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The Learning Organization and the Organization of Learning

Power, Transformation and the Search for Form in Learning Organizations

Abstract *The concept of a learning organization introduces a potentially radical strategic option to leaders of capitalist enterprises in the late 20th century. However the profound changes that it offers are seldom achieved in practice, primarily because of the reluctance/inability of leadership to confront the central issue of the transformation of power relations, and learning, within their organizations. This article introduces radical humanism as an appropriate theory to guide leadership through the processes of strategic cultural action aimed at the creation of a learning organization. It argues that as such action will be initiated by those with executive power, its first phase should be oriented towards the attainment of an organizational culture which structurally endorses the vision of leadership and encourages collaborative learning and greater power sharing. The metaphor of ‘cognitive apprenticeship’ is used to name such a ‘transitional’ culture and, after describing the nature thereof, the article goes on to discuss the process through which the emerging learning organization develops into a mature team culture.*

Modern capitalism has proved itself to be remarkably resilient over several centuries and across significantly different international contexts. From its origins (in modern form) in the West, in the sweatshops of the industrial revolution (a form of capitalism that has re-emerged in South East Asia where it is thriving in the absence of human rights, equity and social justice concerns in these countries); through its transformation into rational-legal form (social democratic or welfare capitalism) in defensive response to the rise of international socialism earlier this century; the masters of capitalism have been able to weather crises of all sorts. This resilience is once again being demonstrated in the ‘crisis’ of resources and markets of the late 20th century. The demise of international colonialism and thus the West’s direct command of global natural resources; the penetration of its previously assured

home markets by foreign competitors; the late recognition of the limits to the earth's non-renewable natural resources; and the indiscriminate exploitation of its renewable resources, have sparked, what Kaplinsky (1995) calls, the 'new competition'. This new competition is distinguished by a scramble for markets—the declining population of the lucrative first-world markets and the near collapse of third-world markets, through the constant diminution of real earnings and corrupt and mis-managed national economies in most of these countries, has led to intense competition for markets within international capitalism.

Japan, a country with centuries of experience in this kind of competitive context having no natural resources to speak of (other than its people) and having always had to seek export markets for its products, has risen to dominance in the latter half of the 20th century's global capitalist economy. This dominance has challenged capitalists in the West to learn from Japan (just as Japan learnt from them in the 19th century—see Nafziger, 1995) for they certainly cannot return to the sweatshop capitalism of their origins even though currently they are renegeing on many hard-won welfare and social justice concessions that were extracted from them by trade unionists and socialists in the past. Rather, through the adoption of the philosophy of 'international best practice' and a study of form in Japanese organizations (Womack et al., 1990; Oliver et al., 1994; Williams and Haslam, 1992), the capitalists of the West are attempting the difficult task of transforming their organizations, grown fat on the bounty of colonialism and assured home markets, from control mode to the lean, results-focused, highly competitive forms of Japanese organizations.

This article will argue the point that whilst the immediate consequence of this transformation of Western capitalism has been a significant cut-back in welfare and a dramatic increase in under- and unemployment (see Rifkin, 1995; Cairns, 1995), the forms of organizations held up as 'best practice' models and the ideal they espouse of a 'learning organization', have greater potential for the realization of some of the cherished goals of early socialists than most analysts realize. A learning organization makes possible 'work as a collective human project' through the development of empowered workteams who collaboratively manage their everyday work practices. Kaplinsky (1995: 18) quotes the delight of a British manager who, under 'best practice' forms of work organization found that 'with every pair of hands' the organization got a 'free brain'. Best practice capitalism thus manifests a contradiction: whilst taking away welfare benefits, it simultaneously opens itself up to greater worker participation, empowerment and management of the company's 'economic project'. How far this empowerment process will go (towards equity and full profit sharing) will be determined by the level of informed strategic action enacted by those committed to such transformation within these organizations, and the unique contextual dynamics of the situation of each (for example, the pressures upon shareholders and/or the relative competitive advantage that the organization enjoys in terms of global resources and markets).

The profound transformation of organizational culture enacted within a learning organization, introduces into the heartland of capitalism elements of socialist thought in as much as such transformation has radical implications for traditional power relations, reward systems, learning and work organization. Hierarchical power structures oriented around the issue of *control* are substituted by the practice of 'servant leadership' (see Kofman and Senge, 1993) which inverts the traditional

power relationship by stressing the *service* aspect of leadership to production teams who are the internal customers of management and who are thus entitled to the same standards of customer service as external customers. Learning organizations also have a radical impact upon reward systems through the introduction of a team culture focused on *results* in which responsibility for success is shared. It is, therefore, logical to expect that rewards should also be shared equally amongst team members. There is nothing *in principle* in the concept of a learning organization that stops the process of performance-based rewards from evolving into full-blown profit sharing, and a system whereby production teams (as *customers*) determine additional management rewards according to the value that leadership, in its service, coordination and strategic functions, adds to the product.

Learning and work organization are also radically transformed by the introduction of the principles of best practice and the processes of becoming a learning organization. In the emerging learning organization, conventional organizational learning, as in the efforts of human resource/training departments, gives way to deep probing into the culture, power relations, hidden learning and work practices of the organization. This is a dangerous arena, for as Jones and Hendry (1994: 156) point out, such learning 'may well create tensions within organizations which result in employees asking searching questions of a social, ethical, moral and personal kind related to the purpose of work and the nature of society'. Kofman and Senge (1993: 19–20) echo this sentiment: 'The learning required in becoming a learning organization is "transformational learning". Such learning is not ultimately about tools and techniques. It is about who we are ... [and] ... only with the support, insight, and fellowship of a community can we face the dangers of learning meaningful things'. This kind of learning goes far beyond Argyris' (1990) concept of double-loop learning (although it includes it) and is similar to Vygotsky's (1978) understanding of learning as a set of experiences which change consciousness. According to Vygotsky, learning does not involve the transposition of knowledge from an 'external' to an 'internal' plane but rather is the process by which the individual is *changed*. If consciousness is co-knowledge as he claimed, then transformations in knowledge result in a changed consciousness. As Leont'ev (1981: 57) puts it, 'the process of internalisation is not the *transferral* of an external activity to a pre-existing, internal "plane of consciousness": it is the process by which this internal plane is *formed*'. Vygotsky stressed social processes in human learning (that is, human transformation) and the active role of the learners in processes of guided participation with more experienced partners in solving immediate socio-cultural problems through primarily linguistic means. He thus viewed problem-solving as a shared process in which partners collaborate to reach a joint solution to shared problems.

Transformational learning thus facilitates the process whereby the mindset of the members of the organization is changed and their problem-solving frames of reference are broadened to include a 'problem-creation' orientation. Functional and instrumental, or surface, learning is expanded into 'deep learning' whereby the relationship of task to culture and existential issues is collectively explored. Through such learning, if it can be attained, the competitive individualism which has characterized modern capitalist culture, gives way to a form of communal learning whereby the interdependence of all members of the organization, and their collective responsibility for meaningful survival, is acknowledged and cherished.

Such a context is a far cry from the 'sweatshops' of traditional capitalism, or the bureaucratic settings of more recent rational-legal capitalism. Armed with concepts and language ('transformation', 'worker empowerment', etc.) that seem more appropriate to socialism, the capitalism of best practice appears ready to encourage organizations to undergo whatever form of metamorphosis that is necessary in the interests of maintaining a competitive advantage in a global economy.

Or is it? Foley (1994) claims that the transformation of the workplace, in pursuit of ideals such as 'best practice' and a 'learning organization' is a myth which disguises a process whereby global capitalism is reorganizing itself. Similarly Clegg (1989) argues that the language of transformation is deceptive rhetoric which masks the true intention of the capitalist elite of maintaining their hegemony in changed circumstances, through the collaborative and creative participation of workers. Furthermore Coopey (1995) points out that the literature on transformative agencies, such as the learning organization, addresses neither the processes by which power is transformed, nor the issue of the degree to which power is shared within such agencies. In all of these arguments, however, the disbelief that global capitalism would risk the consequences of introducing a form of workplace organization that has the potential for *real* transformation of power, echoes far louder than any questioning of the revolutionary *principles* embedded in the concept of a learning organization itself.

The failure of many organizations to achieve the ideals of best practice, and transform themselves from within, does seem to be rooted in their inability/reluctance to transform power relations. It is my experience, in a range of business and industrial settings, that few leaders of organizations comprehend the interdependence of all aspects of an organizational culture. As a consequence of their reluctance to share power and thus concede competitive advantage over others within the organization, leaders usually attempt piecemeal and ad hoc 'transformation' of their organization's culture. The most common example of such, is the attempt to transform the shopfloor culture into a results-focused team culture while retaining a control-focused bureaucratic culture at higher levels of the organization. The consequence of such changes is a highly confused and stressed organization, especially at first- and second-line management levels, with no serious attempt being made to address the more radical principles concerning power-sharing, ownership and transformational learning that are embodied in the concept of a 'learning organization'. Such changes often achieve dramatic short-term improvements in productivity (see Dovey, 1995a) but fail to sustain these in the medium-term and usually lose all competitive advantage gained, in the long-term. Unless a team culture is totally inclusive, that is, it extends from the boardroom to the shopfloor (and beyond with respect to suppliers, customers and other key stakeholders), it will not deal effectively with the fundamental value decisions that affect the interests of all stakeholders in the organization. It is when such inclusivity is achieved that the organization meets one of the critical qualifications of a 'learning organization'. Even those leaders who are serious about transforming their organization appear to lack an appropriate theory of social action by which to guide the processes whereby the issue of power, and its transformation, is confronted. In particular, the question of *how* power is transformed in a learning organization, and *the extent to which* power sharing is possible at specific moments in the development of such an organization, is usually left unaddressed.¹

Radical Humanism as a Theoretical Frame of Reference for the Creation of a Learning Organization

Radical humanism as a theory of social action is based on the ideas of the 'young' Karl Marx (1964) as well as those of Gramsci (1971), Lukacs (1971) and the members of the 'Frankfurt School' (see Jay, 1973). These ideas were formulated by the latter group, in particular, into what has become known as *critical theory*: theory that encapsulates a transformative action imperative in its dialectical understanding of social reality (see Burrell and Morgan, 1979: 279–309, for an overview of radical humanism and its link to critical theory). Critical theorists condemn the passive understanding of the social reality advocated by the interpretative schools of thought, such as phenomenologists, as well as the crude determinism of radical structuralists whose belief in the teleological power of history borders on the religious, and encourages another form of passivity or inaction. The concept of a dialectical relationship between consciousness and structure provides, for critical theorists, a basis for social change through human action in spite of the constraints imposed by the social structures of its own creation—particularly through the reification of these structures by humans 'forgetting' that they created them and thereby assigning to them an ontological status of their own, independent of human volition.

As a theory of social action, radical humanism recognizes the phenomenon of human *struggle* in processes of organizational transformation—given the notion of the dialectic, and the rejection of positivism and narrow empiricism as modes of knowing, there can be no general 'laws' of organizational behaviour or structure. Organizational forms will depend upon the historical circumstances of their creation; the means those wishing to protect, or destroy, the status quo have at their disposal; and the nature of the actions (tactics and strategies) in which proponents and opponents of prevailing organizational structures engage. Subjective dimensions of the action process (confidence, commitment, and counter-hegemonous forms of thought like Freire's [1974] notion of 'critical consciousness') are as important to the success of action as are objective dimensions such as the material and physical means of action (a point supported by the defeat of the objectively superior American forces in Vietnam, and the success of the Cuban revolution). Organizational forms are thus permanently vulnerable to change: the 'stability' of any form will depend upon those wishing to preserve it having both the material and physical means, and the subjective commitment, to sustain it and/or the relative absence of these means and dispositions within any group opposed to it.²

Forms of organization are therefore potentially dynamic and reflect the nature of the social compositions that create, sustain or change them. Change in organizations thus comes through social action that incorporates both subjective and objective dimensions of human endeavour. Gramsci's (1971) notion of *praxis* provides a theoretical explanation for such social action by stressing the dialectical relationship between theory and action: *praxis* involving a continuous interplay between theoretically-informed action and action-informed theory. Radical humanist theory incorporates the notion of resistance and struggle in collective human endeavour by recognizing the human construction of social reality and, thus, human agency as the source of all social formations, counter-formations, and transformations. It has no recourse to teleological forces beyond the potency of human action, and does not

reify any humanly created phenomena whether these be the institutions of the state or more abstract concepts such as that of human history itself. Its position is that social change is not inevitable but is strongly influenced by human action. The vicissitudes of capitalist hegemony over the past two centuries are a key example of this process of struggle and counter-struggle wherein the strategic action of individuals and organized groupings have influenced the sway of capitalist power in the West and across the globe. The increasing 'invisibility' of this contest (see Williams, 1978; Cooper and Burrell, 1988), especially in the era of *postmodernity*, does not mean that it is not occurring at all.

Creating a Learning Organization

There is one central concern within a learning organization: the creation of a culture of shared power and transformational learning. The primary task of leadership wishing to create a learning organization is thus the creation of such a culture:

... culture creation and leadership, when one examines them closely, are two sides of the same coin, and neither can be understood by itself. In fact, there is the possibility—under emphasised in leadership research—that the only thing of real importance that leaders do is to create and manage culture and that the unique talent of leaders is their ability to work with culture. (Schein, 1985: 5)

In most cases this leadership task involves a long and difficult process of transforming a hierarchical bureaucratic culture, characterized by the values of competitive individualism, personal ambition and instrumental learning, into a culture that 'flattens' power structures and encourages relationships characterized by *dialogue* amongst its members (see Freire, 1974: 45–6). This transformational process will include strategies through which the social structures that frame everyday life within the organization are de-reified; personal frames of reference and reality assumptions are reviewed; and workplace practices which enable, empower and encourage all members of the organization towards full participation in its programmes of strategic cultural action are implemented.

The process is usually initiated by one or more people who have executive power within the organization. As Jones and Hendry (1994: 160) describe it, it is the moment:

when an enterprise recognises the need for change, focusing on issues to do with leadership, power, the devolution of initiative and personal development, linked to the needs of the organization and the wider community. The ensuing transformation is most likely to entail a 'mind-shift'.³

Resistance to the process is likely to come from all sectors of the old organization, irrespective of whether they are benefiting from the status quo or not. The reification of behaviour and values exemplified in competitive individualism leads many people to question the 'unnaturalness' of the communitarian values and behaviour necessary within a learning organization. People socialised to an ego-centric locus of control over their destiny do not easily shift that control to the locus of a group, nor do they trust the concept of a 'shared destiny' when they have been

groomed to see others as competitors, and thus a threat, for positions and material means of power.

The nature of the resistance will depend on the nature and degree of power that opponents of the transformation process hold. If the process is being initiated by those with executive power, then it can be assumed that the resistance from those with less power is likely to be based on a lack of trust of those with power (see Dovey, 1995a). According to Argyris (1990), two forms of resistance are most common:

- Resistance from members of the organization whose *mental models*, or 'frozen' assumptions about 'how the world works', are incompatible with the cognitive and emotional orientation necessary for transformational learning to commence. The essence of transformational learning is making oneself vulnerable. If such learning is required in response to a 'crisis', this gives rise to two possible reactions—if the member is at the bottom end of the organizational power hierarchy, he or she is unlikely to have been sufficiently informed to perceive the 'crisis' at all and is unlikely to trust the picture presented by those with power, because of experience of existing power relations. If, however, the crisis is perceived, personal insecurity, whatever its origins, may militate against choices with unknown outcomes and untrusted partners. Frightened people do not take risks, and those lower in the power hierarchy are likely to have mental models rooted in past experiences of vulnerability and powerlessness. The emerging learning organization faces a profound 'Catch-22' dilemma: nothing happens without personal transformation and personal transformation is frequently blocked by deep, subconscious assumptions, about oneself and the world, which have their origins in other times, places and situations. Resolving this dilemma will require a slow, sustained process of transforming relationships and power relations between members of the organization whereby self-interest is transformed and redefined in organizational terms.
- The second possible form of resistance is what Argyris (1990) refers to as 'defensive routines' by groups of people throughout the organization who may have a variety of motives for resisting change. Routinized defensive behaviour can take very sophisticated forms and is more or less conscious across groups. Argyris uses the concepts of *espoused theory*, which is the officially endorsed (or politically correct) position of the emergent learning organization, and *theory-in-use*, which refers to the actual practice of people within the organization and which often contradicts the espoused theory. Theory-in-use may be closely aligned to mental models which are in conflict with the espoused theory and which thus dictate contradictory behaviour by members at a spontaneous, taken-for-granted, level of consciousness; or it may be a more conscious, deliberate strategy of subversion by members who perceive their formal power within the organization to be insufficient to openly contest the espoused theory, and who have nowhere else to go. Whilst the transformation of relationships and power-relations, and the presence of a real crisis of survival, may help to eradicate defensive routines, the harsh reality is that some members of the old organization may never sincerely accept the values and practices which drive a learning organization. How long the emergent learning organization can tolerate their presence will depend on how actively their attempts at organizational sabotage are conducted.⁴

Resistance to the strategic cultural action necessary for the creation of a learning organization can pose significant problems for the leaders of this action process.

However this issue will usually be confronted through the phased implementation of organizational forms which facilitate the transformation of power and learning throughout the organization.

Power, Learning and Organizational Form

The relationship between power management, organizational form and relationship format represented in Figure 1 is an adaptation of that given by Onyx (1994: 5) in her depiction of leadership within organizational context. While a fully developed learning organization would be located in the bottom right-hand box, this does not imply that bonded team relationships 'in the abstract', are being proposed as equivalent to the concept of democracy itself. Democracy clearly involves a legislated 'social contract' in which the rights and obligations of those who participate in such a social order are made explicit. Rather, the notion of 'bonded team relationships' refers to the optimal *relationship* form through which power is effectively distributed (and through which it is made manifest) within a participatory democratic order in which key shared tasks, and the values and behaviours (or 'culture') which drive the attainment of these collectively owned tasks, are contested and resolved. If, however, the initiative for the creation of the learning organization comes from those with executive power in the 'old' organization, who by implication would be the best informed about the reasons for the intended transformation of the organization and who would have to deal with the inevitable resistance from significant numbers of people within the organization, then the initial stages of the transformational process would require a 'transition culture' closer to that located in the top right-hand box of the diagram. The initial situation may demand a more 'authoritative' leadership style with its presumption of possessing a vision not yet perceptible to the mass membership of the organization, which, if realized, would lead to the collective benefit of this membership.

The danger inherent in such a culture is the possibility of the leadership, no matter how well intentioned initially, developing messianic images of itself and arresting the flow of power to the membership and, thus, the transformation of the

Figure 1 The relationship between power management, organizational form and relationship format

	Bureaucratic control	Participatory democracy
Autocratic power management	Military-style relationships	Master-disciple relationships
Democratic power management	'Human relations' approach	Bonded team relationships

culture to that of a mature team.⁵ In order to avoid this, and utilize the benefits of such a culture in the initial stages of the development of a learning organization, frequent use of alternative settings (see Dovey, 1995b) wherein workplace role identities are weakened and new learning through exposure to unfamiliar experiences is facilitated, needs to be structured into the process. In such settings, it has been my experience (Dovey, 1995b) that directors' limitations in the area of social skills, prejudices and unilingual capability benchmark poorly against the strengths in interpersonal skills and the language competence of shopfloor workers (many of whom are trilingual). Such experiences generally lead to a broadening of definitions of expertise whereby the multiple 'masters-disciples' relationship patterns that exist within the organizations become more transparent. In particular a developing awareness of the skewed distribution of academic and technical skills in favour of some social groupings, and social skills in favour of others, helps to invert implicit assumptions within the organization about an *elite*, or *guru*, sect leading the devoted masses, that the 'master-disciple' nomenclature helps to create for such a culture. In exploring the nature of power and learning within this culture, the *apprenticeship* metaphor will be used in the naming of this potential 'first phase' of a learning organization's form.

Apprenticeships-in-Learning

A form of social organization that holds potential for the initial stages of the development of a learning organization is that of a setting characterized by the *guided participation* of novice members by more experienced members, in the work of the organization, through a system of 'cognitive apprenticeships' (see Rogoff, 1990; Resnick, 1989). The 'apprenticeship' metaphor communicates a structured setting in which learning does not involve didactic teaching, but rather the more participative processes of observation, progressive practice, coaching and successive approximation. The apprenticeship model, utilized widely in the professional education of medical practitioners, accountants, lawyers and graduate research students,⁶ as well as in technical and craft education, involves the learning of skills, values and attitudes in the context of their application to realistic problems within a culture of learning which is focused and defined by competent practice. The sharpness of this focus upon the practices of the organization initially structures learning more along functional lines but, as Moore (1986) argues, understanding the centrality of 'task' to 'culture' is the first step to cultural literacy and creative insight. In contrast with traditional apprenticeship models, cognitive apprenticeship as a model of human development which is informed by the learning theory of Vygotsky (1978), draws upon a far more sophisticated understanding of the intra- and interpersonal dynamics of collective endeavour and individual development. Through concepts such as the 'zone of proximal development', the role of partners-in-learning is analysed in basic psychological terms such as 'risk', 'trust' and 'reliability', with reference to the acquisition of skills, values and attitudes. These attributes are integrated gradually into a member's concept of self and are manifested increasingly in the practices and problem-solving behaviour of this 'learning community'.

The cognitive apprenticeship model creates a 'learning rich' setting with 'charac-

teristics, such as the ready availability of models of expertise-in-use, the presence of clear expectations and learning goals, and the integration of skill improvement and social reward, which help to motivate and ground learning' (Collins et al., 1989: 486). Furthermore, the social context of the apprenticeship setting facilitates a positive orientation to problem-solving and the development of collaborative and cooperative learning styles. The visibility of participants' progress in the processes of collective problem-solving boosts confidence and detaches learning from authority figures, thus encouraging independent and self-directed learning. More importantly, as Collins et al. (1989: 487) point out, participants develop 'an awareness of the distributed nature of expertise and insight' which is 'the foundation of successful collaboration in all domains'. The apprenticeship model thus creates a culture of situated learning wherein the following understanding is gained:

- the purposes/uses of knowledge;
- how to use knowledge actively;
- the conditions under which particular knowledge is applicable;
- the relevance of knowledge to specific and general contexts;
- the role of context-generated problems in goal achievement;
- the ready availability of models of a variety of forms of competent practice and thought;
- the relation of learning to the achievement of interesting and coherent goals (thus leading to the development of intrinsic motivation).

Rogoff and Gardner (in Rogoff and Lave, 1984: 103) argue that within the apprenticeship model 'emphasis is placed on "learning by doing" through repeated practice over time rather than by simply watching and copying ... Proleptic instruction functions as a deliberate but tacit process which the participants construct in the course of communication'. Collins et al. (1989: 454) add the point that 'apprenticeship embeds the learning of skills and knowledge in their social and functional context. This difference is not academic; it has serious implications for the nature of the knowledge that students acquire'. They continue (1989: 456-7):

Another key observation about apprenticeship concerns the social context in which learning takes place. Apprenticeship derives many cognitively important characteristics from being embedded in a subculture in which most, if not all, members are participants in the target skills. As a result, learners have continual access to models of expertise-in-use against which to refine their understanding of complex skills.

Moreover, it is not uncommon for apprentices to have access to several masters and thus to a variety of models of expertise. Such richness and variety helps them to understand that there may be multiple ways of carrying out a task and to recognise that no one individual embodies all knowledge or expertise. And finally, learners have the opportunity to observe other learners with varying degrees of skill; among other things, this encourages them to view learning as an incrementally staged process, while providing them with concrete benchmarks for their own progress.

The apprenticeship model facilitates three important forms of learning at both an explicit and a tacit level of learning:

- *Domain knowledge*, which refers to conceptual and factual knowledge about the practices of the organization. While domain knowledge can be taught explicitly,

understanding thereof is greatly facilitated by an experiential frame-of-reference (Moore, 1986; Dovey, 1993, 1995b).

- *Procedural knowledge*, which refers to the sequencing of events, monitoring of learning and other processes, and general organization of workplace events. Procedural knowledge is best learned in situ, tacitly acquired through experience of well organized settings; although control functions such as regular opportunities for collective reflection, analysis and debate would facilitate the participants' consciousness of important aspects of procedural knowledge that they may have taken for granted previously.
- *Strategic knowledge*, which Collins et al. (1989: 477) refer to as 'the usually tacit knowledge that underlies an expert's ability to make use of concepts, facts, and procedures as necessary to solve problems and carry out tasks'. As such, strategic knowledge incorporates *heuristic strategies* ('tricks of the trade' or unconventional approaches which experience has taught may solve a problem intractable to conventional approaches); *control strategies* (choice of heuristics, procedure, coaches and pacing of approach, etc.); and *learning strategies* which refers to the approach taken towards the solution of a particular problem based on existing conceptual, factual and procedural understanding of the problem area. Whilst strategic knowledge is built on experientially-acquired tacit knowledge bases, it can be enhanced through strategic planning and thinking skills workshops and other forms of explicit teaching and analysis. However, strategic knowledge is always linked in a fundamental way to the solving of problems in situ. Collins et al. (1989: 480) state that 'even given explicit formulation of strategies, understanding how to use them depends crucially on understanding the way they are embedded in the context of actual problem solving'.

The apprenticeship method structures the learning of all forms of knowledge through various processes: *modelling* (the observation of competent performance); *coaching* (relationships of support and encouragement); *cognitive scaffolding* (the provision of 'hints' and 'tips'); *opportunities for articulation* (on topics such as knowledge forms, reasoning processes, heuristics, learning strategies, feelings, etc.); *opportunities for reflection* (post-mortems, the development of practice-informed theoretical approaches, etc.); and *processes of exploration* (encouraging participants to take personal responsibility for further learning and self-development).

The apprenticeship form of organization, in terms of its focus upon a culture of practice, fails to meet several important needs of an organization committed to transformational learning. Firstly, its focus upon internal practice limits its self-critical frame of reference to prevailing local criteria of best practice. Learning organizations ready to progress beyond an apprenticeship form of learning will need to expand their learning horizons to include external benchmarking studies, both within and outside their organizational field of endeavour. Through entering the cultural 'belly' of other organizations, members of emerging learning organizations gain perspective on their own organizational culture and its impact upon practice, processes, relationships, customer orientation, learning, etc. This creates a new frame of reference which may result in 're-engineering' a process, that is, radically transforming it (see Hammer and Champy, 1993) rather than attempting relatively superficial changes to it, or a new capacity to explore and transform the deep structure of their own organizational culture.

A second problem associated with the apprenticeship model is the implicit structuring of power relations in terms of a hierarchy dominated by functional expertise. The 'apprenticeship' metaphor itself, as well as language referring to 'experts' and 'novices', implies a 'worth', and therefore a power hierarchy within the organization which is based on narrow functional criteria (usually 'technical' expertise). Emerging learning organizations can avoid such power relations by recognizing the myriad forms and levels of knowledge, insight and expertise that exist within its corporate membership and which are necessary to effect the transformation of the organization. They, thus, will need to promote the understanding that *all* members are 'apprentices-in-learning' in one area or another and that degrees of expertise will vary across areas. Similarly, the notion of co-coaching is important to the emerging learning organization as each member takes on a coaching role in specific areas of strength, and an 'apprenticeship' role in perceived areas of weakness. In this way the developing learning organization creates equal access to various forms of knowledge (for example, that traditionally regarded as low-status knowledge, such as 'hands-on' knowledge, as well as high-status knowledge, such as academic and strategic knowledge) all of which are crucial to the development of egalitarian power relations and, thus, the creative participation of all members in the constitutive processes of interpreting, appropriating and transforming their cultural reality.

Organization as 'Team': The Maturation of a Learning Organization

The ultimate goal of the learning organization is to create a culture of *praxis* within a community characterized by bonded relationships of shared power. As Kemmis (1983: 133) has expressed it, a mature learning organization is a 'forum for group self-reflection (and action)' in which a 'community of self-interests' has been transformed into a 'learning community'. In all the literature on best practice and learning organizations, it is advocated that a 'team culture' is the ultimate goal of a learning organization. However, as pointed out earlier, seldom is a team culture adequately analysed in this literature, particularly in terms of how power is managed, and learning facilitated, within such a culture.

The facilitation of steady progress from a culture of 'guided participation' to a team culture is the primary service that leadership gives to the developing learning organization. As the membership develops in confidence and skill, and transforms its values and knowledge bases, so the 'authoritative' leadership style gives way to a more 'participative' style, and the notion of 'coaching' emerges as an important shared leadership task. The two most important functions of this shared task are:

- A *visionary* function. As the emerging team shifts its focus from functional to transformational learning, so members will be constantly encouraged to transcend previous levels of achievement through the collective development of a vision of excellence. Such a collective vision mobilizes learning and development and sustains motivation and commitment through the difficult process of overcoming self- and other-imposed limitations on performance. In order to achieve transformational learning, the vision must be embodied in charismatic persons within the team—people who through their own example energize and inspire the performance of others, and who motivate self-sacrifice in others in the interests of

the collective attainment of the shared vision of a 'higher state of being'. The nominated coach does not need to possess charismatic qualities personally, as long as the qualities are present in some of the other members of the team. However, the leadership function of coordinating the processes whereby a shared vision is developed amongst team members, is usually the role of the nominated coach. In mature teams such a leadership role may rotate according to the nature of the task/challenge, and the experience/qualities of the team members.

- An *instrumental* function. Vision is a necessary but not sufficient dimension in a team's success. An instrumental leadership process, whereby the strategic action processes are carefully planned, implemented, monitored, evaluated, transformed and re-generated in a never ending spiral of committed and sustained action, is as important to the success of the team as charisma and a shared vision. This is the less glamorous side of leadership and, like continuous improvement processes such as total quality management, it requires the committed participation of each team member. No individual leader can manage the process alone; it is a collective leadership responsibility, the fulfilment of which depends on the level of meaning that the shared vision holds for each member of the team. There is thus a reciprocal relationship between visionary and instrumental dimensions of team leadership, with each dimension 'feeding off' the other, as well as being sustained by collective effort.

Team cultures face the problem of resolving the tension between individualistic and communitarian values—a problem no less difficult within the hegemony of the postmodern state, as Bowers (1984) has pointed out, than it was one hundred and fifty years ago when Marx was confronting the same problem in his concept of the development of the individual-in-community (see Fromm, 1968: 130–1). In the field of sport, Novak (1976: 77) describes American football as 'essentially a corporate game, a game of solidarity, an almost socialistic experience' in which teams 'undo' the violently competitive individualistic imperatives of American society. Similarly, Forsyth and Kolenda (1966) describe the attempts by a prestigious New York ballet company to achieve a similar sense of corporate solidarity in that particular society. The development of team members is thus a broad enterprise which includes the following crucial areas:

- the development of each team member's capacity to form strong, equal relationships with other team members;
- the all-round development of each member (in terms of skills, values and attitudes—see Dovey, 1995b);
- the development of subjective dimensions of members' readiness, such as confidence and motivation;
- the development of strategic thinking skills through detailed pre-action and post-action analyses in which lessons are learned from experience (i.e. action-informed-theory is generated and used in planning future action—see Dovey, 1995a);
- the demystification of members' perception of challenges/problems and the threat posed to the collectivity by them.

Within a team culture there is a commitment to the continuous development of a broad range of skills and attributes in *all* team members and, because of the equal distribution of decision-making power in such a culture, the development process usually begins with the weakest members—that is, it is a bottom-up process (unlike

the top-down development process in bureaucratic cultures, where the real decision-making power rests at the top of the organization).⁷ Furthermore, learning in a team culture probes deeply into existential issues as team members become drawn together by a shared vision which has meaning for their lives. Their commitment to the shared goals of the team becomes characterized by an engagement in the process at a deep emotional level with significant investments of time and energy, and a readiness to make personal sacrifices in the interests of the collective goal. As they develop, team cultures encourage members to take personal responsibility for ensuring good results for the team through on-going, self-directed personal development (skill development, education, etc.).

The following features of a team culture are particularly relevant to the development of a learning organization:

- A team culture is characterized by shared decision-making power, responsibility and rewards. If any members of the team make an exceptional contribution to the achievement of the team's goals (in terms of leadership, expertise, etc.) then a collective decision needs to be taken as to the additional rewards due to such members for the value that they add to the team performance (see Kidder, 1981, for a fascinating account of a case in which intrinsic rewards were sufficient to sustain an exceptional contribution from a small team of Data General engineers).
- A team culture encourages the development of a flexible locus of control orientation in that members learn to recognize the situational-embeddedness of their decision-making responsibility: in the heat of action the locus shifts to the *individual* in order to maximize competitive strategy by exploiting opportunities that fleetingly present themselves, through quick decisions; whilst the locus shifts back to the *collectivity* in situations of strategic and tactical planning, or when time is not a critical factor in the process. Members thus learn when it is appropriate to take personal responsibility for decision-making and when it is appropriate to refer the decision to a broader forum of membership, with the clear understanding that the risks and rewards of decision-making are shared equally within the team.
- Rules in a team culture revolve around the building and maintenance of high quality relationships amongst all members (as opposed to bureaucratic cultures where rules are oriented around policies and procedures). Values such as reliability, responsibility, interpersonal sensitivity, cooperation, etc., are strongly stressed in a team culture. Because of the central role of good communication in the development of strongly bonded relationships, face-to-face interaction is encouraged, and the development of good listening and speaking skills is a focal point of development in teams. From a Vygotskian viewpoint, the conditions for learning become optimal as a context of interpersonal trust is created wherein members enter the 'zone of proximal development' confident of social support and encouragement (see Vygotsky, 1978).
- A team culture is performance-driven (unlike bureaucracies which are control-driven) and thus results-oriented, with clear critical success measures and performance indicators. Member learning is thus referenced by regular feedback and external benchmarking opportunities.
- A generalist-oriented culture of learning is created wherein the broad human development of members is stressed. Such development extends beyond narrow

skills training into areas such as the capacity to think strategically, work collaboratively and broaden general knowledge in terms of understanding global issues.

- With a team culture, selection of members is oriented more around issues of compatibility than formal qualifications. As strong relationships are one of the principal means through which teams attempt to achieve their goals, social skills and values issues are an important factor in the inclusion of new members to the team.
- A team culture stresses a win–win orientation to problem-solving and the recognition of the interdependence of all team members. Either the entire team wins or the entire team loses—victory, or defeat, for only part of the team is a contradiction in terms.

Intrinsic to team cultures are four powerful sources of individual motivation:

1. *Motivation-through-recognition.* Through the delegation of power and authority, each member of a team is recognized as a competent, responsible human being. The trust implicit in this recognition, in being taken seriously as a person, can be a powerful form of motivation.
2. *Motivation-through-relationship.* The notion of ‘team spirit’, as a source of collective strength in a team, reflects the enhancement of subjective factors underlying performance by the positive bonding of relationships within teams. Individuals do not make sacrifices, and push themselves to their limits, for abstract concepts (such as an organization) but rather for other people who they have grown to respect and value. As team cultures stress the development of strong, mutually respectful relationships, they provide another powerful source of motivation towards committed action for their members.
3. *Motivation-through-stimulation.* The fact that teams are results-oriented, builds challenge into the daily lives of their members. The presence of a valued goal and the excitement of the challenge of achieving it, invigorates members both collectively and individually.
4. *Motivation-through-development.* The emphasis on learning and development in teams fuels motivation through the continuous exposure of members to new ideas, knowledge and action. Modes of behaviour and thought are unlikely to become routinized and habitual in a setting in which provocative ideas and challenges are part of everyday life.

Conclusion

This article has argued that the ‘barrier line’ separating the apprenticeship culture and the team culture within participatory democratic type organizations is permeable, and that whilst the attainment of a mature team culture is the ultimate goal, learning organizations may need to develop an apprenticeship, or guided participatory, culture in the initial stages of the development of a team culture. This process creates a more structured and task-focused culture as a forerunner to the more open, explorative culture of a mature team. Furthermore, the initial apprenticeship culture introduces, in a more structured way, the notion of the interdependency of organizational membership, and the reality of organizational transformation as a condition of survival in a rapidly changing global context. Kofman and Senge

(1993: 21–2) offer a similar view of the creation of a learning organization as a collective journey which commences at the point where

there are no ‘teachers’ with correct answers, only guides with different areas of expertise and experience that may help along the way. Each of us gives up our certainty and recognises our interdependency within the larger community of practitioners . . .

and continues until the achievement of a team which

will expand its problem solving mode to include *problem creation* i.e. the generation of a new kind of talk which creatively explores its environment for new challenges, recognising the wonder and awe of the world and the potential learning that workplaces, characterised by learning communities, hold for human beings. (Kofman and Senge, 1993: 21)

Their choice of language echoes the critique of inhuman work structures and hegemonic manipulation of human insecurity, as well as the utopian dreams, of the early radical humanists when they conclude that

we are so focused on our security that we don’t see the price we pay: living in bureaucratic organizations where wonder and joy of learning have no place. Thus we are losing the spaces to dance with the ever-changing patterns of life. We are losing ourselves as fields of dreams. (Kofman and Senge, 1993: 21–2)

Notes

1. The recent transformation of political power in South Africa is a good example of change being guided by a negotiated plan based upon the principle of a win–win orientation to the transformation of power, and by the incorporation of a legally-binding constitutional framework instituted in two phases (an interim constitution allowing for shared power in a government of national unity for five years, and thereafter a new constitution within a multi-party, ‘winner governs’ democratic dispensation). Whether the process will move on to phase two remains a moot point, for the interdependence of the political parties, with respect to a mandate to govern a highly complex and diverse population, may well result in the permanent retention of the principle and structures of shared power.
2. One reviewer of this article questioned whether Freire’s notion of critical consciousness and Habermas’ theory of communicative competence did not constitute a kind of ‘general law’ of behaviour. This I totally reject for to accept this is to engage in what Stanley (1978: xiii) called ‘linguistic technicism’—that is, the ‘metaphorical misapplications of some of the assumptions, imagery, and linguistic habits of science and technology to areas of discourse in which such mistakes obscure the free and responsible nature of human action’.
3. The example of the transformation of political power in South Africa, given in Note 1, applies equally to this point. The old power regime, guided by the leadership of F. W. de Klerk, conceded power because of its weak strategic position (in terms of international financial sanctions) and because the likelihood of a protracted civil war meant that the survival of the country itself would be under threat. The transformation of power within the country thus occurred because the situation demanded it—this transformational process, however, could only occur because those with executive power put the interests of the country above their own personal/ego power needs. This is more difficult to achieve in

work organizations because the same degree of commitment to the organization is seldom present—it is relatively easy to walk away from a failed organization (especially if one has lined one's pockets beforehand) but the implications of being part of a collapsed *country* for one's survival, identity, etc. are profound.

4. This type of defensive response would be typical of many individuals and groups within the South African civil service who may engage in subtle acts of 'subversion' of the transformation process whilst giving the appearance of supporting it because it is in their job interests to appear to be embracing the 'espoused theory' of transformation.
5. One of the reviewers of this article questioned the failure of socialist countries like the Soviet Union and East Germany to 'structurally empower' their people. The preoccupation of these leaders was with *control*, not empowerment, and this they justified in terms of the insecurity of the 'revolution' as a result of what they chose to view as local and international 'counter-revolutionary' forces. 'Empowerment', like 'democracy', became nothing more than political rhetoric in these countries and the hierarchical, bureaucratic cultures of their political and economic structures never came close to being transformed into egalitarian team cultures.
6. One reviewer of this article pointed out the notorious conservatism of the professions and management which he or she argues is a consequence of the apprenticeship model. However, this is an example of throwing the proverbial baby out with the bathwater—all socialization processes involve a form of apprenticeship (the best example is that of the family itself) and the issue is the degree to which values can be imposed or are always negotiated. Recent post-structuralist theory (see Derrida, 1976) argues that meanings are always deferred and cannot be located in any fixed position and/or structure. As such, the experience of participants within any endeavour or structure is open to arbitrary and/or idiosyncratic interpretation, and thus the capacity of participants for creative appropriation and transformation of 'meaning' from the apprenticeship experience always exists as a possibility. The absence of didactic teaching in favour of more participative methods of learning facilitates the creative appropriation of productive power in apprenticeship settings driven by values of knowledge acquisition as opposed to political power plays of professional protectionism.
7. Team *culture* should not be confused with 'teams' per se. While many so-called 'teams' exist in a variety of social contexts (workplace, leisure, family), most of these do not comply with the norms of a team *culture*. I am, here, addressing the issue of a team culture at the theoretical level (that is, in the abstract) and am not concerned about the myriad of idiosyncratic behaviours that specific groups of individuals (who may refer to themselves as a 'team') may practise under the guise of 'teamwork'.

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