

---

# From individual to team learning: practical perspectives on the learning organisation

---

Roland Yeo

---

## The author

Roland Yeo is a Lecturer, Temasek Engineering School, Temasek Polytechnic, Singapore.

---

## Keywords

Convergence, Strategy, Leadership, Learning cycle, Organizational performance, Strategic planning

---

## Abstract

This paper distils practical perspectives from experienced consultants on an integrative framework on organisational learning and performance. The foundation of this framework is governed by behavioural and cognitive learning theories. Convergent interviewing was the methodology used to verify the practicality of the framework and provide insight for further development. Data derived from four organisational development consultants confirmed the framework's feasibility, but suggested additional issues to examine organisational learning further. The conclusion drawn is that there are distinct stages of learning but the relationship between them is robust and dynamic. Further, the notion of "triple-loop learning" is often misconstrued in practical contexts due to its level of abstraction. Effective leadership is regarded as the leitmotif in driving strategic organisational learning initiatives. However, leaders must consider the time factor involved, as such initiatives can only take effect after a period of time rather than immediately.

---

## Electronic access

The research register for this journal is available at <http://www.emeraldinsight.com/researchregisters>

The current issue and full text archive of this journal is available at <http://www.emeraldinsight.com/1352-7592.htm>

## Introduction

A review and analysis of the literature point to a gap in the various theories on organisational learning (Yeo, 2001). The gap suggests that many conceptual frameworks in the literature do not adequately explain how organisational learning affects organisational performance and success (see for example Griffey, 1998; Edmonson and Moingeon, 1998; Reynolds and Ablett, 1998). Through further synthesis of the literature, a research problem (RP) and four research issues (RI) based on this gap were derived in Yeo (2002). They are:

- RP.* How and why does organisational learning influence organisational performance?
- RI1.* How is organisational learning developed?
- RI2.* How appropriate are the three stages of learning (i.e. single-loop, double-loop and triple-loop learning)?
- RI3.* What factors influence learning during the three stages?
- RI4.* How does organisational learning influence organisational performance?

Yeo (2001b) also concluded with a preliminary theoretical framework which aims at bridging the gap between organisational learning and organisational performance. In addition, the framework underwent empirical testing through the methodology of convergent interviewing. The aim is to explore the research problem and four research issues as a continuation of the theoretical research conducted in Yeo (2002). Four organisational development consultants were interviewed to verify the feasibility and practicality of the framework. Findings from this convergent interviewing research will provide further insight into organisational learning and performance, enabling future empirical studies to be carried out to tighten the relationship between the two concepts. The process and findings of this exploratory research will be detailed in this paper.

---

This paper has benefited from the comments of the editor, reviewers, and Dr Chris Goldspink and Professor Robert Krone from the International Graduate School of Management at the University of South Australia.