

Organisational Learning Study Guide

This guide is for those interested in exploring the topic of organisational learning and the learning organisation in greater depth.

The guide poses questions which can be explored through various books, articles and reports, with Web links to those that are available on line.

Organisational Learning Theory

What are the theories that have contributed to the understanding of organisational learning?

Can organisations “learn”?

How do the various theories of organisational learning interact with and complement each other?

How have organisational learning theories influenced the way we look at organisations?

Web resources

1. Smith, Mark K. (infed, 2001); chris argyris: theories of action, double-loop learning and organizational learning.

<http://www.infed.org/thinkers/argyris.htm>

This paper examines the significance of the models Chris Argyris developed with Donald Schön of single-loop and double-loop learning, and how these translate into contrasting models of organizational learning systems.

2. Smith, Mark K. (infed, 2001); learning in organizations.

<http://www.infed.org/biblio/organizational-learning.htm>

Here, is an exploration of the theory and practice of organisational learning and an examination of the key theorists and themes, as well as a consideration of the question “can organisations learn?”

3. Gonzales, Jose J; Merging Organizational Learning with Learning

Theory – A Task for the 21st Century?

<http://ikt.hia.no/josejg/Papers/Merging%20organizational%20learning%20with%20instructional%20theory.pdf>

This paper discusses the inter-relationship between organisational learning and learning theory and the ability of each to influence the other.

4. 8acollective (July 6, 2010); Organizational Learning Theory.

<http://8acollective.com/student-task/organizational-learning-theory-foundation-and-definition.html>

This article discusses the difference and relationship between the terms information and knowledge, and the relationship between organizational and the construction, implementation and management of knowledge in organizations.

5. Sharp, Dr. Colin A., (WORKING PAPER 1998); Are Theories of Organizational Learning Necessary for Evaluation?

[http://www.personalresearchandevaluation.com/documents/organisational_learning/SHARP-
OrgLearning98.pdf](http://www.personalresearchandevaluation.com/documents/organisational_learning/SHARP-OrgLearning98.pdf)

This paper explores the relationship between organisational learning and evaluation.

6. Hovland, Ingie, Overseas Development Institute (August 2003); Knowledge Management and Organisational Learning: An International Development Perspective An Annotated Bibliography.

<http://www.odi.org.uk/resources/download/143.pdf>

This annotated bibliography aims to review the current literature on knowledge management (KM) and organisational learning, particularly in relation to the international development field.

Books

Argyris, Chris (1992) Overcoming Organizational Defences: Facilitating Organizational Learning. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Argyris, C. and Schön, D.A. (1978), Organizational Learning: A Theory of Action Perspective, Addison-Wesley, London.

Kolb, D.A. (1984) Experiential Learning. Experience as the source of learning and development, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Senge, P. (1990) The Fifth Discipline. The art and practice of the learning organization, London: Random House.

Organisational Learning in the Real World

What are the similarities and differences in learning in a business environment and learning in the voluntary sector?

Can learning help organisations achieve real outcomes?

Is learning helping organisations achieve positive results?

How can organisations determine where they stand with regard to organisational learning?

Web resources

1. Britton, Bruce (July 1998); The Learning NGO, International NGO Training and Learning Centre.

<http://www.intrac.org/data/files/resources/381/OPS-17-The-Learning-NGO.pdf>

This publication is aimed at organisations working in the field of international development but is relevant to all voluntary organisations. It says that “it provides a conceptual framework for the subject which is relevant to organisations which are value driven and non profit making”. It is also includes a diagnostic tool to help organisations assess their current capacity for learning and many practical tips on how to become a learning organisation.

2. Signet Research and Consulting; Emergent Learning

http://www.signetconsulting.com/concepts/emergent_learning.php?gclid=CLGA1u-jsKYCFYUe4QodhFp4ZA

Emergent Learning is a method to help organisations consider the learning from their work and its implications for their future practice. The Web site provides information and tools that help businesses incorporate learning into their ongoing work and planning cycles.

3. Fyles, Rex, Humanitarian Coordinator Oxfam Canada; How Does Oxfam Canada Learn? Organizational Learning in a Real-life Voluntary Sector Organization.

<http://www.cvsrd.org/eng/docs/MMP/How%20Does%20Oxfam%20Canada%20Learn%2022.pdf>

This article examines organisational learning using one of Canada’s most respected voluntary sector organisations as a case study.

4. Perkins, Douglas D., Bess, Kimberly D., Cooper, Daniel D., Jones, Diana L., Armstead, Theresea and Speer, Paul, Program in Community Research & Action, Vanderbilt University; Community Organisational Learning: Case Studies Illustrating a Three dimensional Model of Levels and Orders of Change.

[http://people.vanderbilt.edu/~douglas.d.perkins/Perkins et al.2007.comm.org.learning-levels.orders.change.JCP.pdf](http://people.vanderbilt.edu/~douglas.d.perkins/Perkins_et_al.2007.comm.org.learning-levels.orders.change.JCP.pdf)

This paper is designed to help community organizational researchers and administrators think about an organization's learning and empowerment-related structures and processes in terms of first order (incremental or ameliorative) and second-order (transformative) change at the individual, organizational, and community levels

5. Laura Roper, Laura and Pettit, Jethro (August, 2002); Development and the Learning Organisation: an introduction.

<http://portals.wi.wur.nl/files/docs/ppme/p258.pdf>

This is study of how practitioners are approaching the issue of learning in organisations and whether their approaches are yielding positive results.

6. Ebrahim, Alnoor (2005); Accountability Myopia: Losing Sight of Organizational Learning.

<http://red-dere.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/nvsqaccmyopia1.pdf>

This article examines the relationship between accountability and organisational learning and the problems associated with losing sight of mission when adopting an accountability framework.

Books and Articles

Johnson, J. R. (2002). Leading the learning organization: Portrait of four leaders. Leadership and Organization Development Journal, 23(5/6), 241–249.

The Learning Organisation

What steps can an organisation take to become a learning organisation?

What are the essential characteristics of a learning organisation?

What are the expected outcomes of becoming a learning organisation?

If the benefits of becoming a learning organisation are so obvious, then why aren't all organisations moving along this path?

Web resources

1. Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE, 2004); Self Assessment Resource Pack on Learning Organisations.

www.scie.org.uk/publications/learningorgs/index.asp

This pack is designed to enable social care organisations to assess whether they are a learning organisation (defined as, an organisation that uses evidence-based practice and informed decision-making). It is helpful resource material for any voluntary organisation. It was developed by SCIE Practice Development staff, in collaboration with service users, carers and staff in social care.

2. IBS Centre for Management Research; Learning Organization - Creating a Learning Organization and Leading it.

<http://www.icmrindia.org/free%20resources/articles/learning-organization1.htm>

The article discusses the characteristics of a learning organization and how to lead a learning organization.

3. Cors, Rebecca (May 5, 2003); What Is a Learning Organization? Reflections on the Literature and Practitioner Perspectives.

http://www.engr.wisc.edu/services/elc/lor/files/Learning_Org_Lit_Review.pdf

This article considers what a learning organization is and whether that model helps organizations achieve desired outcomes?

4. The MEAB Group, University of Edinburgh (February, 1996); Learning Organisations: Where the Learning Begins

http://www.see.ed.ac.uk/~gerard/MENG/MEAB/lo_index.html

This article provides insights into the history, development and current thought on organisational

learning.

5. **Mark Easterby-Smith, Mark Araújo, Luis and Burgoyne, John G (1999)**; Organizational learning and the learning organization: developments in theory and practice.

http://books.google.ca/books?id=pF2pcrSa49IC&printsec=frontcover&dq=organizational+learning+in+practice&source=bl&ots=8H4BGn9wRq&sig=PWhRXf5Y7tBLrETUWB-m8Pte0AY&hl=en&ei=NK6wTYjIMank0QG77pAj&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=8&ved=0CFAQ6AEwBzgK#v=onepage&q=organisational%20learning%20in%20practice&f=false

This document provides a comprehensive overview of the learning organisation with contributions by many leading experts.

Books

Schein, Edgar (1992) 'The Learning Leader as Culture Manager' in Organizational Culture and Leadership. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Senge, P.M. 1990b. The Leader's New Work: Building Learning Organizations. Sloan Management Review, 32(Fall, No. 1): 7-23

Kolb, D.A. (1984) Experiential Learning. Experience as the source of learning and development, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Garrett, B (1987) The Learning Organisation, Worcester: Billings

Learning Strategically

What is the difference between learning and learning strategically?

What world conditions are influencing the way in which organisations learn?

What is the relationship between learning, strategy and practice?

Web resources

1. Peterson, William G.; Strategic Learning: A Leadership Process for Creating and Implementing Breakthrough Strategies.

http://www.williepietersen.com/pdf/Strategic_Learning.pdf

This article delves into the need to change for organisations to be successful and identifies the key competencies that organisations must master in order to become adaptive enterprises.

2. Ian Cunningham (February 1999); Strategic Learning - using Self Managed Learning.

http://www.lulu.com/items/volume_66/7522000/7522186/1/source/Strategic_Learning.pdf

This paper argues a more strategic approach to learning is needed and that this must include the recognition that most effective learning takes place in live work situations and that training is at best a support for such learning.

3. Antonacopoulou, Elena P. (December, 2005); Micro-foundations of Strategic Learning: Strategizing as Practising

<http://www.google.ca/url?sa=t&source=web&cd=39&ved=0CFYQFjAIOB4&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.cbs.dk%2Fen%2Fcontent%2Fdwnload%2F33519%2F468571%2Ffile%2FElena%2520Antonacopoulou.pdf&ei=4tKwTfCIDIHegQenvuHwCw&usq=AfQjCNGmaOQwYHHrjFHs0PICTAVjDsNicQ>

This paper contributes to the understanding of the dynamics of strategizing practice by focusing on the strategic role of learning to integrate the multiple micro and macro forces affecting strategizing practice.

Books and Articles

Hedberg, B., (1981), "How Organizations Learn and Unlearn," in P. C. Nystrom and W. H. Starbuck, Handbook of Organizational Design, Vol. I: Adapting Organizations to their Environments, New York: Oxford University Press.

John, Steven: Strategic learning and leading change: how global organizations are reinventing HR,

Burlington, MA: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Thomas, James B., Sussman, Stephanie Watts and Henderson, John C.; Understanding "Strategic Learning": Linking Organizational Learning, Knowledge Management, and Sensemaking, **Organization Science** Vol. 12, No. 3 (May - Jun., 2001), pp. 331-345