

With the help of the contents presented in the class and in this week's reading "Theories of Action" shortly answer the following questions:

1. What is the relation between single- /double-loop learning and Model 1/ Model 2 theory-in-use?

Learning involves detection and correction of error. Goals, values, frameworks and strategies are taken for granted. A room temperature thermostat is analogous to "single-loop" learning. When the thermostat finds a gap between actual room temperature and its setpoint, it makes a corrective change in the control output.

"Double-loop" learning occurs when error is detected and corrected in ways that involve the modification of an organization's underlying norms, policies and objectives.

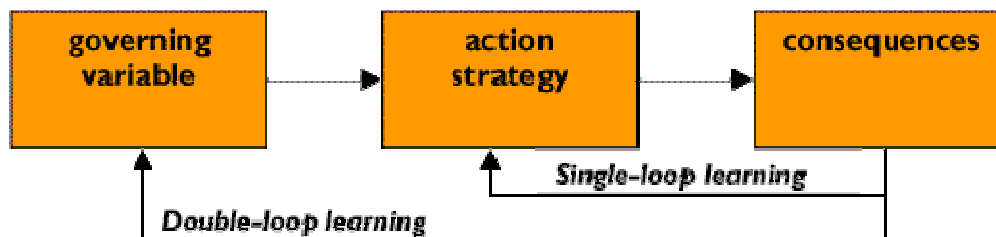


Fig. 1. Argyris' single- and double-loop learning (Smith 2001).

The governing Values of Model I are:

Achieve the purpose as the actor defines it

Win, do not lose

Suppress negative feelings

Emphasize rationality

Primary Strategies are:

Control environment and task unilaterally

Protect self and others unilaterally

Usually operationalized by:

Unillustrated attributions and evaluations e.g.. "You seem unmotivated"

Advocating courses of action which discourage inquiry e.g.. "Lets not talk about the past, that's over."

Treating ones' own views as obviously correct

Making covert attributions and evaluations

Face-saving moves such as leaving potentially embarrassing facts unstated

Consequences include:

Defensive relationships

Low freedom of choice

Reduced production of valid information

Little public testing of ideas

(Smith 2001).

The governing values of Model II include:

Valid information

Free and informed choice

Internal commitment

Strategies include:

Sharing control

Participation in design and implementation of action

Operationalized by:

Attribution and evaluation illustrated with relatively directly observable data

Surfacing conflicting view

Encouraging public testing of evaluations

Consequences should include:

Minimally defensive relationships

High freedom of choice

Increased likelihood of double-loop learning

Anderson (1997)

2. What are Model O-I/II Limited Learning Systems?

"Model O-I ("O" signifies "organization") is a model of a limited learning system (Figure 2). The model states that when individuals programmed with Model I theory-in-use deal with difficult and threatening problems, they create primary inhibiting loops. That is, they create conditions of undiscussability, self-fulfilling prophecies, self-sealing processes, and escalating error, and they remain unaware of their responsibility for these conditions. Primary inhibiting loops lead to secondary inhibiting loops such as win-lose group dynamics, conformity, polarization between groups, and organizational games of deception. These secondary inhibiting loops reinforce primary inhibiting loops and together they lead people to despair of double-loop learning in organizations."

"Model O-II describes the behavioral world created by individuals interacting on the basis of Model II theory-in-use. When members of organizations deal with difficult and threatening problems using Model II theory-in-use, they are engaging in Model II inquiry rather than creating primary inhibiting loops. Previously undiscussable issues will be brought to the surface, assumptions will be tested and corrected, and self-sealing processes will be interrupted. Both single-loop and double-loop learning can occur. Dysfunctional group and intergroup dynamics should decrease, and there should be less need for camouflage and games of deception." (Argyris et al 1985).

References

Anderson, L. (1997) Argyris and Schön's theory on congruence and learning. Available at <http://www.scu.edu.au/schools/gcm/ar/arp/argyris.html>. Cited 19.11.2008.

Argyris, Chris, Robert Putnam, and Diana McLain Smith. *Action Science: Concepts, Methods, and Skills for Research and Intervention*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1985.

Smith, M. K. (2001) 'Chris Argyris: theories of action, double-loop learning and organizational learning', the encyclopedia of informal education, www.infed.org/thinkers/argyris.htm. Last update: October 01, 2008. Cited 19.11.2008.