

Global Thinking in Effective Global Organizations: A Proposed Framework

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Abstract: Authentic global thinking requires respect for the enormous diversity of thinking and the continual creative development of diverse traditions, through dialogue and also through the fresh eyes of each new generation. Global co-evolutionary processes link individuals, societies and environments in complex ways for the creation and maintenance of “shadow spaces” of hegemonic thinking which is unique and innovative in its creativity. Hegemonic thinking can be characterized by “single-loop” learning or ideological thinking to achieve pre-defined goals. To actively seek to become attuned to the co-evolutionary sustaining of diversity and innovation for the full development of human life, there is a requirement to question goals and so to engage in “double-loop” learning. Organizations need to consider that learning systems engaged in not only “double-loop” learning of questioning goals but also of transforming goals and processes in accordance with an ethical vision of respect for all lives or “triple-loop” learning. This study attempts to explain the “triple-loop” learnings that requires the trust and autonomy of individuals and teams and thus allowing optimal synergies to emerge within organizations. Organizations can comprise of multiple “shadow spaces” of unique “triple-loop” learning innovation as well as adaptive structures of “double-loop” learning. Moreover, the “shadow spaces” can at best also become sites for mutual learning between multiple cultures. Key to “triple-loop” learning is the skill of acculturation whereby a person can be grounded in their ancestral culture, whilst also constructively, engaging with other cultures to synergize innovation.

Key words: Authentic global thinking, global organization, learning organizations, triple loop learning, innovation, constructively

INTRODUCTION

Global thinking is the importance of learning to support collaborative environmental management and achieve sustainability under conditions of social-ecological change (Armitage *et al.*, 2008). It can be misinterpreted and wrongly considered to mean a global similarity in the way of thinking. This misinterpretation has to be left aside by acknowledging the reality that globally there are already many ways of thinking as ways of thinking are largely a product of cultural traditions of which there are many. So, the notion of global thinking has to incorporate the reality of multiple ways of thinking. The key and original step that this study takes is to introduce how global thinking is emerging by focusing on the natural inevitability of diversity of cultural traditions. This gives clues as to why and how global thinking is emerging the way it is. Cultural traditions can be analyzed in part as socio-ecological systems. The key significant

feature of socio-ecological systems for the purposes is that socio-ecological systems are maintained by individual human beings who have their own life trajectories. They start out as children and grow into adolescents, then into adulthood and later die. Moreover, they all have multiple needs which include an existential need for meaning and purpose. The socio-ecological systems which all people participate within to provide the needs of people do not follow the same trajectory as people, except by analogy and then only at a different timescale to that of a person. The result of such a perspective is to recognize a dynamic process of nested “adaptive cycles” each operating at different temporal and spatial scales which has been termed “panarchy” (Fig. 1).

Each adaptive cycle and the panarchy of nested adaptive cycles are natural phenomena which human activities including human thinking, have only limited ability to influence. The emergence adaptive cycles of the socio-ecological systems of cultural traditions are one

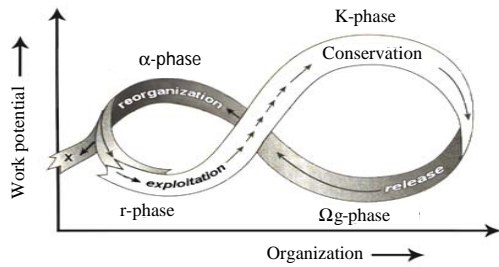


Fig. 1: The adaptive cycle (Gunderson and Holling, 2002)

level within the panarchy of nested adaptive cycles where each human life can be considered to be at a lower level and where ecosystems are at a higher level. Whilst each human being cannot willfully stop them self from roughly following their life trajectory they can nevertheless influence it through their choices for example by choosing whether to live healthily or not. Similarly, the conscious structuring of socio-ecological systems can only influence the life trajectory of cultural traditions. Cultural traditions have a natural life of their own. But it is possible to ensure that cultural traditions do not die out, just as it is possible to ensure that human beings or member of any other species, do not die out, through ensuring adequate diversity amongst them. This is a key principle of co-evolutionary theory, whereby reproduction requires a requisite natural rate of increase in diversity to ensure that there are an adequate range of beings adequately adapted to whatever the environment changes occur. Sexuality provides this capacity amongst species and within socio-ecological systems of cultural traditions it is fulfilled by what are known as “shadow spaces” (Morrison and Singh, 2009) which are sites of creativity that ‘breed’ innovation. Moreover, it is clear that the source of this is the innate creativity of children and the idealism of youth which is then enhanced by authentic dialogue and personal relationships. So, a sustainable socio-ecological system forming a cultural tradition maintains innate creativity through being continually renewed by each new generation of human individuals and institutionally supports it to allow the development of adaptive capacity through the emergence of multiple co-existing socio-ecological structures.

Management literature has kept abreast with the developments of systems theory and applied them to real-world practical situations. This has occurred through the definition of the meta-structure of organizations in terms of learning (Argyris and Schon, 1978; Senge, 1990). Senge (1990) coined the term “learning organization” to emphasize the point. The need for “soft” recursive management can be summarized as the need for management to see an organization as a learning system

engaged in social learning (Checkland, 1981; Checkland and Scholes, 1990; Morrison and Singh, 2009). The processes involved have been analyzed clearly and taken to involve three nested loops of learning (Flood and Romm, 1996; Morrison and Singh, 2009; Morrison, 2012).

Single-loop learning refers to what can be achieved by hard (enforced) systems analysis. Double loop learning refers to the ability to plan strategically and adaptively to the objective complex environment of multiple stakeholders. This has also become well recognized in the field of environmental management (Rammel *et al.*, 2007; Armitage *et al.*, 2008; Cundill and Fabricius, 2009; Pahl-Wostl, 2009). Triple-loop learning refers to the ability to maintain motivation and innovation due to relationships of trust and autonomy within the complex of cultural norms, values and beliefs. It is triple-loop learning that enables authenticity to be maintained and enables “transformational” leadership-by example which empowers others also to innovation (Bass and Steidlmeier, 1999; Gardner and Scheuerhorn Jr., 2004; Mazutis and Slawinski, 2008). The role of and necessity for triple-loop learning to incorporate cultural reality has also begun to be recognized in environmental management as it pertains to global inter-cultural issues (Pahl-Wostl, 2009; Morrison, 2012).

Literature review

Thinking

Global thinking: From the perspective of co-evolution and socio-ecological systems, global thinking refers to global possibilities of dialogue between individuals, thus, enriching the creativity of the “shadow spaces” in each cultural tradition. Given this process, fears of global hegemony appear to be misplaced and even impossible. This in turn suggests that global thinking refers to an enriching process of enriching cultural traditions including their creativity and diversity. But this is only one side of the issue. Globalization of dialogue between cultural traditions does not occur in a vacuum. It requires some change in the structure of socio-ecological systems to facilitate this. In effect new forms of socio-ecological system emerge within the panarchy (Gunderson and Holling, 2002) of nested adaptive cycles which we can call the global organization. Global organizations do not replace or contradict the socio-ecological systems of cultural traditions any more than they replace or contradict the other levels of adaptive cycles in the global panarchy, for example, individual human beings or ecosystems. Global organizations are a new emergent level which have their own specific characteristics, yet which are also analogous to what is also found in other levels. The specific characteristics of the global organization are well known and can be summed up as those of the “learning organization”.

Hegemonic global thinking: Hegemonic global thinking can be interpreted as arising when single-loop thinking is used out of context due to the presumption that there are no unresolved problems to discern or opportunities to discover as all necessary goals are already clearly defined. In short it becomes ideological. As already outlined such a presumption is unrealistic and if it arises, it would neither work in actually achieving a truly global scope and for very long-it would be unsustainable. Firstly, it fails to engage in the adaptive process which is the essence of socio-ecological and all natural systems. Secondly, it fails to engage with the personal life trajectories of the persons who constitute socio-ecological systems and hence the issues characteristically addressed by cultural traditions, namely discernment of problems, envisioning of opportunities, communication and personal relationships (Bates, 1975).

Authentic global thinking: According to Bass and Steidlmeier (1999), authentic global thinking by global organizations which are therefore learning organizations, can be expected to explicitly engage in double-loop learning and triple-loop learning which only using single-loop learning in proper context. Double-loop learning is how global organizations engage strategically and adaptively with the global environment including the global market of customers but also with the global diversity of nations and ecosystems with their unique requirements and expectations. At the level of global organizations within the panarchy of socio-ecological systems, double-loop learning is what enables global organizations to adapt to the global niche it can fill, by complementing other global organizations in the provision of goods and services whilst also competing with others to the extent potential efficiency gains have been discerned. Similarly, triple-loop learning is what enables global organizations to discern potential efficiency gains and opportunities for new market niche, along with the facilitation of innovation by synergistic teams of persons through effective communication and effective personal relationships.

Effective global organizations: Ethics can be seen to be intrinsic and indeed central to real global organizations and hence global thinking because of triple-loop learning which is based on recognizing and respecting and assisting meaningful life trajectories of people both as employees as well as customers. Only healthy goods and services find a sustainable place within the adaptive process and only personally supportive institutional arrangements allow synergistic innovative teams to emerge. It is in this light that “shadow spaces” need to be understood. They are places of creativity, trust, openness

and integrity toward customers as well as the organization. An effective global organization facilitates the emergence of such “shadow spaces”. But as they cannot be constructed but emerge only to the extent that there is authentic autonomy and trust, the exact sites and number of “shadow spaces” within an organization will always remain undefined and likely to continually change. So, the enhancement of global diversity that authentic global thinking brings is also found within the multiple complementary global organizations that emerge in response to the global context, environment and market. Wherever, sites of “shadow spaces” emerge there is the presence of authentic workplace communities. What empirical evidence in organizations is beginning to reveal and what is already well known in relation to what makes indigenous knowledge systems effective is that the formation of synergistic teams for maximal innovation is enhanced by hybridization between cultural traditions (Morrison and Singh, 2009). So, not only does the interaction of multiple cultural groups and tradition enhance the emergence of “shadow spaces”, they also enhance the empowerment of individual cultural traditions on their own unique trajectories. Cultural traditions are co-evolving to adapt to complement other cultural traditions, just as global organizations do so with other global organizations (Fig. 2). What is beginning to become clear is that global organization need cultural traditions for them to be able to authentically emerge and that as they do emerge they are providing a boost to the integrity and development for cultural traditions. The study provides several examples of the phenomenon and introduces an original model of the dynamic.

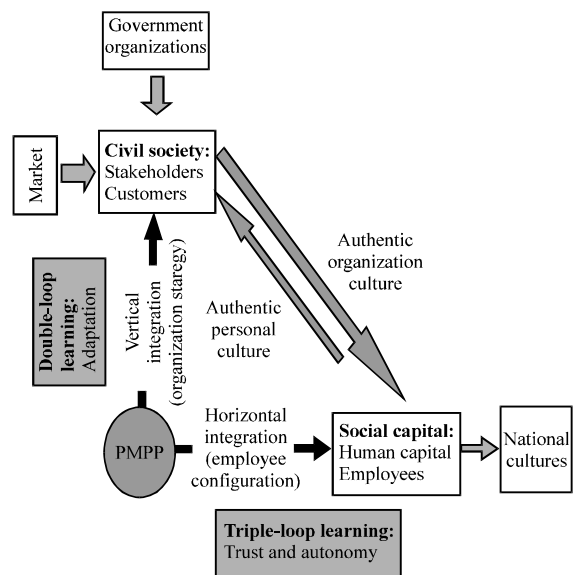


Fig. 2: Research framework-the learning organization

MATERIALS AND METHODS

All data for both the explanatory case study are collected through both formal and informal processes. The documents obtained are the companies' official and unofficial documents. The data via document reviews, informal conversations and observations were then analyzed. The data collected were from hard copy PMPP and companies' documents is mainly qualitative, though they also include some quantitative aspects. The data will be analyzed using Nvivo10 Software, using the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) Method with the Nvivo 10 Software as part of the discourse analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A key feature of the original model is the juxtaposing of the well-recognized vertical and horizontal dimensions of organizations to the equally well recognized recursive interaction between civil society and social capital. The model seeks an interdisciplinary integration of concepts from the disciplines of Political Science and Human Resource Development/management as well as from trans-disciplinary systems theory. Key points are that civil society requires the existence of markets and democracy but is also inseparable from and initiated by social capital which is in turn maintained by the loosely integrated weaving of both formal and informal cultural traditions and supported by the existence of civil society. The model explores how the concept of civil society appears to be equivalent to sustainable development, yet, adds insight to how the four pillars of sustainable development, the environment, economy, society and culture interact. The overall approach the model takes is to emphasize that civil society and sustainable development are how authentic global thinking is manifest and that it occurs through the operation of learning organizations whose structure has begun to be understood. This bodes well for the emergence of responsible business and governance in face of global social and ecological crises. But it leaves unaddressed another side to the analysis of socio-ecological systems which is that there are natural consequences of the failure to think and act responsibly, just as there are natural consequences of doing so. Due to the range of global interactions that is now available, the possible negative consequences to civil society are now increased. So, realistically globalization can be expected initially to increase the polarization between sustainable responsible civil societies and undemocratic tyrannies of attempted hegemony. Long term however,

the responsible approach of civil society can be expected to become increasingly established as authentic global organizations emerge to provide an increasingly stabilizing matrix strengthening cross-cultural dialogue and cultural traditions.

Following on from this, another key point that the paper explores is that given that both global organization and cultural traditions are developing through cross-cultural interaction, a key skill necessary for global thinking is acculturation. It is emphasized that acculturations has to be carefully distinguished for assimilation as the unrealistic notion for hegemonic globalization is falsely promised of the notion of assimilation. In reality, assimilation can be and is only a short term phenomenon whereby people in a particular culture can traumatize people in other cultures whereas acculturation is the empowerment of people in a particular culture to be able to learn from people in other cultural traditions so as to enhance their own cultural tradition. Once again, the same phenomenon is found with indigenous people. Those who are able to acculturate do not lose their own indigenous knowledge but rather enable it to flourish and to develop. Moreover, they are able to share it for the benefit of others and other cultural traditions. This is the nature of authentic global thinking.

CONCLUSION

Global thinking has dangers if the goals for society are presumed to be known as this leave thinking merely left to deal with technical issues that maybe attempted to be imposed by various forms of undemocratic tyranny. Also because in reality most thinking occurs within the organizations of society, it means that the emergence of global thinking will most likely emerge through organizations. The likely way in which this emergence will occur has two main characteristics, both of which have already begun to develop within organizations. The authentic integration of the complex interaction of facets of sustainable development with the necessary loose coupling, occurs if organizations focus on providing services for civil society whilst simultaneously providing a supportive work place for employees, so that, the workplace is also part of civil society. One is through the ability of organizations to continually adapt their structures to the global context or in other words with their global environment to form civil society in sustainable development. The other is through the ability of organizations to facilitate authentic organizational cultures of inclusive openness whereby each person can feel secure through their own unique cultural identity

being respected by others and moreover valued by being sought to contribute to dialogue with others who also bring their different cultural identities of strengths and weaknesses, all of which leads to innovative synergies. Organizations that institutionalize global thinking in this way can be expected to maximize innovative capacity and sustainability in the provision of services to global society whilst also supporting the ongoing creative development of cultural traditions and hence cultural diversity, through the innovative work of its employees who remain at the same time active members of cultural traditions. Authentic global thinking can be expected to both increase the diversity of thinking as well as the sharing of the diversity.

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