



TOOL | Single, Double and Triple Loop Learning

Based on the thought leadership of Chris Argyris and Donald Schön as well as others along the way, here is an overview:

Single Loop Learning is about making adjustments to correct a mistake or a problem. It is focused on doing the things right. Causality might be observed but typically is not addressed.

Double Loop Learning is identifying and understanding causality and then taking action to fix the problem. It is about doing the right things.

Triple Loop Learning goes even deeper to explore our values and the reasons why we even have our systems, processes and desired results in the first place. It is about trying to ascertain an understanding of how we make decisions that frame our work.

Cultural Elements and Considerations

Organizational learning is critical to making change in the work we do, whether that change is small, moderate, or transformational. The people in the organization create culture together. Some of the conditions required for effective learning include:

CONSIDERATIONS

Learning requires space and freedom. Do not limit your learning potential by containing it within organizational dogma and the various biases that exist throughout the group.

We all learn differently. Some of see confusion where others see clarity. Welcome both rather than get frustrated with one another.

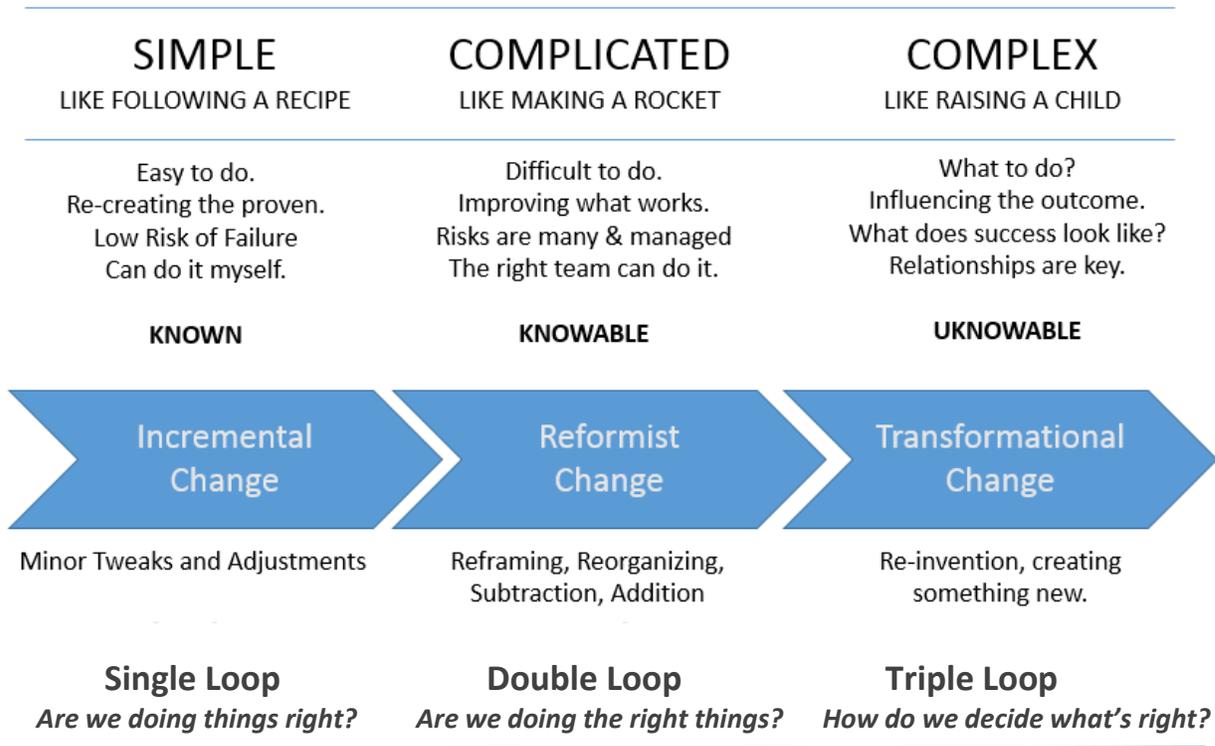
Break up your learning groups so that people do not sit together in camps or stovepipes. Sometimes the best learning comes from outside our normal associations.

If you are trying to learn how to correct or turn around a problem, embrace your failures as a learning opportunity. Blaming one another won't foster trust, much less successful engagement.

Don't overload one another with too much information. Get focused on what data is required to help you

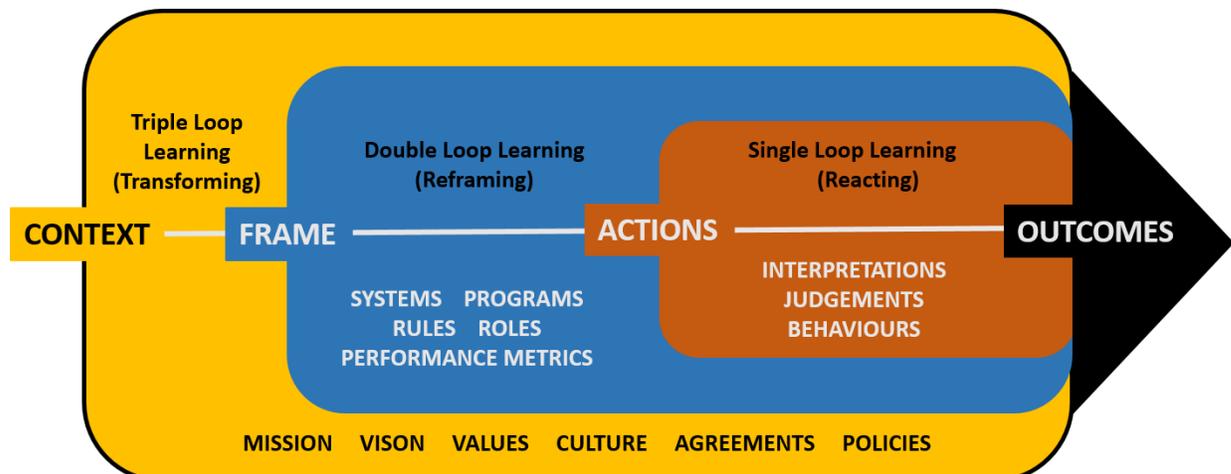
A learning culture includes growing people's abilities to dialogue, use wicked questions, engage in Appreciative Inquiry, deploy some Upside Down Thinking, and engage in a variety of facilitation methods.

Single, Double and Triple Loop Learning is related to Brenda Zimmerman’s explanation of problems or challenges as being Simple, Complicated, or Complex. As well, this learning approach is connected to the various types of change: Incremental, Reform, and Transformation.



Organizational and Learning Framework

Learning together benefits from a framework that helps ensure clarity about what we are trying to learn about. In an organization, there is Context, Frames, Actions and Outcomes. The diagram below provides an overview of the connections and differences between the terms. Single Loop Learning tends to focus on actions. Double Loop Learning focuses on the frame within our actions take place, and Triple Loop Learning gets to the core of things: our purpose, the values that guide us, and so on.



Learning awakens us to possibility and acting on possibilities compels us to learn.