Order and Diversity: Representing and Assisting Organisational Learning in Non-Government Aid Organisations.

Description

Tweet

No, history did not begin three years ago ;-)

â??It was twenty years ago todayâ?¦â?• well almost. Here is a link to my 1998 PhD Thesis of the above title. It was based on field work I carried out in Bangladesh between 1992 and 1995. Chapter 8 describes the first implementation of what later became the Most Significant Change impact monitoring technique. But there is a lot more of value in this thesis as well, including analysis of the organisational learning literature up to that date, an analysis of the Bangladesh NGO sector in the early 1990s, and a summary of thinking about evolutionary epistemology. Unlike all too many PhDs, this one was useful, even for the immediate subjects of my field work. CCDB was still using the impact monitoring process I helped them set up (i.e. MSC) when I visited them again in the early 2000â??s, albeit with some modifications to suit its expanded use.

Abstract: The aim of this thesis is to develop a coherent theory of organisational learning which can generate practical means of assisting organisational learning. The thesis develops and applies this theory to one class of organisations known as non-government organisations (NGOs), and more specifically to those NGOs who receive funds from high income countries but who work for the benefit of the poor in low income countries. Of central concern are the processes whereby these NGOs learn from the rural and urban poor with whom they work.
The basis of the theory of organisational learning used in this thesis is modern evolutionary theory, and more particularly, evolutionary epistemology. It is argued that this theory provides a means of both representing and assisting organisational learning. Firstly, it provides a simple definition of learning that can be operationalised at multiple scales of analysis: that of individuals, organisations, and populations of organisations. Differences in the forms of organisational learning that do take place can be represented using a number of observable attributes of learning which are derived from an interpretation of evolutionary theory. The same evolutionary theory can also provide useful explanations of processes thus defined and represented. Secondly, an analysis of organisational learning using these observable attributes and background theory also suggest two ways in which organisational learning can be assisted. One is the use of specific methods within NGOs: a type of participatory monitoring. The second is the use of particular interventions by their donors: demands for particular types of information which are indicative of how and where the NGO is learning In addition to these practical implications, it is argued that a specific concern with organisational learning can be related to a wider problematic which should be of concern to Development Studies: one which is described as â??the management of diversityâ?•. Individual theories, organisations, and larger social structures may not survive in the face of diversity and change. In surviving they may constrain and / or enable other agents, with feedback effects into the scale and forms of diversity possible. The management of diversity can be analysed descriptively and prescriptively, at multiple scales of aggregation.

Category

1. Uncategorized

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