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AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL AWARENESS AS A CATALYST FOR MANAGERIAL AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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This article argues and illustrates that autobiographical research, writing, and conversation that engenders autobiographical awareness, form a significant catalyst for managerial and organisational development toward continual quality improvement and the creation of learning organisations.

The article also argues that autobiographical writing and conversation is a key process – indeed, an indispensable process – in social scientific research based on the action inquiry paradigm (Torbert, 1991).

Previous Findings

According to our previous developmental studies of managers and organisations (Fisher, Merron and Torbert, 1987; Fisher and Torbert, 1991; Torbert, 1987, 1991), the earliest stages of managerial and organisational development that encourage continual quality improvement in practice are the parallel and analogous Strategist and Collaborative Inquiry stages (see Table 1). Table 1 shows that very few managers (around 10%) and few organisations develop to these parallel stages. These findings therefore raise the question: what activities are representative of a Collaborative Inquiry stage learning organisation and are conducive to managers' developing to the Strategist stage?

Another aspect of our research permits us to address this question. Over a number of years, we have tested 192 managers' ego development stage at least twice, over periods ranging from 21 months to eight years, using Loevinger's sentence completion form (Loevinger and Wessler, 1978). Of these 192, 25 had experienced one or two developmental transformations, and the other 167

had remained at the same developmental stage. What accounts for the difference? Perhaps many factors, but our research documents one factor the presence or absence of which correlates strongly with whether or not the individual experienced developmental transformation during the period under study (see Figure 1).

% Managers (n=497) at stage %	Stage	Personal development	Organisational development
0%	1	<i>Impulsive Impulses rule reflexes</i>	<i>Conception Dreams about creating new organisation</i>
2%	2	<i>Opportunist Needs rule impulses commitments</i>	<i>Investments Spiritual, network, and financial</i>
8%	3	<i>Diplomat Norms rule needs</i>	<i>Incorporation Products or services satisfy market or political constituency</i>
46%	4	<i>Technician Craft logic rules norms</i>	<i>Experiments Alternative structures and strategies tested</i>
34%	5	<i>Achiever System effectiveness rules craft logic</i>	<i>Systematic Productivity Single structure/strategy institutionalised</i>
10%	6	<i>Strategist Principle rules system</i>	<i>Collaborative Inquiry Self-amending structure to match dream/mission</i>
0%	7	<i>Magician Process (interplay of principle/action) rules principle</i>	<i>Foundational Community Structure fails, spirit sustains</i>
0%	8	<i>Ironist Intersystemic development rules process</i>	<i>Liberating Disciplines Widen members' awareness of splits or alignments among mission/structure/ operations/outcomes</i>

Table 1 Stages of Personal and Organisational Development

(based on Torbert, *Managing the Corporate Dream*, 1987, and *The Power of Balance*, 1991)

Figure 1 shows that 22 of the 25 adults we studied who *did* transform over several years from the Technician or Achiever stages to the Strategist stage *have participated in ongoing self-inquiry groups which integrate autobiographical conversation and writing*, with roleplays of day-to-day efficacy in work and personal relationships, and discussion of the group's own process (Torbert, 1987, 1990; Fisher and Torbert, 1991). On the other hand, 165 of the 167 persons we studied who did *not* transform to a later developmental stage over the same period also did *not* participate in such ongoing self-inquiry groups.¹ These findings, in turn, lead us to the question: what occurs in these self-inquiry groups that generates development? What is 'autobiographical awareness' and why is it so strongly associated with development? In one sense, this article is an effort to describe the independent variable in a field experiment.

	<i>Did develop to later stage</i>	<i>Did not develop to later stage</i>	Total
<i>Did participate in a/b self-inquiry group</i>	22	2	24
<i>Did not participate in a/b self-inquiry group</i>	3	165	168
Totals	25	167	n = 192

Figure 1 Effects of Autobiographical/Behavioural Self-Inquiry Groups on Managerial Development

In the body of this article, we first present the 'autobiography' of the two different, but related, self-inquiry settings in which 22 of the 25 adults who developed to the Strategist stage, participated. Next, we examine more closely

¹ These numbers result from combining findings from two different studies. The first study (n = 177) occurred in the early 1980s and involved before and after ego development measures of two Boston College MBA cohorts separated by the 21 months of the programme. The second study (n = 17) occurred in the late 1980s and involved administering an ego development measure and a two-hour tape recorded interview. Figure 1 includes those members of the second study from whom we had an earlier 'pre' measure. Increasing age and educational level, the two variables most likely to correlate independently with later developmental stage, do not account for the findings shown here. Measured by Goodman and Kruskal's tau, participation in autobiographical/behavioural self-inquiry groups improves the likelihood that a person will develop to a later stage by 81%

the context within which participants write and talk autobiographically. Excerpts from participants' written autobiographies are included. Then we discuss what these settings imply for the conduct of human inquiry (Reason and Rowan, 1981). Finally we discuss what the characteristics of those settings imply for quality improvement programmes that seriously aim at helping an organisation develop into a Collaborative Inquiry stage learning organisation, and helping managers develop to the Strategist stage where they can begin to understand, enact, and encourage continual quality improvement.

The Two Self-Inquiry Settings

The two types of groups, whose autobiographical and professional inquiry-in-practice supported the developmental transformation of 22 of the 24 participating adults that we measured over several years, began with an MBA seminar entitled 'Consulting: Practice and Theory'. This course is perceived as special because there is always a waiting list for it and it requires the instructor's permission to enter, and because most of the students who take it do so as the beginning of a clinical training process for consulting, which includes working with four first-year MBA project groups during the following year. In short, entry into the course requires a high degree of voluntary initiative and commitment on the part of aspirants. Participants are asked to write three papers for the course, one of which is an autobiography (the course and the papers will be described in more detail in the next section).

Eight to ten participants continue to work together with the course instructor as consultants to four project groups during the following year, along with weekly, two-hour practicum sessions where discussion alternates between administrative issues, consulting issues in working with groups, and personal development issues that members wish to continue exploring. Such a self-inquiry-in-practice group has existed each year since 1980 (the research findings include two such groups in the early 1980s).

The second type of self-inquiry group is a group of alumni from this programme, all of whom have taken the Consulting course, but not all of whom have served as consultants. This group, entirely voluntary from the outset, meets one evening every three weeks throughout the academic year and takes a weekend retreat together each summer. Most years, sub-groups of three have met regularly in between each group meeting to work together more intensively. This group discusses current, on-the-job dilemmas of the members, as well as any other personal development issues the members choose. It has existed, with some continuing and some changing membership each year, from 1985 to 1990. Although as many as three faculty members from the school have participated in given years (discussing their own developmental and on-the-job issues), the group has no formal leadership.

The gradual, long-term impact of these ongoing groups on managers' development can be exemplified by outlining the developmental careers of two members who were actually measured three times over a period of six years. The

first member took the consulting course, but did not serve as a consultant. Two years later, he took a 'job sabbatical' (self-financed from savings), but remained unclear about personal vision and returned to work at the same company; two years after that, he joined the alumni self-inquiry group. Throughout this time, this person was measured at the Technician stage of development. A year later, he again left his job, and this time decided to start his own small consulting company. He continued to meet with the alumni inquiry group throughout this period, and, a year after starting the business, was measured at the Strategist stage of development. Thus for this person the initial course and the autobiographical writing itself, as well as the intervening four years when he was not engaged in an ongoing self-inquiry group, did *not* generate development. However, two developmental transformations *did* occur during ongoing participation in the alumni self-inquiry group and while he was starting his own business.

The second person took the course, served the following year as a consultant, and showed a transformation from the Technician stage to the Achiever stage over the 21 month period of her MBA programme. This person joined the alumni self-inquiry group for two years, then continued meeting with one other member from that group on a regular basis for a third year. When measured at the end of a fourth year, she showed a second transformation from the Achiever stage to the Strategist stage.

In both cases, six years elapsed between the initial measure and the final measure showing two developmental changes. These are two of only three cases in all of our longitudinal research when a person has shown two developmental transformations during the period measured (the third person also moved from the Technician to the Strategist stage according to the measures, during the 21 months of taking the Consulting course and serving as a consultant to first-year project groups).

The Setting for the Autobiographical Writing

Class time in the Consulting course is devoted to discussion of readings, to roleplays of managerial/consulting situations that participants experience at work (or in family settings, if they wish), and to feedback about the effects of each person's managerial/consulting style on others. In addition, each of the 15 participants is asked to serve as a consultant to the course itself from the first moment of the first meeting, and to intervene whenever he or she believes such intervention would further group development toward a high performing learning organisation.

One of the three papers each student writes concerns his or her consulting style as revealed by transcripts of tape recordings of course sessions (the transcripts are prepared by the students; one student/half hour of recording). Students analyse the group as a whole and their own efficacy from various theoretical perspectives (Argyris and Schon, 1974; Putnam, 1990; Rossmoore, 1989; Schein, 1969; Smith, 1991; Torbert, 1973). This paper provides students with

a close 'read' of the behavioural challenges they currently face in becoming more effective as professional consultants. The exercise as a whole also cultivates students' ability to 'read' ongoing conversational action more closely. The exercise symbolises the concern in this learning process for moment-to-moment experiential awareness, choice, public testing of perceptions and intentions, and increasing efficacy. Here is an excerpt from one paper, to provide a flavour:

'I had been reading the transcripts as we received them, but several days before the paper was due, I needed to read the entire bunch to assimilate how I was going to address the paper. I finished the first reading and was struck by several aspects of my own quotes . . . but I had no concept as to the content of the paper. So I read the transcripts through for a second time, then a third, and still had very little to write. I was stuck because I wanted to externalise and formalise a paper, yet the very topic demanded me to internalise on paper. This has been my first lesson. I am very controlled in how much I let out.'

The paper circles around this theme of extreme self-control. As it progresses, he gradually relaxes this boundary, and in the following year he shared the 'unsharable' with the consulting group, other colleagues, and even spoke in public. The paper continues:

' . . . I first characterised my quotes using the concepts of advocacy, inquiry, and experimentation. I advocate quite a bit, inquire a fair amount, and experiment almost never . . . (three pages of detailed analysis follow)

Now we arrive at my lack of experimentation. This really relates back to the subject of my guardedness . . . I want to control what I say. I conjecture this relates back to my desire when I was going through adolescence, high school and college to keep (a certain) fact . . . hidden from everyone . . .'

The second paper is the 'biography' of an organisation in which the student has worked or is currently working. This paper applies a theory of stages and transformations in organisational development (Torbert, 1987) to that organisation, attempting to 'make sense' of the organisation's current problems, dilemmas, and intervention needs (as well as fleshing out or critiquing the theory wherever it appears inadequate). This paper has the effect, almost universally, of making more sense both out of the theory and the organisation for the student. More dramatically, the paper frequently has the effect of increasing the student's sense of relatedness to, and strategic efficacy in, the organisation because it encourages the student to make newly 'self-evident' organisational interventions. A number of examples are offered in *Teaching Action Inquiry* (Torbert, 1991b).

Nowadays, for example, students frequently report that their organisation is sponsoring a major 'quality' initiative that they have felt anxious and sceptical about. The organisation may indeed have mixed motives and little competency in implementing such an initiative. (If it were clear and highly competent, the quality initiative wouldn't be necessary!) At the same time, students often

recognise through writing the organisational biography that developmental transformation is inevitably 'messy', that the organisation's initiative can be used to legitimate changes they have not previously felt encouraged to take, and that they may actually be able to help the organisation as a whole succeed in better defining and accomplishing its strategic intent.

The Autobiography

The third paper, as already mentioned, is an autobiography. One purpose of this assignment is to help students sharpen their current developmental position. They compare key events in their lives to the developmental growth process described in Kegan, 1982, and Kegan and Lahey, 1983; (related developmental theories include Alexander et al, 1990; Fowler, 1981; Gilligan et al, 1990; Perry, 1970; Loevinger and Wessler, 1978). This ad-knowledge-ment helps them appreciate the depth and flavour of their commitment to their current managerial/consulting style. It also helps them to define the transformational challenges that currently face them, if they choose to face the challenges. Even more striking, writing the paper seems to open students more profoundly to their own development, as the examples below will illustrate.

This outcome would obviously *not* occur if students did not develop trust in the instructor who is reading their papers, if students were not willing to write honestly, and if students felt as though they were objectifying themselves and reducing their individuation by comparing their personal experiences to a general theory. So, in order for this paper to be truly meaningful, it is written after all the course meetings, where an explicit aim has been to develop high trust within the group. Also, students are urged to describe their experiences prior to any attempt to make sense of them theoretically, and then not to force-fit theory to experience. Moreover, whereas sharing of the first papers is encouraged, absolute confidentiality about these papers is cautioned (if a participant chooses to share his or her autobiography, the other is explicitly *not* obliged to reciprocate).

But, and perhaps most important, because Kegan's (1982) theory is about an open-ended logic of development itself rather than about the more closed-ended logics of each distinguishable stage, the comparison of their experiences to this logic helps students to see the sense in what before was inter-stage nonsense – the hope in what before was inter-stage depression. The striking outcome is that students feel *dignified*, as Kant (1981) would predict, by experiencing that their tangled and apparently 'arbitrary' or 'wildly irrational' experiences can make rational sense in a larger, evolving sense of reasoning. Thus, through the three papers together and the conversation in these self-inquiry groups, a person's lifetime journey (the autobiography) is brought into contact with an organisation's lifetime journey (the-organisational biography), with particular attention to how effective their own micro-actions in the present are (the review of consulting style as revealed in transcripts). This kind of simultaneous appreciation for lifetime and present moment, for self and other, is what we mean in this article by the phrase 'autobiographical awareness'.

An Example of 'Autobiographical Awareness' in Writing

To give one example, one sometimes intimidatingly bright, crisp, focused woman wrote her autobiography at one sitting near the end of the course, after a session during which the instructor introduced a prolonged exercise about leadership, membership, and intimacy that began by asking people to recover direct memories from their sixteenth year. After discussing her most prominent sixteenth year memory with one other member, as she drove home that night, she writes, 'I suddenly saw my life on a time line and I could clearly identify the transformations of my personality and the major and minor events that led to these transformations'.

Part of what she saw was the positive developmental meaning of the most traumatic event of her life that had occurred during that sixteenth year – how, through her actions, she had moved from a submissive 'Diplomat' interpretation of the traumatic situation to an assertive 'Technician' action. Another part of what she saw, simultaneously, was how the explicit meaning she had made of that event at the time – that she needed to toughen up and guard her boundaries – did not need to be the end of the story; indeed, that this style had become taken for granted and was now inhibiting her managerial/consultative effectiveness.

The story concerned her Christmas visit with her beloved grandfather:

'He told me how much I reminded him of my grandmother who had died before I was born . . . We sat on his bed and went through the treasures in the box and he proceeded to tell me about how much he loved me, how he loved me more than my other two cousins, and then he brought out several large savings bonds that were in my name as a testimony to his love for me. I started to cry, I felt very helpless, and very sorry for how lonely I knew he was. Then he started to touch me and take off my blouse while telling me how he always felt so close to me. I started to sob – at that moment it all came back to me. I understood why I had felt so uncomfortable before and why I detested the smell of brandy and other hard liquors. As he continued to undress me and kiss me, I became outraged at the thought and the memories that were flooding into my mind of other events of my childhood when he had done similar things to me – always offering to help me change, creating exercises and games that just we would play. I was horrified, scared, and furious, and with a strength I never really knew I had, I threw him off me and onto the floor . . .

I started to change incredibly from that day on. I became very assertive and developed the attitude that things would only start happening in my life if I made them happen . . .'²

² This excerpt and the following ones are quoted with permission of the authors (and they have seen and been invited to comment on a draft of this article). The papers were written at different points over the past 12 years.

By the end of the paper the student recognised that her 'hard' exterior was still very much in evidence and that she could afford to experiment with relaxing that shell. Over the following weeks and months, she proceeded to take a number of initiatives with her family and at work that conveyed sharing and caring and generated trust. At work, she helped a divided and ineffectual work group to become much more cohesive and to make significant positive contributions to an organisational change process.

A Second Autobiographical Excerpt

Although the assignment only suggests a 10-page paper, the average paper is twice that long, and one student wrote 77 pages of riveting and well-analysed material, concluding: '(The developmental books) are like great signposts for which I was searching, in order to get a clue as to whether I was on the right road, as I struggled to be more effective'. This quote may leave the impression that the student had become an uncritical 'true believer' in developmental theory, but the body of the paper carefully documents (among many other things) qualities of her experience at odds with the sequential element of developmental theory. For example, she shows how Achiever stage themes permeate all the times of her life from the age of two and a half when she memorised the Cowboy Dan story, including when to turn the pages so that it looked like she was reading. She now realises that Cowboy Dan himself was an archetypal Achiever (long-term goals, results-oriented, striving for excellence, master of his own destiny), and she felt a deep affinity for him (and her careful memorisation indicates that she was already achieving excellence in action as well!)

This woman was extraordinarily successful in business terms. For her software company, she managed six product representatives half-time and sold to her own accounts half-time. The company had 23 other full-time sales people. Thus, she represented 1/47 of the sales force. Nevertheless, she generated a full 40% of the company's sales revenue! This extraordinary level of achievement occurred in spite of *and* because of a personal history of extraordinary physical abuse by her mother.³ For example:

'My brother's birth brought another set of responsibilities into my life. My

³ The reader will note that, in terms of their content, both of our extended examples concern abuse and the 'dark side' of human biography. There are certainly many examples of developmental transformation that do not concern abuse - e.g. a woman illustrating how participation in the women's movement and its ideology helped her transform from the Diplomat to the Technician stage. However, none of those papers brought together as many different elements of autobiographical awareness process as these two. Hence, our choice to present these two cases. From another point of view, these cases illustrate how people in moments of developmental crisis participate in constructing the crisis situation, both in the ways they choose to act at the time and in the way they later come to interpret and reinterpret the events. Before they write their autobiographies, many of our students consider their lives rather grey and prosaic. In writing their autobiographies, they often discover the drama of their lives - the dark, the light, and the colour spectrum.

mother threatened that she would kill my brother if I did not take care of him for her. Knowing how out of control my mother could get, I had no doubt that she would do this. For years now she had been cutting articles out of the paper about mothers who went beserk and killed their kids. I was very afraid of her and what she might do. My mother decided to have my brother sleep in my room with me so that I could get up with him in the middle of the night. At least this meant that I did not have to sleep with my mother anymore My brother was colicky and therefore up most of the night. It was very difficult to go to school after having been awake with a baby all night. However, I managed to make it through all the top level courses.

Once during this time I woke up one night to find the sun lamp turned on and pointed at me. My mother told me that she had planned to leave it on all night and let me die of sun burn! I was very afraid of her. I began to sleep with sharpened pencils in my hand, and with a knife under my mattress so that if she tried to attack me in my sleep, I would at least have a chance. I lived in total fear of my mother.'

Three years later, at the age of 17, this woman began to practise meditation:

' . . . I began to differentiate between having religious beliefs that guided one's life and the act of having to publicly manifest one's belief. This insight didn't come any too soon. I had begun to meditate, do yoga, and attempt astral projection. Through these efforts I learned to stop hearing when my mother would beat me or verbally abuse me. My mother was driven wilder by this, and again threatened to kill my brother if I continued to do my yoga and meditation. She forced me to return all my books on meditation and Eastern culture to the library and to throw out the ones that I had bought. This forced me to realise that while some physical positions were more conducive to meditation, I could practice many elements of it, such as breathing techniques, in any position. I had learned a very important fact, that the outward manifestation could be in total opposition to what was happening inside . . . '

These brief excerpts provide only glimpses of the bizarre life this woman led as a child, but they suffice to indicate that, mysteriously, her capacity to respond as she did in many ways strengthened her.

Now, we skip forward to the end of the paper where she is describing her current behaviour at work, which she has just learned from feedback within the self-inquiry group is in some (much less bizarre) ways analogous to her mother's ability to appear sane to the outside world while tyrannising her family:

'The description of (Harold) Geneen (of ITT) in *MCD* (Torbert, 1987) reminds me of my behaviour at this time in my life when it says of Geneen, "his own goal-oriented behaviour could be responsible for destroying a team and making a goal unreachable" (p. 111). While I had always been

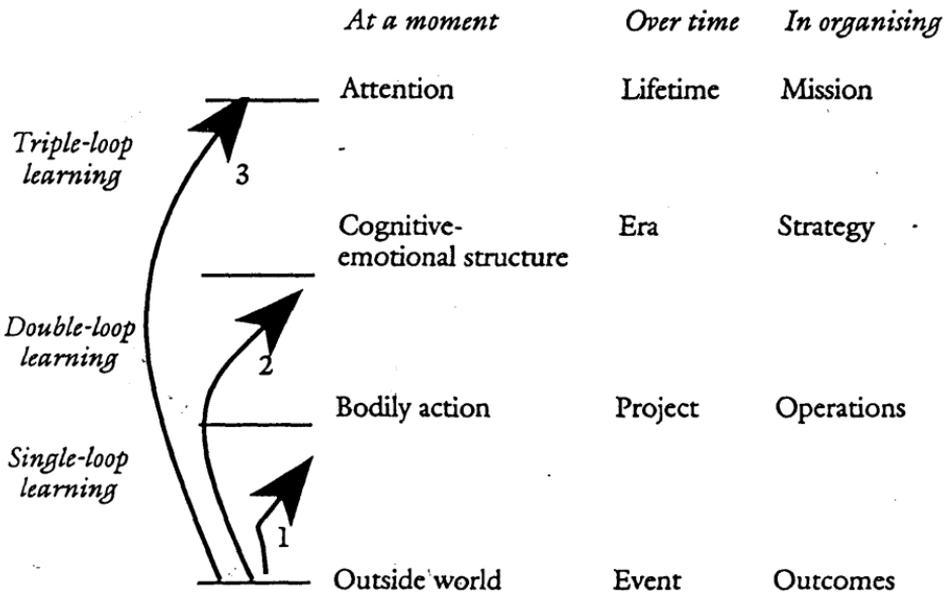


Figure 2 Single-loop, Double-loop, and Triple-loop Learning

strategically diplomatic with my customers, I would often be much too direct with in-house people. In fact, my co-workers would often ask, 'How does she sell anything if she treats customers the way she treats us?' I was still manifesting a lot of Achiever characteristics and was letting my own goal-oriented behaviour get in the way of building a team with my co-workers. (My boss) realised that I obviously couldn't be treating the customers the way I treated my co-workers. However, he was shocked when he went on a sales call and saw how dramatic the difference was. My body language, facial expressions, pace, tone, vocabulary, pattern of intonation, phraseology and total interaction was different from anything he had ever seen in me. My boss suggested that I might want to try treating my co-workers like I did my prospects. I have begun to work on this and am amazed at the results . . . I have begun to be able to more consciously select from a wider menu of behaviours in more situations. My co-workers still call me by the nickname of 'The Piranha' . . . but new employees now ask old employees how on earth anyone could call a nice person like *me* a piranha! They are generally told, "She looks harmless, but don't try to get in her way. You'll be eaten alive - one bite at a time".

Our point here is that the primary characteristic of these autobiographies is a sense of self-recognition of oneself as being involved in an ongoing evolutionary process (Torbert, 1973). This self-recognition occurs in a narrative, lifetime context that neither behavioural feedback nor atemporal 'cognitive theory' (e.g. Argyris and Schon, 1974) ever touches. It *is* theory-guided, by a particular theory held in a particular way - a developmental theory that is not held too tightly or 'academically' by the instructor.

The Role of Autobiographical Writing, Conversation, and Awareness in the Action Inquiry Paradigm of Social Science

The notion that story or narrative is the primary manner in which organisational interventionists and people in general make meaning out of their experience has become widely argued in literary studies, philosophy, and social science in recent years (Bateson, 1979; Bruner, 1986, 1990; Mangham, 1978; Ricoeur, 1981; Smith, 1991; Spence, 1982; White and Epton, 1990). Torbert (1973; 1991, final chapter) introduces a further notion (see Figure 2): that there are three qualitatively different types of feedback, learning, and knowledge, only the last of which corresponds to autobiographical-awareness-in-action (see also Habermas, 1979; Percy, 1975).

The first type of knowledge is empirical, technical, and ahistorical: it permits us to achieve a goal over time – to get to the bathroom in this building or to fix a certain machine. In single-loop feedback and learning, a person or organisation learns to change specific behaviour or operation, in order to more effectively achieve a pre-determined and constant goal or project.

The second type of knowledge is theoretical and structural: it gives us a distinct, systematic perspective on events (usually implicit and taken for granted) that seems eternal during the historical/developmental era in which we hold it. Through double-loop feedback, a person or organisation learns in a way that changes the very structures, strategies, and goals within which single-loop learning occurs, in order to more effectively approach a relatively intangible mission, purpose, or principle. Through double-loop feedback, a person or organisation changes developmental stages or eras.

Double-loop feedback occurs in at least two circumstances: first, when the person allows his cognitive-emotional structure to be revealed to himself, illustrated by the first set of excerpts from the student having trouble writing his paper; or second, when the person acts in a qualitatively new way for her, as the illustration of the woman's memory of her sixteenth year shows.

The third type of knowledge is an experiential ('autobiographical') awareness that appreciates how time-bounded goals, eternal perspectives, and one's own idiosyncratic life interweave in each present moment. With triple-loop feedback, the very taken for granted purposes, principles, or paradigm – one's entire sense of one's life project – may be reintuited (Bateson, 1973); also, inconsistencies among mission, strategy, operations, and outcomes are observed *as they occur* (Torbert, 1987; 1991b). In other words, triple-loop feedback is based on a free attention simultaneous with the experience – an attention that interpenetrates the other three 'territories of experience' rather than becoming identified with any one of them. In this sense, the autobiographical papers are only proxies for, or at best instigators of, real-time autobiographical awareness. Again, the 'sixteenth year' paper and the circumstances leading up to and following upon its writing illustrate this unusual process. The woman sees her life as a whole and its distinctive 'eras' as well. Thus, the sixteenth year event is seen, through

the theory, not only as traumatic and survivable, but also developmentally progressive. At the same time, the question arises whether the current era has ended or deserves to end. The question arises *for her* what is developmentally progressive *now*, thus opening toward further transformation *in the present*.

Mainline social science – whether primarily quantitative or qualitative – concerns the interaction between the first two types of knowledge. By contrast, the third type of knowledge, which also embraces the first two types, is the aim of the autobiographical and behavioural self-inquiry groups mentioned in this article and of the action inquiry paradigm of social science (Torbert, 1991).

Implications for CQI Programmes and the Effort to Create Learning Organisations

CQI (or TQM) programmes have largely been developed in the business, rather than the academic context, so notions such as developmental transformation and single/double/triple-loop learning are not part of their rhetoric. The notion of a learning organisation, by contrast, is at least partially an invention of the academic world and *is* linked to the notion of frame-changing, transformational learning.

In neither case, however, is it clear that we can point to any examples *in practice* of such learning, even in books which claim to be practice-oriented (Maccoby, 1981; Tichy and Devanna, 1986).

The question to which this article gives a partial answer is, *how can development toward full enactment of CQI and learning organisations be encouraged?* This partial answer is deceptively simple: *Through the creation of voluntary, ongoing autobiographical and behavioural self-inquiry groups that aim toward triple-loop, autobiographical awareness.* Only through this kind of awareness can organisational members see, as they act, whether and when their own day-to-day operations are congruent or incongruent with those of the organisation's mission (see Figure 2).

We say that this answer is 'deceptively' simple because to create such relatively non-goal-oriented groups requires: 1) a deep interest; 2) a certain amount of skill and comfort interweaving highly personal material and issues of professional effectiveness; and 3) a vision that increasingly sees into the multiple layers of each moment (i.e. precisely the type of awareness that the self-inquiry groups cultivate). All of these are post-Achiever qualities which, as we have seen (refer back to Table 1), few managers in any given setting are likely to display, but which are needed if they and their organisations are to become capable of realising their potential. Quality programmes not aspiring to, and animated by, triple-loop awareness are likely to stall, or to become totalitarian and exploitative of their employees, rather than empowering.

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