



the benevolent society | children



Ford Associates

Organisational learning at The Benevolent Society

Integrating our philosophical approach & practice

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Introduction

- Interest in capturing the evidence about what works & integrating into *our approach*
- Interaction between this & practice wisdom on the ground
- Interaction with developing as *learning organisation*
 - Learning teams
 - Communities of practices
 - Bill Ford mentoring role

Session outline

- Introduction
- Why the need for *learning organisations*?
- The Benevolent Society journey towards becoming a *learning organisation*
- Developing our philosophical approach - what have we learnt?
- Where to from here?

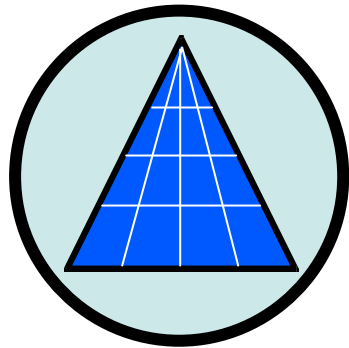
Background – The Benevolent Society

- Australia's oldest not-for-profit
- 650 staff
- Annual turnover \$30 million
- Children, women's health, ageing, social leadership
 - Centre for Children, 115 staff
 - Children's services, home visiting, early intervention, child protection, community leadership

Requires creation of “Communities of Practice”

industrial
economy

*Traditional
Organisations*



Knowledge
is divided

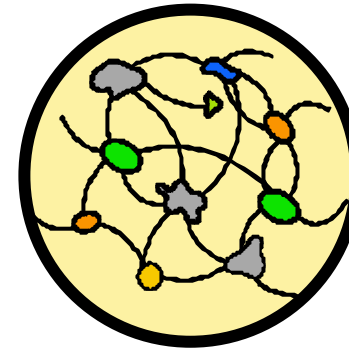
Knowledge
is boxed and sticky

Skills
are divided

Competencies
become core rigidities

**knowledge
& mobile**
ecosystems

*Learning
Ecosystems*



Knowledge
Is integrated

Knowledge
is mediated and flows

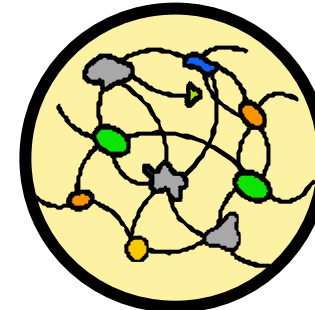
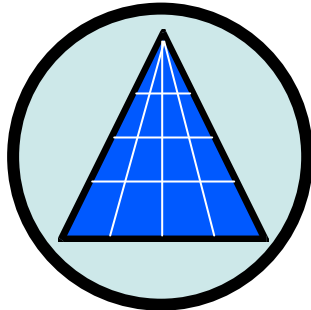
New skill-sets
are developed

Competencies evolve

Requires creation of “Communities of Practice”

industrial
economy

*Traditional
Organisations*



**knowledge
& mobile**
ecosystems

*Learning
Ecosystems*

from

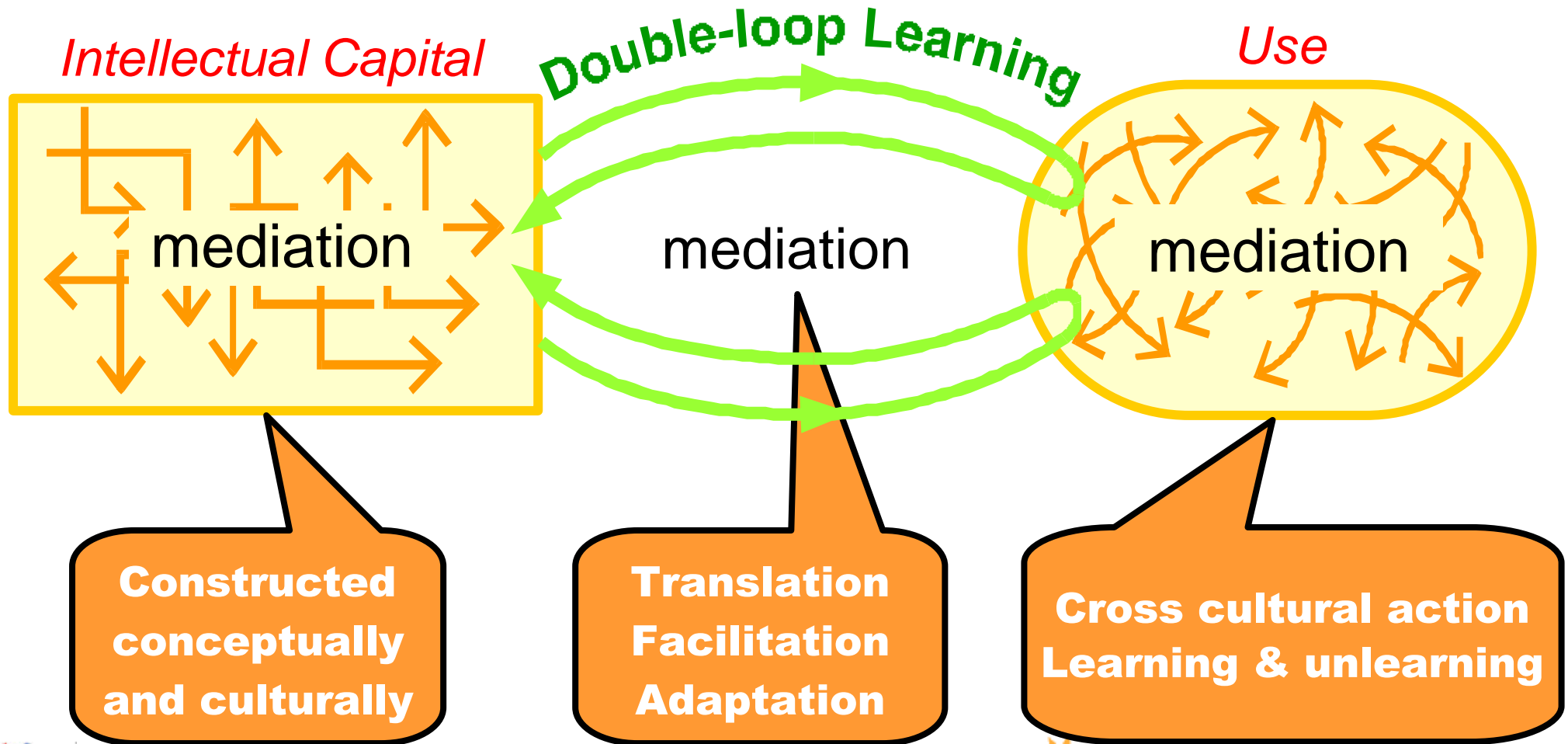
Traditional Work Practices

to

**Learning Based Work
Organisation**

- **Restricted skill range** → • **Innovative skill sets**
- **Specialist training** → • **Cross-cultural learning**
- **Knowledge control** → • **Knowledge sharing**
- **Fear of discontinuity** → • **Enjoying life long learning**
- **Individual & functional** → • **Communities of practice**

Requires mediating knowledge and know-how between diverse cultures



Requires a learning & knowledge friendly culture

- **Open sharing & caring**
- **Cooperative & competitive**
- **Action research & learning**
- **Learning communities**
- **Value in diversity**
- **Recognition & reward**

Benevolent Society journey

- Take off point
- Finding the right questions
- Learning teams
- Communities of practice
- Action research/learning

Take off point - key questions

The formulation of a problem is far more essential than its solution

- How to make a difference?
- How to share knowledge & use collective skills make our services better?
- How to tap the creative power of staff?
- How do we move from the conceptual to practical application?
- How to have a stronger focus on communities, respond better to need and demographic shifts?
- What sort of organisational culture supports this?

Why develop our philosophical approach?

- Uncovering more about what we do
- Coherent approach, integration
- Increased job satisfaction
- Evidence
- Capturing good practice
- Needing to update our stated approach

Aim

- To have our philosophical approach articulated so that it can more fully drive our strategy, systems, services, practices and future direction.

Our action learning model

- Capturing experienced based knowledge (1st hand knowledge)
- Capturing formal (2nd hand knowledge)
- Reflecting on the implications
- Inquiring and acting on the reflections

Adapted from SOL 2002

What we did

- Reflective focus in discussions
- Literature review
- Action research projects

What have we learnt?

- We need to share knowledge of our journey
- Practicing what we preach - eg Resilience – has given stronger base & structure to our multilayered work with children
- New knowledge & understanding being mediated across professional boundaries
- Cross cultural learning (dynamic interaction between formal and informal learning)

What have we learnt?

- Tacit knowledge needs to be recognised and captured
- Using the concept of communities of practice and learning teams
- Consulting is not enough
- Action research can play a vital role
- The importance of evaluation
- The reflective practitioner
- Importance of *Double loop learning*

Emerging issues & questions

- Dilemmas with the strengths perspective
- Difficulties with community engagement
- Balancing frank discussion with the party line (harnessing dissent & letting go of defensive practice)
- Difficult to be all encompassing - Individual service philosophy v overall CFC philosophy

Where to from here?

- Process has been a catalyst for
 - Developing service models, better articulation of what we do
 - New reflective mechanisms
 - New directions & practices
 - Clarity around aims and objectives
 - Evaluation
 - More attention to integrating our work eg in supervision
 - Changed induction processes

Next steps

- Refining our philosophical approach
- Integrating new processes and directions resulting from our deliberations

Conclusion

- Radical departure from traditional planning processes
- Closer to practicing what we preach

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