

ELT Ireland 4th Annual Conference
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Developing Outcomes in ELT

How to create a school that learns

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Your school

Identify something *your school* persistently does not learn?

We must develop institutions which are *learning systems*
capable of bringing about their own continuing transformation

Donald Schon

What is a learning organisation -1

Definition !: An organisation that exploits the learning opportunities **just below the surface** of everything we do

What would that be like in your school?

Thus the entire school and its activities transform into an **adventure park** for everyone's learning.

How would your institution feel as an adventure park?

Learning in the organisation must be equal to or greater than the **rate of change going on around it**

What are the changes going on outside your institution?

What is a learning organisation -2

Definition 2: An organisation that facilitates the learning of all its members *and continuously transforms itself.* Pedlar and Aspinwall

An org. that does a lot of training is not a learning organisations

Our most important resource is our people (popular cliché)

But ... It's the quality of relationships between them that is the most important resource. **What are the relationships here?**

Human capital is not just having smart people ... It's having smart people *connected up*... **How are your people connected up? What's missing?**

And the great thing is.....connecting people up actually *enables them to be smarter!* **How?**

Learning organisation self-assessment -1

12 statements here. Can you guess one of them?

Note any that especially catch your attention

- 1.. It's easy to get people to try out new ideas
- 2.. Everyone is involved in discussing policies before adoption
- 3.. People across departments know what each other needs, and help each other
- 4.. Everyone is encouraged to learn new skills and abilities
- 5.. Learning and contribution count for more than position and status
- 6.. Annual appraisals activate peoples own learning, which drives organisational learning

Learning organisation self-assessment - 2

- 7.. People are not blamed for bringing bad news
- 8.. You get honest and supportive feedback on your performance, and you give the same to others – up and down
- 9.. People are encouraged to try different ways of doing their work, to experiment, reflect, discuss
- 10.. Going public on mistakes is normal, not career limiting
- 11.. Leadership activity is encouraged from all
- 12.. Serving *all* the stakeholders is a constant priority

- Which statements strike you?
- What would you add?

Examples of whole school learning from a systems perspective

**This is not the usual CPD in itself, this is growing the context for it
This is System change...**

- Learning reviews
- Feedback / 360s
- Conversations about what matters
- Whole organisation in a room
- Values and actions
- The vision thing
- Recruitment for quality

Learning review (performance CPD review)

Purpose: Reflection, relationship, improvement

Outcome: Private effort → collaborative development

Three phases of the review:

1. Your sense of well-being here
 2. The years to date: What have you done, How have you done it, What have you learnt? Plus feedback, and performance
 3. The coming year: What will you do differently. What do you want to learn? How? What are your aspirations for three years time?
- Commitment to learning plan: Actions: Support needed; & Dates

Afterwards: Share learning plans staff connection and commitment.

Feedback

Create a feedback culture, starting with yourself:

“What’s it like working with me? What do I do that helps / hinders you?

“What would you like me to keep doing? And what might I do differently that would help you more...?

“I’d like to tell you something I think you may find useful (I hope you’ll do the same for me...). Would you like to hear it?

“What did you learn from doing that?

Learning conversations

A primary leadership activity is **to start conversations** with whoever is there about whatever is important to them.

Host conversations. **ie** Listen and understand
Don't argue, or defend, or try to fix anything
But **summarise** and show you have understood
Perhaps ask people to consider resolutions...
Allow different views to sit side by side
No hurry to resolve...

Ask “What are **the undiscussibles** in this room?”
Simply acknowledge their existence, and leave the door open...

Whole-organisation-in-the-room

1.. Get into the dept groups of the organisation (teachers, admin, reception, marketing, cleaners, finance, management, principal...)

Q1: What it's like in your part of the system?

Q2: How do you see the other parts?

Q3: What one thing, if the others knew it, would make a difference?

2.. Each group answers all three Qs in whole group with facilitator

3.. Meet in 1:1s across groups and discuss. "How can my work serve your work ... my team serve your team?"

Align actions with values

People want their work to be worthwhile, have meaning

To take their values to work

When people are aligned to their purpose, when the gap between values and behaviours closes, what people experience is ... a stream of ease

Roger Lewin

But: *We are living contradictions, we value one thing and we do another. It is inevitable. And it is painful*

Times when I enact my values

Times when I contradict my values

Staff and customers want alignment between:

1) Purpose, 2) Talk/strategy/plan 3) Actions 4) Impacts

The vision thing....

People don't buy **what you do**, they buy why you do it.

What you do simply serves as the proof of what your belief

What's important to you in your work?	<i>Values/Purposes</i>
What will it be like when you've done that?	<i>Vision</i>
What's the journey from here to there?	<i>Mission</i>
How will you do that?	<i>Strategy</i>

Repeat this process with entire staff

Only shared vision has power to engage the system

Recruitment for quality

If learning is part of your organisational culture, then make a **reputational feature** of this **at recruitment time**

“....In this organisation we are committed to conspicuous learning, to seeing the whole school as an adventure park for our learning Staff learn by questioning what they do, questioning the system, telling each other about it, exchanging feedback and helping each other....

Work itself is an inquiry...”

“If you were to come and work here, how would you find that...?”

Tips for leading through learning - 1

4 ways to get connected

1. Create and maintain partnerships. Essential to institutions carrying out their missions. *A partnership is a relationship in which we are jointly committed to the success of a process or project*
2. Start conversations about whatever matters to whoever is there
3. To introduce change shift the relationship ... Work with the relationship, not the individuals.
4. Give up trying to be interesting, and reach out and connect. More interesting

Tips for leading through learning – 2

4 ways to loosen up control

1. Bother less about trying to control, and encourage connectivity
2. Make plans but don't expect them to work out.
3. Develop your intuition. Follow hunches. Be vulnerable, risk fear, be messy, hang loose
4. See control in yourself. Be aware of the energy expended by your intent to control, and how it distorts what is happening right now..."

Tips for leading through learning – 3

4 ways to lead through learning

1. Lead through your own learning. involve the learning of others in framing the situations of the day.
2. Because *learning itself* is a way of getting things done. Learn your way into and through a situation changes the situation.
3. Use the organisation for everyone's learning. See whole school as an adventure park for your learning. Draw leadership activity from others
4. Inquiry requires to see what's happening without judging. Judging clouds seeing. You're not supposed to be an angel. You'll always mess up. Enjoy the seeing. Be fully human. Be free inside

Related reading

Learning organisation ☐

Mike Pedler 1996 *The Learning Company*

Peter Senge 1996 *The Fifth Discipline*,
2002? *Schools that Learn*

Systems thinking

Fritjof Capra 1999 *The Web of Life*

2015 *The Systems View of Life*

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Thank You!

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Your school

- How do your Ts / Staff learn.
- How does your school learn?

Can you give an example of each?

- Identify something your school persistently does not learn?

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