's certainly, by no means, everyone in the organisation. And obviously some people in the organisation are able, just by dint of what they do, to contribute to lots of different things, whereas some people can only contribute in a minor way to some things.

PR: And do you have any particular things in mind? How you might encourage involvement of everybody?

SA: Well, what we've done so far is work out project teams that are sort of corporate. The two we had to start with were both HR projects so they were across the organisation. What we need to do, and what we have been doing, is using the team approach a lot more at the ordinary, every day level. And the learning journey has certainly helped us to, to think about doing that. I mean, it's not perfect, by any means, but we do use a team approach a lot more. And even in terms of our public work as well. I mean, in our division here, there are a couple of fairly major projects with our community working parties, and it's really encouraged our staff to think about doing that with the public and getting much better value and viable projects, than just doing it ourselves.

It's a huge amount of work obviously, too, but you do get people involved a lot more, and that's really coming home to us now. So it's positive for the future, but it's hard work: actually thinking of ways to involve all of the staff. For example, I mean, we've got a lot of support staff, who, say, work in treasury and administration. It's difficult to think of ways that they can contribute, perhaps at a corporate level. We've certainly put people into those teams, but they've struggled a lot. And you don't want to exclude people.

PR: What do you understand by the term 'learning organisation'?

SA: A learning organisation? Where you're constantly trying to improve what you do. And using education, I suppose, as a tool to do that. Not learning for just the hell of it, but we're always looking for ways we can improve our services, and run better services, or different services, and it's, to me it's one of the tools in your tool box. It's probably a pretty key one, because, you know, your staff are...the old cliché: your biggest asset. But without training, people are not going to deliver things in a way that the public wants. If you're running a service industry, training is just a given as far as I'm concerned. We take a very low key approach to things here, because, you know, that incident I talked to you about, the Bobbsie twins, I mean, it just showed us, that if we went full-on with the fairly conservative kind of a stance you're just going to burn people off. We don't talk about, the 'quality' thing, we just start doing it. In the 80s and 90s, I was involved in with an organisation, and we started to get into the 'quality system', and there was a big launch, the big "Tah dah!" and the big, huge, amount of training, then it all kind of fizzled out. And we just didn't want to do that here. We just wanted to break it down into little bits, start doing the bits, and just work that into our every day routine, where we could. Without having the big fanfare and the big fuss, and "Look at us, what we're doing". We just wanted to get on and do it. So that's the approach that we've taken.

PR: What milestones really stand out, in the last ten years or so, that adds to the work that you've done?

SA: Probably the first one was moving completely away from just doing technical training, into realising that we had to look more completely at the kind of training we were giving people. Training had always been, as I mentioned, pretty ad hoc. When I came here, we used to get brochures through the mail, we still do, and people go "Oh that looks like an interesting course", and they go and talk to their boss, and the boss would look in the budget and if there's enough money in the budget and they felt inclined, the person would go. Really, whether it was that relevant or not. And nine times out of ten, it tended to be technical training. So the move away from just technical training was a milestone, and also the move to corporately trying to tie up what we were doing with where we were going. That's been a huge turnaround for us.

PR: Tell me about how you've gone about doing that.

SA: I think it was realising, with putting the learning journey in place, that's really the big key milestone in the last few years in terms of the HR department. And organisational development, not just personal, or individual development. It's a cultural thing - creating, or changing the culture. It's been the biggest catalyst to us, doing that, that we've ever had. As you would imagine.

PR: So, in regard to that, are there any other things that stand out as different, for a person starting now, at the Council, to one who started ten years ago. What would be some of the dramatic changes?

SA: In terms of training, I think we take a much more corporate approach and try and tie that up with our strategic visions. If you wanted the buzzwords, that's probably what we're doing now. And we weren't doing that before, ten years ago. That was just ad hoc, what the person felt like doing. I think we have a more open, much more open organisation. We are able to take risks more easily. I mean there's always fear of failure isn't there? But, there's a more encouraging environment now. Look, it's patchy, and we're not perfect and when I say these things, there are some places where it's fantastic and some places where it's not very good at all and there's a long way to go. But generally, that's lifted overall I think. We do a staff survey. We've done three or four now I think, and the results of that make you think that it's a very positive place to work in, where people are valued more than perhaps working in other organisations. Which is good. Much more access to decision-making: where things affect you. And I think, that's partly been the learning journey, but also partly the implementation of our performance, goal-setting, and review system that we've got to. So there's much better interaction with people and their supervisors. And less barriers, far less barriers across the organisation. There are still some barriers there; it's probably more at a personality level now, than the institutional level.

PR: Are there any aspects of organisations where you feel there are some frustrations, like where you've put efforts into change, but you haven't seen what you'd like?

SA: From an HR point of view? The only one really is the frustration that when people do courses, often they come back to work and all that learning is left at the course. So, continuing on the learning afterwards. But that's a generic problem, you'll get that anywhere. It's costly frustration, and even when people are open to going and doing a course on something, it might be interpersonal skills, or service ethic, or something, and they get back to the office and they know that stuff up here, but it's not ingrained into their every day work, so, I think one of our challenges will be to try and get better value out of continuing that on, after the training and learning has actually happened.

PR: I guess that's one of the advantages of the learning groups...

SA: Definitely. Yeah, definitely.

PR: Do you know what differences you'd see?

SA: We did do some training on quality tools, you know, some of the Pareto work, and fish-boning and stuff like that, and we did that by taking two people out of each of our learning groups, about ten learning groups at that stage, and they went to a course on that particular activity and came back and trained the group. And that was really good, and then some of us, about a year later, did refresher training within the groups as well. The disadvantage is that, when you get back to your desk, you're not constantly looking for ways to use that training, you know, I'd, a bit like I said before, I'd just worry that you spend a lot of money and time on these things, and - human nature - it's easy to just go back to your old habits when you're in your former environment. That's something for us to work on in the future. When we do we'll patent it.

PR: So, that would be one of the key challenges for the future. Are there any others that you see?

SA: Well we're heading into a leadership development programme, which is through the staff surveys, it's been a constant reminder that we don't really have leadership skills in the organisation. And if we do they're there by accident really, and they're there because people are tuned to being that way. When I came here in '91, people were called supervisors, so, if you're my supervisor, you make sure I do my job, and knock off at 4:30. Then we developed it a bit into a manager role, where you know, taking on performance, goal-setting and review. Now we're moving more into looking at what leadership skills we actually need in our organisation. There's an absolute dearth of them through local government. And people don't value them either in local government, which is a bit of a shame.

PR: So how do you see the leadership role differing from management?

SA: Probably a more strategic view of where each of those people are going in terms of… in terms of where the organisation is going. So "how do I fit in here? How can I help my work group towards where the organisation wants to go?" Much better processes for dealing with staff, staff working as teams, yeah, and more individual development of people at a management, instead of supervisory level.

PR: So how do you see community service as changing over the next three or four years, in terms of the learning journey in this particular department?

SA: Much more emphasis on team work. And more cooperative or collaborative teamwork, with external organisations, people out there in the community. We can make a much bigger effort out there. That's a bit vague I suppose, but…

PR: Well tell me about the work in the past. Have people tended to be internally focused, rather than strategic?

SA: Yeah, yeah that's right. If you'd come 5 or 10 years ago, to a parks section, the Parks department, you'd have seen a manager there, monitoring the grass cutting, possibly even out there, checking it up, checking it up, that sort of thing. But, he would have been out there, and worried about whether the weeds were sprayed and stuff like that. Now, the parks manager here, he's just finished a very big project which has involved developing a walkway up one of our most beautiful rivers, and he's done that in conjunction with a community working party which is still really under the umbrella of this Council, but has involved mostly people who live out there. The chairman of the working party is a guy who lives on the river, it's got staff on it, it's got councillors on it, it's got the public out there, and together they've got this thing going. They've done a terrific job of it, and will keep it going for the future, in terms of maintenance and future development and using it for education programmes and so on. If you'd come five or ten year ago and talked to the former parks manager about that he would have fainted. You know, that just wasn't in the role that they had, so things have changed a huge amount. And I believe that the learning journey, that programme that we've had, has encouraged people to think about collaborative work instead of just doing things on their own.

PR: So both collaborative within the Council…

SA: …and externally. For us, externally, for us, it makes a big difference. I mean, there would have probably been hundreds of people so far, up the walkway, doing planting and doing maintenance work and so on. And a huge commitment from the community…keeping it going, and keeping it looking really beautiful. They're very proud of it. So, I think the team approach is really helping us to look at how we can do that out there in the community, and do it well.

PR: That's excellent.

SA: The other really big benefit for us out of the learning journey is it's given us a good reputation internally, but it's given us a really good reputation externally as well, amongst perhaps local government staff. Not just our community, but in the wider community through New Zealand. We're not a very big authority as you've probably figured out, we're under the average size for a local authority. I actually think that makes it easier for us to implement programmes like the learning journey, because, I can't imagine, say, Auckland City doing it as easily as we've done it. It used to be a problem, Tokoroa was a bit of a wild west town in the 70s and 80s. If you were somebody from Auckland or Wellington or a big city, it was never seen in a terrific light. But when I recruit for jobs now, I'm really impressed by the range of people that apply for jobs, and my latest recruit at the senior level was our District Libraries manager. She came to us from Auckland, and came down here and we went and got a really good feel for the organisation when she was being interviewed, and went round and had a look round the town, didn't see too much that displeased her. When she came down here, in her first week, she was amazed at the sort of organisation at work compared to, say, Auckland City where she'd come from. So, we have lots of those stories, not just from people who come to us from other organisations, but, when we go to conferences and seminars and things...you're always comparing yourself aren't you? People come back with horror stories of how they're treated in other organisations not too far from here.

PR: Do people move between organisations?

SA: Yes, there is a bit of movement. And our problem here is a lot of the time with, say, planners jobs and some of our engineering jobs, we get people coming straight from Uni to here, and they'll stay for a couple of years. We train them up, and then off they go to some flash job somewhere else. And that's fine. We accept that now, but part of the reason why we're attracting a good calibre of staff for most positions, is we have a good reputation, and that, to us, is just so important. I've seen organisations, that have had problems recruiting good staff. It sends you on a downward spiral and you can't seem to get your way out of it. Good staff mean a good strong organisation, and good services for the community.

PR: And what specifically do you think is the attraction?

SA: It's the good organisation. We seem to be a good organisation to work for; we have a real family environment here now. If somebody's in trouble - we've had staff who've had cancer and had family crises - people rally round, they don't just leave them to fend on their own. There are lots of things that we haven't done that other organisations, other Councils have done, for example: we still have three days off between Christmas and New Year, and that's counted as extra leave. So, people have three and a half weeks leave here, instead of just the three. A lot of councils have to negotiate now, and get it out of their contract, but we see that as something extra we can give the staff, and I think people appreciate it too. So we're seen as a good employer. It's really important for us recruiting to a place like Tokoroa, which we feel hasn't really had a great image over the years.

PR: Just after I talked to Murray about the involvement in my research there was the announcement at Kinleith about the layoffs, and that must have affected both the community generally and the Council. How do you think the Council responded, or how has the learning journey affected this?

SA: I think because we've had the learning journey, people know each other better and so we know, for example, that there are probably people who have got partners who work out there, or are involved with families who work there and get their livelihood out there, and it's made us care a bit more about that kind of thing. Definitely. We're a bit sensitive to all those issues now, more than we used to be I think.

Interview with Doug Ducker, General Manager, Pulp Division Pan Pac Forest Industries

PR: What I'd like to do is get a sense of the timeline, as you see it, how and when you got interested in learning issues?

DD: A two minute background in a sense. The company today is coming up to thirty years in operation. The first twenty years of that were really developing the industry in the process, particularly as...where I'm related which is in the pulp division...so I'm only talking about here our pulping business as opposed to our saw-milling business. But there's two or three unique elements associated, one was that we were a brand new company as of 1973 so there was all the trauma associated with the structuring of that. Secondly, we were a joint venture company, which incorporated, at that stage, Japanese ownership, in the sense of shareholding being balanced under legislation today. Although in principle, the management contract was purely aligned to New Zealand control, in those days the line of Carter Holt Harvey as they are, or as they were, the Japanese influence was pretty limited apart from provision of technical support and observing what we did. Management processes and the training processes of old really related to pretty heavy fire fighting type issues dealing with problems that arose at the time within the plant. Manuals were established in the first stages, the updating and maintenance of those manuals was very limited, staff turnover for the first three or four years was quite high, but then showed stability. The operation incorporated a lot of the history that had evolved, in the sense of the major pulp and paper industries in place at the time. Example of that were Carter Holt Harvey, or New Zealand Forest Products, as they were known then, as a major industrial activity, and also the Tasman pulp and paper being Kawerau based activities. So things like wage rates and pay structures came into place in that way. In the ensuing period over the twenty years, given that I've been involved pretty near for 28 of the 30-odd years of the company in various levels of the organisation...I've been able to watch and participate in different ways I guess. And as we've got out of the troubleshooting areas and got onto more routine elements, two things were then evolving: One is that we were developing a very stable workforce. The average service life of my operators today is probably around 18 to 19 years of that 30-odd year service. What we didn't have was a renewing situation to any great degree. Given in that time we didn't make any major changes. What we effectively had therefore was a bunch of operators and engineering support staff and to a higher degree, in fact, supervisory staff, that were becoming very cast in their moulds. Capable of handling what was necessary today.

PR: When did this start becoming apparent to you?

DD: It was evident to me I guess...In my first ten years I was very technically oriented in the sense of process engineering and quality control and process development sort of areas. In '83 '84, so ten years in, I'd picked up the production role, in those days the role was production superintendent, and it was as I looked at that I'd really felt that I was not able to manage, given that things were being managed despite me, if you like.

PR: By the operators themselves?

DD: Yeah...by the collective environment, literally by the culture that was there. It was still very strong, not that that's necessarily changed, there's still a strong union orientation amongst the workforce in particular. And at the same time I'd become involved with the evolutionary processes associated with the changes in the qualifications framework. Haven't got the dates right, but around the late 80s, that started to shake down as being another way of integrating and heading towards operator competencies. I started to take a fairly active role in the FIT, the Forest Industry Training. I went through various roles there, in terms of active in the committee through to chairmanship of the SOC for several years. I was subsequently involved as a board member of FIT, as the Pulp and Paper Industry representative. That took me into a training area that I really hadn't given much thought to before which was again industry based. The major stepping stone was probably however the late 80s or around 1990, I was able to pick up the role of Pulp Mill Manager, as it was at that stage. And that now gave me the capacity to affect change in a way that I couldn't previously. Given that the manager prior to me was relatively comfortable with the status of things as they were. From about '90 we had moves from the workforce to modify the way in which they worked and we moved from what had been a four-shift roster to a five-shift roster strategy. And effectively developed that into a process for effecting other changes. In reality it's been a 15 year process given that there's probably a year or two left to bed this thing down. We need to define what this thing is. What the nature of the change has been at the very fundamental level is to take out hierarchy in the system. Where we traditionally would roll from a general manager to a mill manager to a plant manager, day superintendent, shift superintendent, leading hand, and the like. We had all that hierarchy in the system. Today that structure is very flat, it's basically myself as general manager, a coordinator, specific jargon to eliminate the manager concept as we managed the change, then the operator. Today we have the operators taking high cost decisions on occasion. Energy management can mean the shutdown of the plant for a period of time to ensure we don't incur penalties that can be up to $20-30-40,000 an hour. Those calls are being made by the operators. Historically that would never have happened, so we've managed to effect that change. And a lot of that's happened by changing the culture of the operators, and their vision of themselves: their confidence in themselves. They were always capable of making decisions but there was someone else to do it for them, particularly the shift supervisor, and the like, and therefore didn't participate. So that affected a need to bring in change in terms of the learning processes.

PR: What learning has been involved for managers?

DD: Big culture shift to management level not the least been myself, generally known to be hands on, generally known to be close to the chest, not a good delegator. I guess I haven't perceived myself as being an out front leader. Historically no changes where made on machines unless they were endorsed by the supervision, shift supervision, or day supervision, or general management level, on occasion. Today the operators make the calls, they'll take the plant up and down if they need it for maintenance or need it for operations. The electricity crisis of last year, which this company was very vulnerable to, at one point we were looking at a cost overrun of around $10 million. Our gross margin was at risk. And we effectively managed that. Initially I took direct control of the way in which we managed the electricity situation. But in the space of six months, facilitated a little bit by support technology that we're putting in place, with regards to information, to give the operators the full management portfolio if you like. So in six months, we've translated that right through. Control moved from me through to the day superintendent, which is Rodger Jones, and Rodger has now got that fully downloaded now so the operators are doing that and I don't give it a thought.

PR: So each operator can judge his own electricity use?

DD: Yeah, he can monitor the electricity use. He's got some understanding of where our constraints are and what we might see as thresholds, because we haven't given them full financial control. But in essence, they are now delegated and more importantly, they're accepting of the delegation that they can take responsibility...not necessarily accountability. Accountability still sits with me overall and Rodger next and the operator next. But they take the responsibility for doing that. Whereas, historically we've had operators who wouldn't have gone near such a decision making process. So in the context of evolving the learning processes, that's been, for me, a measure of the success of the process.

PR: And you've consciously, or deliberately used the national qualifications framework to drive change amongst operators?

DD: It was an opportunity that presented to get the operators thinking about what it meant, because as well it was being driven within the industry. We had five or ten people involved in the establishment of the standards, the content of them, what the test elements might be, what the assessment bases might be, and the like. So there was a direct way that could be achieved here, and it provided a stimulus for change. We haven't gone as far as some others have done, which is to say; "Unless you get to a Level 4 qualification you won't receive this payment", for instance. We haven't linked it heavily into the pay scales, or anything that major, because, it's something that's an adjunct to that. It's a bit like most motivators, good training means you can go home knowing you've done your job well. I'd rather that was the driver rather than it being the means by which "I can get another $10 a week in my pay packet".

PR: My impression's been that at an operator level the learning efforts have mainly been working with individuals on their technical competence, whereas the managerial challenges have been working together on their collective or team skills.

DD: Yeah, there's probably a couple of things that have occurred. One, the shrinkage of the operators, which gave a bit of a facility for those who wanted to opt out to do so - effectively we've had about ten redundancies with four new positions created out of that redundancy situation – it gave an opportunity for some to opt out of the process, given that they weren't ready for it. An example of that was the production superintendent. At the end of the day, he just felt that he wouldn't fit with the new mould that we were creating. So that eased that pain in a way, which could have been for him or could have been for us in the development of the process. At the operator level I'd say we've got about a 70 or 80% hit, we've lost a couple of guys. We'd much rather still have them with us, but they had their own reasons for taking that opportunity. But overall it was a pretty reasonable value. The situation broadly was one where we had pretty good technical confidence in our people at the more senior levels, as it then evolved. We had good operating capability at the lower levels, but we didn't necessarily have all the technical competencies there. And still struggle with one or two; there's one or two individuals. As this process highlights, they need more time or surprisingly have got 19 years on a roll forcing their way through in a manner where they managed, but didn't really know what they were doing. Not in the extreme, they didn't understand the picture. Having got past that, where we're at now, it's more in the developing of the team building and the working with individuals at the operator level and this engineering switch we've made now is certainly quite challenging in that respect. Yeah, so there's a developing need there, to develop the interaction. The interesting thing that's evolving now is this integration of the engineering group into the smaller teams. So before we had, if you like, the Pulp division fitters and the Pulp division electricians, and now we've got fitters and electricians who are primarily responsible for processing or refining or utilities. They'll still come together as a bigger team to support major maintenance work and that sort of deal. So there's a need to improve those sort of interactions, and that's something that's evolving. So the interpersonal skills and things like that are something where we've got a degree of focus on. There's a lot of reluctance. A lot of people don't recognise the need for it, have a lot of difficulty sitting through a training session in it and seeing the collective relevance of that. So that's a challenge that is probably for me, still out there, and how we effectively manage that. Broadly speaking however, the very, very pleasing thing at the end of the day on this one, is that we have in the last three or four months, despite all of that change process that's gone on, we've got the plant, without substantial modification, running harder, running at record production levels and maintaining quality standards that are tighter than we've had in the past.

PR: There's no indication that you're over-extending your capacity?

DD: No. Collectively within the teams, with a bit of caution in one area but that's because it's a little clouded. Basically people are looking now to see, well, "We can do better than this". So where five years ago I was probably comfortable, to have a demand for about, for example, 220,000 tonnes of output from the plant, and probably run it on a basis of utilising that 220,000 tonnes capability. Today we've committed ourselves to having the plant running at 260,000 tonnes capability and you're in around 250,000 a year out of it. So with all of that change, and those processes going on we have got the added bonus that we've got those improvements coming through. That for me, in a way, is testament that we haven't necessarily got it wrong, I'm not saying we've got it all right either.

PR: I was interested in you saying that you always felt that it was a long term, fifteen-year process and I guess you've got three or four more years left in that? What's left? What is there that still needs to be done?

DD: The areas that I would feel are probably still needed wrap-up I guess is probably the bedding in of the relationships between the operators and the engineering groups. And getting to the stage where certainly 80% of the crews are effectively what I would call on-line managers. That's about them getting to fully understand all the key elements. Some respond differently to others on that, some don't even recognise the magnitude of decisions they're taking or the consequences of the decisions they're taking. We still battle in many ways in things like safety, in performance. We don't have a bad safety record within the Pulp group, it's pretty limited levels, though a bit of rebirth of injuries lately, pretty minor nature - it's the back twinge that has someone off 48 hours. The major burns from blasts of steam or hot water or hands crushed in rollers, we don't see any of that today. Thankfully. But it's getting them to pick up that aspect of the role that I see as being important at the end of the day. The core concept that I always had here was one that I really saw the managers of the process being the process operators. Being on the job, on the spot and they could take the decision. Ultimately they will have, and can have that capability to make decisions. So it's that bedding in of that. Ideally I'd like to have people primed and ready for something like a new development process which will give them that new thrust, which takes us through another three or four years. I don't know how you keep the momentum on these things going, but otherwise we'll just bed in where we are and be level.

PR: And you'll be back where you were...

DD: Yeah, or someone else will come along and say "How have you allowed this to happen? Why don't you do this or that." We probably would argue that we pin ourselves down too tight. We now need to expand out in a few areas to make sure that people get appropriate time to work on some of the development of these tasks and roles. In terms of the driver from my own perspective of effecting this change, it probably came from concerns that I had about what the effect of hierarchy was, while the principles apply in that you will delegate down a chain from manager to superintendent to supervisor to foreman and that scenario, the reality was that each of those levels tended to block because there would be an element of protection of power or authority. While I haven't pulled the book out, it would be interesting to do that and have a look and see if I've done what I was meant to do! It was more a case of, I guess I saw that as one element, and it's a bit of the Senge work and the bit of your own work and we went through the other – the TWIs and all sorts of things, training within the industry, setting up job methods and playing with job descriptions and playing with names. At the end of the day, it's the people who make your business, and it's getting the people's thinking right that's the whole thrust of what we're trying to do. But in the manner that they don't feel that they are at risk, or their jobs are in jeopardy.

PR: I was reading recently about some of the times when reducing hierarchy has gone wrong, and it's typical happened within organisations where you have a hierarchy of six or eight levels where levels don't listen to the people underneath them anyway. Reducing it to three levels of people who aren't listening to each other doesn't work. You actually have to do both things: change the behaviour of the people so that they really do listen, as well as changing the hierarchy.

DD: Well certainly a challenging thing as an example, this interview is in an office in the central complex of the site, where my responsibilities are outside of this office. I only have about three of my team around me down here. And in part that was a conscious withdrawal, certainly the initial part, in the sense that I knew if I stayed on the plant with the team, I wouldn't divest. Given that when I talk about a three tier operation with supports around it, if I was there, I would still be active in the immediate area, and so it was a case of withdrawal to allow the guys to get on with the day-to-day, week-to-week activities that they take responsibility for. And I think in part that's a pretty necessary element. And there's still a risk of, from time to time, reentering the physical territory, and as much as I think it's right, there is a diverse separation because my role has got to be far better developed into the strategic and development issues, and the development of the plant and its production output. What we've done, over the last ten years is expand the activity of the company, of the Pulp activity, where we traditionally just produce pulp for the share holder on a pretty simple basis: standard product, single grade, single customer effectively. We've expanded it out to take the plant into process areas it had never been into, making product they'd never made, and subsequently sold that product into markets in China, and a little bit into South Korea. Still small volume stuff, but with a developmental prospective. Again, all of that's been picked up by the new crews very effectively

PR: It's interesting, a couple of things, one is: where you feel the major conflicts have been as you've tried to help the organisation evolve in this way? What have you seen the major battles or conflicts that you've had to work through?

DD: The natural one is change: what's in it for me? And I think that was a critical aspect of allowing time for people to come on board, in one or two instances, we let time evolve to the stage where guys were saying, "Lets get on with this". We were talking about it long enough. There's been a little bit of surrounding support groups being very cautious about it. There's been the natural caution of a strongly unionised environment. We are still unionised, with relatively strong, certainly stable leadership, the same leadership now as there was before, as far as the union groups are concerned. There's only two unions we are dealing to in this area, but they're still relatively strong. But there was a caution there, in the sense of, we'll do what we need to do and that wasn't blocking it, but the interesting challenge in this area and there are other ones for us still, while it's been advocated as being the thing the worker wants, the worker doesn't really want a bar of it, he just wants to get his pay and get out of here, safely, on time and have a simple life. He doesn't want to get involved. He's happy for the boss to be accountable for it all, he doesn't want to get involved in it. And it was a similar thing in training. You could argue it's great to know how paper is made and what affects paper's quality, but at the end of the day its "I run a refiner that turns chip into pulp and as long as it can do that bit alright and I don't need to know any more". There's still elements of that among the old hands and some of them we won't push – there's no point. I don't see any point in that, we can tolerate that, given that we're interested in the collective output of the group, it's not necessarily too focused on individual output. There are some dangers if you do that. So we haven't pushed that too far. For example we've talked of the issue of performance management, that's part of the ongoing process of the establishment of need for forward learning, collective learning. And within my own team, they didn't like it. This was a company-wide initiative, generated by HR developments if you like, three years ago, or thereabouts, we really collectively rejected the whole process, "We're doing fine thanks very much, we don't need any more systems to come in over the top of us". But, there's a recognition, which is a similar element of the change process, and it could be something to be had out of this that...let's work with it and let's see where we can develop advantage from it. Resistance of change is a key thing; unions to a smaller degree; support from other areas, which again is more of a resistance, a natural one. I was fortuitously left with a pretty open hand on it from my own boss, who is the managing director. In that sense he was quite comfortable to let me evolve things as they happen, and still continues to do so pretty well. Independently another division has gone through various changes which incorporated, in that time frame we were working, major capital work, rebuilding the mill, that's $50-odd million spent over there; a restructuring of their work to some extent, still initially within the hierarchy. Now quietly, and much to our amusement, we're seeing that hierarchy being eliminated, and they're looking to delegate more directly to the operators, using a different learning process and interacting with us to some extent.

PR: Are there areas of the business where you feel it's been a real effort to bring about any change? Some things have obviously gone very well, but are there areas where you feel you have poured in effort and not seen much value?

DD: Nothing comes to mind directly that says, well we didn't get there...The twist, talking of learning organisations and the development, the twist for me is one that I'm quite accepting of but extremely frustrated by is that one of the key elements was the development of the coordinators. A key goal in all of this was to facilitate the development of those people. So the focus before we started off with someone looking after refining and processing and then an opportunity presented itself—well, in fact a need arose—to move some of the coordinators around, to other roles, to utilise their skills a bit better, and we in fact brought one coordinator in to look after two of the focus groups we'd established. One of the other coordinators had embarked on an MBA programme, and subsequently was attracted outside of the organisation. And then the coordinator who took the dual responsibility, embarked on an MBA programme and subsequently *also* left the organisation. But in part that's something I'm quite accepting of, we've got to accept that we'll get attrition. One of the difficulties of the horizontal management is that you don't offer career steps that people look for; you can offer the job diversity and the work satisfaction, but you don't necessarily give them that picture. And so therefore for those individuals who are perhaps strongly career motivated, as are people I've got with the organisation now. We had the situation there where they saw the opportunity to move elsewhere and progress elsewhere and that's excellent. I have a proper regard for that. But it's painful at the time when it happens.

PR: We better wrap it up; we talked a little about learning organisations, what do you understand by the term? I mean people have all sorts of different ideas.

DD: The core principle is back to those broad objectives that I probably outlined earlier, in the sense that I don't perceive that we are a learning organisation per se, although that jargon has been used in terms of what we're doing, the courses that we're undertaking and all of that nature. But essentially the key to the businesses is people, we can have a plant, but people are the key and the critical thing is to have the people in the frame of mind that renders them adaptable to the changes that are inevitable. The only constant thing we're going to have is change. Having people adapt in a manner that they can adjust and respond to the change—that's what the organisational structure and cultural developments really been focused on. And it's about, therefore, having people understand that they are playing key roles, their position is one that is necessary and that the contribution is valued, that can be seen in support directly to them and development of their own skills where it is appropriate – something we've had to adjust to. You can't turn them all into clockwork managers. At the end of the day, at least 80% of the work is routine, day after day punching out pulp bails or punching out wood chips or whatever is necessary. But it's getting that other 20% to turn into something far greater, so you truly end up with 110% output, which – as I use the example – is reflected in a production capacity of 240-260,000 tonnes, without really changing the plant, just changing the way the plant is operated and managed and supported. It's important in that if you've got an overview support that's facilitating that to happen, which needs a degree of tolerance – we haven't dared go back and work out the dollars we spend on training, on a per head basis, on a per ton basis. It's more an acceptance that this is the way we're going to do this business at the moment. And we'll allow for adaption to occur. Just lastly for your own comment, we have continued with coffee sessions, and that has mixed reception from time to time, and mixed attendance from time to time, but targeted on a fortnightly basis and just getting together within the coordinating team and talking about issues that seem to be relevant to today. It's been one of looking around, adapting to inputs that are generated – being selective in what you pick from it – and adapting them into the process.

Appendix 7:

Method of Triads Validation

Appendix 6: Method of Triads Validation

In order to validate the research design, the dilemmas used in the study were analysed using what is known as the Method of Triads. This method is designed to test the degree to which the two items making up each of the dilemmas are perceived as opposites. Ultimately this part of the study was unsuccessful. A variation on the procedure may be used at some time in the future.

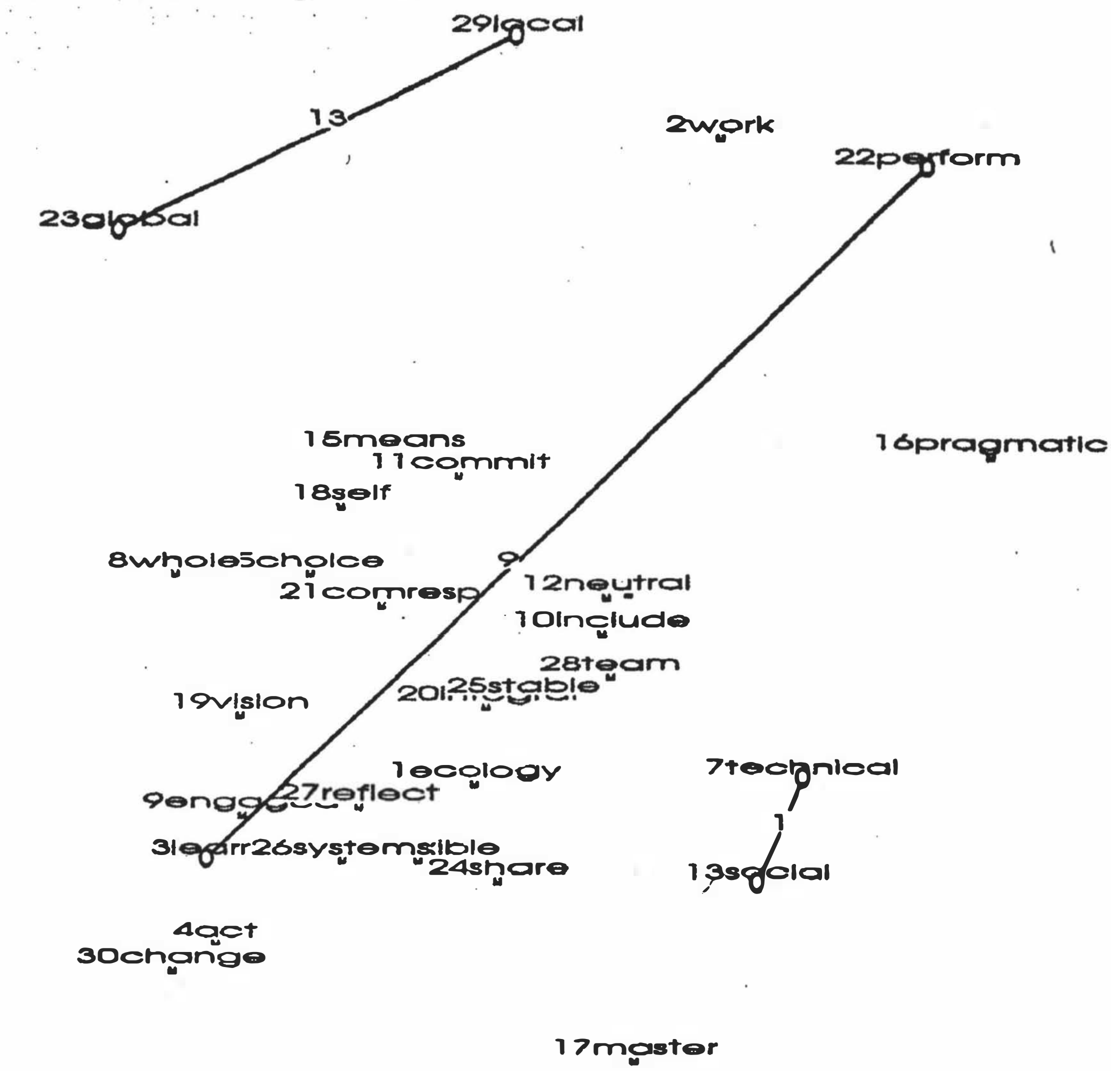
The Method of Triads involves splitting each of the dilemmas used in the instrument into two items (the 'a' and 'b' options of the dilemma), each of which can be presented separately to an informant. The 15 dilemmas thus become 30 items. The items can then be mapped in terms of their relationship to all the other items in the instrument.

Method of Triad data was collected from 46 informants using the following procedure. Each informant would shuffle the 30 items into 10 randomised groups of three (triads). The informant would then determine which item in the triad was the odd-one-out: the least like the other two. The triad would then be recorded in one table of a data-entry form with the odd-one-out indicated. This procedure was performed three times, with informants completing three tables. Not every informant worked through all of the tables. The 46 informants provided 126 tables, for a total of 3,780 triadic decisions. This number is considered ample for determining a stable Method of Triads solution.

If we were to consider a triadic decision graphically, we could say that it involves determining the shape of a triangle, where each point represented the position of one of the items in space. If three items are presented to an informant who selects Item X as the odd-one-out, the result is an isosceles triangle, with Items Y and Z relatively close together and X an equal distance from both. If the same triad is presented to a number of people the shape of the triangle will continue to change. If all three items are equally similar or equally different some informants will think Item X is the odd-one-out, some Y and some Z. When their decisions are combined the result will be (roughly) an equilateral triangle. If all informants agree that X is the odd-one-out the result will be an extended isosceles triangle.

When the triangles representing the combined triadic decisions of all informants are determined, they can be brought together into a solution that takes the form of a 3 dimensional map, which shows the relationship of each item to all others in the instrument. Figure A7.1 shows one view of the map for the items in the survey used in this research. The map also shows lines connecting several of the dilemmas presented in the survey. Line 1 shows the Technical—Social Dilemma; Line 9 shows the Performance—Learning Dilemma; and Line 13 shows the Local—Aspiration Dilemma.

Figure A7.1 Method of Triads Map of Dilemmas



When informants see the items of a dilemma as opposites the items will appear distant from one another on the map. An example of this is the Performance—Learning Dilemma with its long connecting line (Line 9).

Unfortunately, many features of this solution seem counter-intuitive. For instance, both Technical—Social (Line 1) and Local—Aspiration (Line 13) have relatively short lines, even though the items involved ought to be opposites. What accounts for this discrepancy?

It seems that some informants when encountering, for instance, the 'Technical' and 'Social' items plus another item to make up a triad grouped the first two as lying along a common axis (even though they occupied opposite poles on that axis) and chose the third item as the odd-one-out. In this way some items may have been treated as similar by informants because they were so directly opposite to one another. Some informants reported to the researcher that they had made decisions in this way; determining that the 'Technical' and 'Social' items both dealt with skills needed by an organisation.

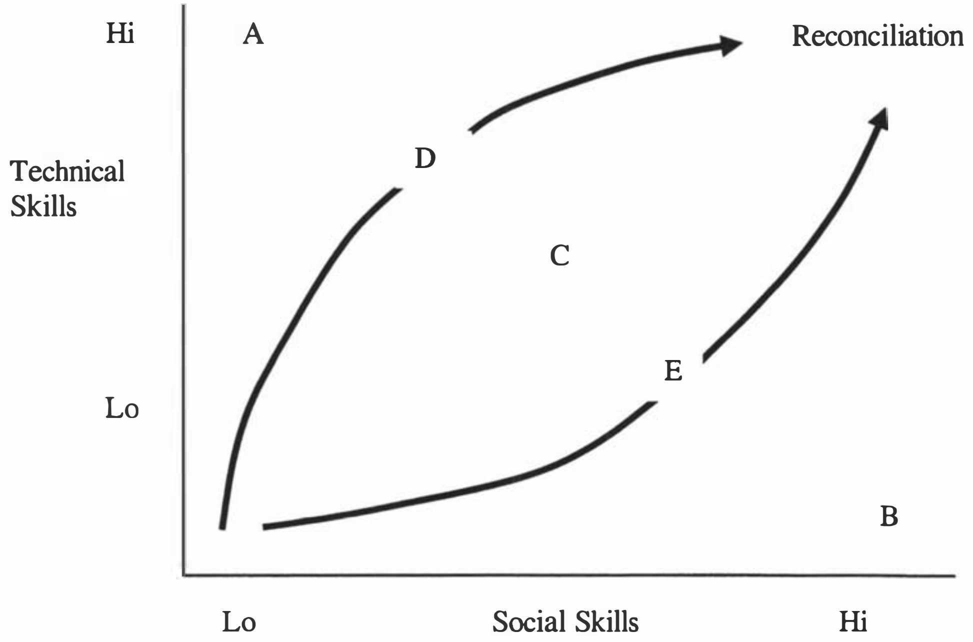
At some point in the future the Method of Triads process may be used to validate a future version of the instrument. Care will need to be taken in the giving of instructions to informants and some changes may need to be made to the wording of items so that items making up a dilemma are not related by construction.

Appendix 8

Dilemma Instrument in the 5-Option Format

The dilemmas discussed earlier in the thesis are presented here in a 5-option format. The options outline the 5 ways a dilemma can be resolved, as shown in Figure A8.1.

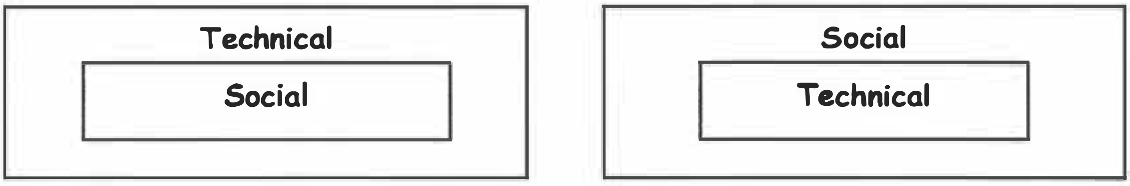
Figure A8.1 Approaches to Dilemma Resolution



With the Technical—Social dilemma, the original survey consisted of the A and B options only. Each represents an extreme position, where respondents must choose between values rather than find a point of reconciliation. The C option is a compromise where respondents can choose to have a little of what is represented by each value, although they are, in effect, undermining both values in the process. The D and E options represent different ways of achieving reconciliation with a 'both/and' solution.

In constructing the D and E options we consider alternative ways of looking at the relationship between the values, as displayed in Figure A8.2

Figure A8.2 Figure-Ground Diagrams for the Technical—Social Dilemma



The first diagram prompts us to think how Social skills can act as an important value in the wider context of Technical skills to give the D option. The second diagram reverses the relationship to give the E option. This order of options is followed throughout this sample instrument.

Answer the following questions by selecting the option that best represents your opinion. Choose only one option.

A group of managers were discussing how their organisation could get the best from its investment in learning. They disagreed over the types of skills that needed to be developed. Which do you agree with?

a. "We need to invest in the technical skills of our people. This will help each person do his or her work more effectively."

b. "Our investment needs to be in social skills so that people can work together more effectively."

c. "We should split our investment between technical and social skills so people are basically competent in both areas."

d. "Social skills are a form of technical skill needed by everyone. Like literacy, everyone should have skills needed for working with others."

e. "Technical skills are best learned and used in an environment where there are strong social relationships."

While of the following do you most agree with?

a. The are motivated by their personal interest, so learning has to be of personal benefit. People want to establish a balanced, comfortable life for themselves and their families.

b. Learning should be motivated by a desire to contribute to an organisation. People learn best when they are committed to an organisation and want to contribute to its long-term success.

c. People will always be reluctant to commit themselves, so while an organisation might ask for commitment there needs to be something in it for the worker.

d. Being committed to an organisation is important for people; it is part of having a balanced life.

e. People will commit themselves to organisations that are committed to being good places to work. Organisations need to offer people a balanced life.

For organisations to progress people need to share knowledge with one another. This can happen where:

a. People make on-going improvements to systems and processes. This way, what gets learned gets quickly turned into new ways of going about work.

b. People recognise that organisations exist to give people the opportunity to work together. Knowledge sharing happens naturally in a closely connected community.

c. Management controls knowledge sharing so it does not become time-consuming or waste resources.

d. Processes are in place that ensure relevant knowledge moves throughout the organisation. Sound relationships can be the by-product of efforts to build a robust organisation.

e. There is a supportive environment that encourages everyone to learn, talk, plan and reflect together, with efforts focused on process improvements that benefit everyone.

A group of managers were discussing the approach to learning they should take in their company. Which do you most agree with?

a. “We need to make sound, objective decisions about learning. People have to learn skills that directly contribute to the organisation.”

b. “Learning is about passion! We need people to discover the joy of learning. We have to foster creativity. We have to grow people’s love of learning.”

c. “It is smart to use good quality training professionals, so that when people have to do learning they find it enjoyable.”

d. “Passion and excitement about learning doesn’t happen by chance. Things need to be well organised so that people can express their emotions through learning and work.”

e. “Emotion drives the learning process for a lot of people. So, emotion needs to be factored in to plans and people can be excited about learning necessary skills.”

Which of the following do you agree with?

a. Learning needs to be driven from the top with executives taking a ‘hands-on’ approach. They need to lead the process of learning to ensure it addresses issues important to the organisation.

b. Executives need to trust people to take responsibility for their own learning. Learning is a ‘grass-roots’ process, built on personal and community responsibility.

c. People need to be given some freedom for learning within the limits determined by executives.

d. ‘Grass roots’ learning works where people willingly align their interests with the direction of the organisation and executives.

e. While providing direction for learning where it is needed, executives need to work at encouraging people to take responsibility for their own learning. Over time, executives.

A group of workers were discussing how to get the most learning from their work. Which do you agree with?

a. “We need to spend more time reflecting on what we do. That means taking time to think about our work and to talk to others about what we are learning.”

b. “Learning is about action. We need to experiment more, trying out new ways of getting things done.”

c. “It is hard to get a balance, but people should try to do a bit of both reflection and action.”

d. “Taking action is the basis for deeper and deeper reflection. Action allows us to test and refine our insights and understanding.”

e. “Reflection is one of the many actions people take when learning. It is part of any high quality experimental process.”

Managers in an organisation find that some people do not want to take part in organisation-wide learning activities. Should managers:

a. Use whatever means are necessary to ensure that everyone takes part.
b. Let people choose for themselves it they take part.
c. Initially give an option, but follow up with some mild coercion.
d. Allow people to take part to the extent they are comfortable. In this way, people can build their readiness to take part.
e. Treat inclusion as an equal opportunity issue. Some people will be reluctant to volunteer and need to be included. This way people learn to make their own choices.

Learning is important for our organisation because it helps us to:

a. Be more flexible, taking on new challenges and finding innovative solutions to problems that arise.
b. Be more consistent, getting better at what we do.
c. Be able to try new things from time to time while staying competitive in our core business.
d. Be serious about our experiments: trying new things and quickly building competence where our innovations are successful.
e. Expand our ability to get results in our area of core competence, building outward from a strong base of expertise.

Which do you most agree with?

a. Failure is unacceptable. Our organisation operates in an environment where we need to get things right. Performance is paramount.
b. Failure is an important part of learning. Our organisation should have an environment where it is safe to try things, even when they don't succeed. Work should be a place that helps people develop.
c. While learning is important, we wouldn't want too many errors. Mistakes have to be kept within acceptable limits.
d. Learning should lead to success. Failure is fine, where people put effort into learning from it and improved performance is the result. Big failures are OK if they lead to big learning and big success.

e. Learning happens best when it is put to the test. When we endeavour to perform well we challenge ourselves to take our skills to new levels.

Your organisation is introducing a new product that represents a major move forward from what you have offered in the past. You are still working hard to learn all you can about the product and how customers can get the most from it. Several customers, however, insist you supply the previous model—the one they are most familiar with. People in your organisation disagree on the approach you should take. Which do you agree with?

a. "Give the customers what they want. You can't win an argument with a customer."

b. "We need to focus on learning about the new product. We'll tell the customer the old one is no longer available."

c. "Supply the old product for a limited time, and provide them with information that gets them used to the idea of changing."

d. "We need to use these customer responses to rethink our product strategy. We want our ideas for the future based around the realities of life for our customers."

e. "Let's invite these customers to join with us in experimenting and learning about new products."

When someone new joins your work team, they need to learn about the team while the team needs to continue to perform. Which of the following do you most agree with?

a. Getting the work out is a priority. Helping the new person learn has to be fitted around the need to maintain team performance.

b. Helping new people learn about the team and the part they play is the priority. Sometimes performance has to suffer so new people can learn.

c. Orientation is fine as long as it doesn't significantly affect performance. Orienting the new person can cared for by people who are not involved in critical tasks.

d. Team performance is best maintained if real effort goes into orientation. Orientation processes need to be well designed so that quality performance will follow.

e. People will be most effectively oriented if they work with the team. Projects can be designed so that a full orientation of a new person takes place as part of the process.

A group of managers were discussing their organisation's vision. Which do you agree with?

a. "We need to limit what we strive for. Our success can't be at the expense of the community we work in."

b. "It's a mistake to be constrained by local conditions. We need to set our sights as high as we can, even if we outgrow our community."

c. "While we set goals and try to succeed we should be seen as socially responsible."

d. "Our vision should reach beyond our own success and encompass our community. We should contribute to a healthy society."

e. "Visions should inspire people and people are truly energised when they are contributing to the greater good."

A group of workers were discussing the sort of learning that was important for their organisation. Which do you agree with?

a. "People are really learning when they innovate. We need people to be experimental, trying new things."

b. "Real learning means gaining mastery of something. We need to be assured people are truly capable of doing their work well."

c. "We just need competent people who will occasionally try new things."

d. "We have to be masters: masters of change. That means being serious about understanding processes and dynamics of innovation.

e. "True mastery means knowing how to handle whatever arises. Learning should enable people to apply their expertise to new challenges and problems."