

# Learning Organisations, now with Quality Assurance

## IAS Conference on Knowledge Based Economy Corporations in the KBE

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### Other words for "KBE"

It may be that the connection of 'quality' with learning and knowledge is obvious but I think it is often not part of an academic discussion about management and organisation. So the earlier part of this text may not be needed, although it remains the main point.

The 'Knowledge Based Economy' continues ideas about organisational learning. Recently guest editors for Management Learning (June 2006) quoted Peter Drucker - "We are living in a knowledge society that yields high returns on knowledge resources."

The KBE is connected with the idea of a 'Media Big Bang' , a book title I featured on a previous page about forms of [morphosis](#). 'Morphosis' is used in ' Media Big Bang' to describe some companies with ' a readiness to boldly abandon practices that are no longer useful and actively accept new changes.' The context is a perceived rapid change in media convergence. The book is written from experience in South Korea, where broadband has been widely available for at least four years. News is already moving online and the expectation is that books and journals will follow.

The idea of the KBE also continues some hopes built around personal computers and claims for 'desk-top publishing'. Theodore Roszac has recorded some of the 'heroic age of the microcomputer' in 'the Cult of Information'. "From its beginning, the microcomputer was surrounded by an aura of vulgarity and radicalism that contrasted sharply with the mandarin pretensions of the hightech mainstream. this is because so much of the new, smaller scaled technology was left to be developed outside the corporate citadel by brash young hackers." There are contradictions here with Apple for example a key part of the NASDAQ but thinking about the web as a major element in the KBE, some aspects of this continue. John Seybold was best known for his reports on desk top publishing technology but he had a much wider vision, of a '*new age* in which everyday people with knowledge and the opportunity to use it are the organizing principle of society.'.

Checkland (1998) describes the academic subject 'Information systems' as a combination of computer science and management 'with a host of supporting disciplines' but this follows a section on more general writing described as 'journalism', including Roszac. This has some interesting ideas, including the role of information in the earliest stages of the industrial revolution and the role of printing in the development of knowledge.

## British Origins of Anti-Performativity

Part of the critique of quality ideas is an objection to 'managerialism' and 'performativity'. The approach is based mostly on analysing something like 'quality' as language on the assumption that it disguises something else. A sentence such as "The Knowledge-Based Economy (KBE) conjures a world of smart people, in smart jobs, doing smart things, in smart ways, for smart money, increasingly open to all rather than a few. It has become the dominant economic strategy for many countries, regions, and cities and is endorsed by many economic, political, and social forces." may mean that KBE is the latest version of neo-liberal propaganda or an attempt at 'corporate culture'. It could be doubted that anything 'managerial' would ever appeal to academics in a tradition where vocational knowledge is only recently accepted as part of the scope. Critical Management Studies (CMS) has strength in the UK, something that calls for explanation. The traditions of British education may be connected with how it survives.

Since 1995, 'Making Quality Critical' has defined attitudes to quality for many academics concerned with management learning. As part of critical management studies it is intended as a challenge to any unthinking acceptance of quality ideas. For someone working with quality assurance the book often seems lacking in sympathy. My impression now is that the CMS project is concerned with 'corporate culture' as a general theme and that quality is just one aspect of this.

Recently *Management Learning* included a debate about CMS, starting with 'For Management' by Stewart Clegg and others. They write that CMS has a 'non-performative' intent, where 'performativity' is seen as "a means-end rationality where what is valued is the maximisation of outputs for minimum input".

"Antiperformativity" may have some idea about action or involvement but I cannot understand what it is. Nelson Phillips comments on the 'positioning of the critic in relation to the object of study and its practitioners' as 'central to the identity work that goes on within CMS. This identity through distancing may relate to the perception that CMS 'demonises managers'. In a reply Hugh Willmott characterised the starting position in 'entertaining, knockabout stuff' terms as an 'anti-management stance ascribed to CMS'- 'any support for management is a support for technocratic desires for performativity' ; management is both totalising and "bad".

The older UK universities have only become interested in business very recently. CMS may be a way to continue to maintain a distance. Sheldon Rothbatt studied attitudes to business at Cambridge during the nineteenth century and shows that his scope continued into the period between the world wars. "In the '30s perhaps 46% of all Cambridge graduates came from business families: and yet in 1937-8 (covered by Committee Report on University Education and Business 1946) only one third of graduates whose after careers were known returned to business. In the 1962 edition of 'Anatomy of Britain', Anthony Sampson noted a 1959 survey of 927 Cambridge undergraduates. 17% were choosing a career in business management or advertising but "only 8% would have chosen it if other professions- notably teaching, writing or social work - were equally remunerative."

(There is more on this section in a previous version)

## **Knowledge and 'data source reliability'**

The blog for *Information World Review* often includes discussion that turns up in print later. There was a recent post on a meeting they attended about e-learning.

"Education has to face the fact that the world has changed, searching is part of our lives, we go to Google, and that is the world we have to prepare our students for," said Professor Paul Leng, head of the e-learning department of computer science at the University of Liverpool.

Although Mark Chillingworth may have been covering the Online Information show for ten years or so, he is still fairly convinced about hard copy.

"Professor Leng's comments ring true, but at what cost, do we leave publishing and books on the shelves to waste away?" He later quotes Suw Charman, executive director of the Open Rights Group -. "You used to go to the library and you quoted from the books there. Uni lecturers knew where the information you used came from. The books in the library were bought by the university, ergo they were a reliable data source."

Chillingworth comments "That entire model is now almost entirely defunct. But the term "reliable data source" will never go away, students and lecturers will always need these, and its for information professionals and providers to look at e-learning and student behaviour to ensure their future."

The hard copy in libraries - books and journals- are seen as data sources. They contribute to knowledge when accessed. The knowledge through search engines -search engine constructed knowledge- differs from the Research Assessment Friendly knowledge found in university libraries. It tends to be less limited by specific disciplines and more mixed with application situations. It may be less edited and authoritative but it is easier to update and may have been reviewed by large numbers of people who are able to add comments or reviews as in the Wikipedia.

## **Modes of Knowledge**

In the UK there has been interest in modes of knowledge production as described by Gibbons and others in 1994. 'In mode 1 problems are set and solved in a context governed by the largely academic interests of a specific community. By contrast mode 2 knowledge is carried out in a contest of application. Mode 1 is disciplinary while Mode 2 is transdisciplinary.' The approach that works for science needs to be modified for social theory. There is opportunity for dialogue between modes 1 and 2. There seems to be an idea that universities could work at one level for research, another for teaching, and then another level for relating to the local economy. This is not going to work well for a subject such as quality.

Burgoyne and Turnbull James(2005) writing about leadership research comment that "The authors' experience of conducting the leadership development best practice research contrasts with what might be regarded as the traditional way of conducting Mode 1 research. Paradoxically, much of the discussion on Mode 2 research is conducted by contrasting it with Mode 1 (the norm), and is highly theoretical and conceptual. It is therefore of limited value to those who aspire to conduct Mode 2 research."

There is more on this in the final section of this paper.

## **Back to the "Learning Organisation"**

In the UK the actual term mostly used in the '90s was 'learning company'. This was the title of a book for managers by Pedlar and others. Today the 'learning organisation' is mostly associated with the '5th Discipline' by Peter Senge. This project has been continued with more consistency. Senge has not claimed that maintaining a learning organization is easy. The 'Dance of Change' deals with many examples of difficulty. The subject of 'Management Learning' developed to look at 'organisational learning' without claims about the possibility of learning organisations. CMS included critiques of human resources claims about learning environments. Attention moved on to 'leadership'. Leaders were assumed capable of characteristics that encouraged a learning environment.

The table shows the dates for the sequences of books linked to the Fifth Discipline and around the 'learning company'.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Title</b>
1990	Fifth Discipline
1994	Fifth Discipline Handbook
1999	Dance of Change
2000	Schools That Learn
1991	Learning Company
1994	Towards the Learning Company
1997	Learning Company Second Edition
1999	Organizational Learning and the Learning Organization

'Towards the Learning Company' and 'Organisational Learning' are both collections of academic articles. The Fifth Discipline books are all written as if for practitioners although academics also read them. "and the Learning Organization" is shown in small type as on the cover.

Senge worked at MIT, where Deming's books were published. The link with quality ideas is not explicit but is there if looked for. The 'Beer Game' is described as invented at MIT in the Fifth Discipline but was also a feature of Deming seminars about stats and systems. Alan Clark has used the Fifth Discipline section on the Beer Game as part of a Deming SIG look at Systems Thinking.

There were positive references to quality in the 'Learning Company' books. The 1991 version shows TQM and 'The Learning Company' as part of Organizational Transformation (p17). The equivalent diagram in 1997 shows only the Learning Company, as a response to 'Organizations as straitjackets : no integration of individual and organizational learning.' Deming is shown as contributing to the ideas around the Learning Company. He also appears in one of the glimpses with 'provocative sayings' in '97 and 14 points in '91. However there is no sense of his concern with system or the role of leadership.

The 2004 book - 'A Manager's Guide to Leadership' has an emphasis on individual learning and again not much emphasis on structure. There is a section on the EFQM Excellence Model complete with a diagram. However they comment-

"The problem with all such models - especially when they are made up of the lines, boxes and linearity of the wiring diagram or engineering blueprint- is that they encourage people to believe they are true.

'Leaders devise clear visions', 'systems produce quality', 'enablers lead to results' and so on. Such simple nostrums totter in the face of recent insights of complexity theory and of the old knowledge about the effects of power and politics in influencing what actually happens in organisations."

However, many managers believe in something like these diagrams. Senge has a much closer link to systems, something managers can understand in organizations. And the 'results' box on the EFQM model relates to economics.

The 2001 'Management Theory at Work' conference started with a keynote by John Burgoyne on the 'Virtual, Knowledge-managing, Learning Organisation'. As memory serves this was a provocative tour of prevailing ideas soon after the apparent web crash but aware of new directions that appeared strangely similar to many previous discussions. This keynote connected with much of the conference and was the sort of start that raises so many questions that it could have been returned to in the closing plenary.

(Similar issues were covered in a paper for the Networked Management Learning conference in 2000).

Unfortunately, in my opinion, the keynote on 're-imaging relevance' by Chris Grey was widely influential in suggesting that universities stop claiming to be able to contribute actionable knowledge and concentrate on critique instead. So far as I know the outline of a 'Virtual, Knowledge-managing, Learning Organization' has not been developed.

One of the papers asked why the 'learning organisation' had become so popular and studied it as a fashion rather than as something that might be implemented. This concentrated on Senge's work as an example of how vague ideas can easily spread.

More recently Paul Tosey has written in *Management Learning* about the "Hunting of the Learning Organization" as a "Paradoxical Journey" based on the Hunting of the Snark by Lewis Carroll. The 'idea' of the 'Learning Organisation' can be regarded as a Snark, but it is also a Boojum where there is a shadow side as 'it seems essential to regard learning as being regulated in organizations.'

Tosey's conclusion is pessimistic on behalf of the LO, as if it has served out a timespan, even as a subject for critique. "I am not optimistic for the future of the learning organisation as an idea, as I perceive that it is softly and silently vanishing away. There will be other Snarks to hunt, of course ; however, every Snark will turn out to be a Boojum."

In an article for *People Management* John Burgoyne wrote in 1999 that "It does seem to be true that after a decade of working with the idea of the learning organisation there are distressingly few, if any, case studies of large scale success with the idea. My interpretation is that the concept is right for the times, but that the first generation of learning organisation prescriptions has not been up to achieving large scale

sustained organisational reform. This is regrettable and disappointing, but it would perhaps have been a miracle if it had been otherwise. The total quality movement, which is, I think, the exemplar organisation reform recipe, has now been going half a century. I suspect that after its first decade it was very much like the learning organisation movement now: a number of differing prescriptions and some interesting pilot work. Larger scale successes were still to come. I think the learning organisation is following the same trajectory."

Yet it is never too late for the 'learning company' to make a comeback, possibly as part of the discussion on a KBE. There was one article in *Management Learning* about a transition from TQM to Learning Organisation as a 'strategy of renewal'. The links between TQM and LO were clear and TQM was seen as a positive base for moving towards a LO. The period studied was between 1992-1996 but the publication may reflect current interest.

The most recent *Management Learning* is a special issue on "Organizational Knowledge, Learning and Capabilities." One article is about 'Learning and Knowledge Building in Open Source Communities'. The criteria for a learning organisation could be argued to be relevant here. The K Desktop environment is a significant software product so there is a valid comparison with a company or organization producing software. The study included email and other online records as well as interviews. The way it is described in the article is sympathetic with no questioning that the intentions of open source are genuine. "The manifestation of learning processes led to concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation at the individual level."

Several Open Source projects have open websites for Quality Assurance, allowing anyone to get involved, at least at the level of reporting problems. For example-

W3C quality assurance tools	<a href="http://www.w3.org/QA/Tools">http://www.w3.org/QA/Tools</a>
Open Office	<a href="http://qa.openoffice.org/">http://qa.openoffice.org/</a>
Mozilla Quality Assurance	<a href="http://www.mozilla.org/quality/">http://www.mozilla.org/quality/</a>

## **Making Quality Critical**

The book 'Making Quality Critical' starts with the claim that the word 'quality' is pretty much meaningless. Rather like 'post-modern'. So here is a definition from the Wikipedia.

"Quality refers to the distinctive characteristics or properties of a person, object, process or other thing. Such characteristics may enhance a subject's distinctiveness, or may denote some degree of achievement or excellence. When used in relation to people, the term may also signify a personal character or trait. When used in relation to management, the term may be easily defined as "reduction of variability" or "compliance with specifications".

I think it is evident that this will be a concern for management. This is not just a consequence of

'management fashions.'

Wilkinson and Willmott (W&W) write that management academics "have been inclined to be contemptuous of its triviality, dismissing ideas about quality as merely the latest in a long line of management fads or 'snake oils'. Deming did change presentation over time but there is consistency between what he said in '50s Japan and in '80s USA. Similar ideas are presented today, linking back to Shewart in the '30s. This is not a fad. W&W also write that quality authors tend not to reference other academic literature. This is true in both directions. Most quality theory has developed through practice. Few academics appear to be interested in quality as a subject.

W&W write that from the quality 'expert' perspective "any good or service can legitimately receive the seductive sobriquet of 'quality' so long as it consistently meets the standards - however 'inferior' they may be- that beat the competition within its market niche." this is taken from a very minimum approach, before 'continuous improvement. This is not an accurate representation of what quality is about. They recognise that Deming is critical of 'management by fear' but they then ask "Do advocates of quality management who emphasise the importance of employee involvement or urge respect for humanity (i.e. Ishakawa 1985) regard such values and priorities as unassailable virtues, or are they viewed principally as a means of raising productivity?" In my own view, there is clearly a difference in how Ishakawa ideas have worked in US/UK compared to Japan but the theory is still there to consider. It could be used as a way to criticise quality management in UK or US companies.

The first article is fairly positive about what is possible in a number of cases. They started with quality circles before moving to TQM. Yet in the introduction there is objection to accepting this as something to be welcomed.

"It is not necessary to deny that changes brought about by TQM can have benefits for employers - such as more control over their immediate working environment, greater pride in their work, and improved promotion opportunities - in order to appreciate that TQM can marginalise other frames of reference that offer alternative perspectives on the claimed benefits of TQM."

This is the kind of statement that makes me think that 'anti-performativity' really has no form of action or engagement. The preferred state is to understand a critique. I may not have understood this but discussions of anti-performativity always seem to me to back off any available activity in favour of understanding.

By the way, quality circles now seem to be only happening in Asia. This may be because of a shared cultural rather than a sustained plot by managers to impose values by fraud.

Hugh Willmott wrote an article for *M@n@gement* in 2003 on Renewing Strength: Corporate Culture Revisited, reviewing an earlier article from 1993 (also available from *M@n@gement*). This is a sustained attack on corporate culture of all kinds, TQM is just one example. For the main argument it does not matter whether TQM as some benefits for management.

## Deming and Quality Assurance

In a previous paper on 'Values and Dr Deming', I quoted from Kosaku Yoshida's 'revisit' to Deming's 14 points. In discussion, Yoshida admits that his article is not based on empirical evidence and 'has a tendency to overgeneralise the nature of American and Japanese organisations'. The article was written in 1996 and even then there were changes happening away from traditions such as lifetime employment. However Yoshida stated that 'Japanese management will never easily throw away advantages such as long-term commitment to its employees, securing trained workers, emphasising the solidarity of the entire company, and accenting trust between management and employees. Yoshida looks at Deming's 14 points in two groups associated with two main distinctions between American and Japanese approaches. One is that Americans are analytic, believing that if each part is perfect then the aggregate should also be perfect. Japanese are holistic, encouraging co-operation and long-term views. Also Americans tend to accept results within limits, while Japanese seek the centre of desirability. This connects with continuous improvement.

The original point numbers are in brackets

### Founded on desirability

- Eliminate the need for mass inspection by building quality into the product in the first place.(3)
- Improve constantly and forever the system of production and service to improve quality and constantly decrease costs.(5)
- Institute training on the job.(6)
- Institute a vigorous program of education and self-improvement. (13)

### Founded on holistic thinking, including co-operation.

- Create constancy of purpose toward improvement of product and service...to stay in business, and provide jobs. (1)
- Stop purchasing based on cost. Move towards a single supplier for any one item. Build a long-term relationship of loyalty and trust. (4)
- Institute leadership. The aim of leadership is to help people and machines and gadgets to do a better job.(7)
- Break down barriers between departments. (9)
- Eliminate work standards (quota) on the factory floor. Substitute leadership.(11)
- Eliminate management by objective. Eliminate management by numbers, numerical goals. Substitute leadership.(11B)
- Remove barriers that rob the hourly worker of the right to pride of workmanship. The responsibility of supervisors must be changed from sheer numbers to quality.(12A)
- Remove barriers that rob people in management and in engineering of their right to pride in workmanship. Abolish annual merit ratings and management by objective.(12B)
- Put everybody in the company to work to accomplish the transformation.(14)

The two other points are 'Drive Out Fear' ( 8) and point 2 – 'Adopt a new philosophy'. According to Yoshida, an earlier version of point 2 was "We are in a new economic age, created by Japan". 'Drive Out Fear' could be in either of the groups above. Control charts are not used to impose targets but to show a holistic view of the process. From this version of the 14 points it appears that a role for leadership is to

support a holistic view of organisations. Yoshida reports that Deming would not use the term TQM. Yoshida's conclusion is that "TQM as practised in the US is analytic, and the Deming philosophy is a holistic approach that is most absent within the American business culture."

Deming is NOT in favour of targets and league table. It would be possible for people in education to base an alternative form of quality assurance on his ideas. the OFSTED approach to 'inspection' sometimes seems to be the 'reject and scrap' model that quality assurance moved away from. The recent announcement that 'failing schools' will get more inspections while those where 'self-assessment is seen to be working will get less seems to me to align inspection with punishment and is very unlikely to support a creative 'system review.

The Deming Special Interest Group at the IQA are holding two meetings in 2006 about Deming and Ford. This is a chance to look again at how far the '80s enthusiasm for Deming ideas has been implemented. My impression is that there are still a lot of open questions. Why is Toyota doing so well? Is there something about Deming that US organisations have not actually tried yet?

Deming is not promoting 'management by objectives' as seems to be assumed by those opposed to quality. Actually his ideas could be a base for a quality approach on education that was in line with other values.

## **Soft Systems**

Systems Thinking is one part of the 'System of Profound Knowledge' as described in 'The New Economics'. The other aspects are variation, psychology and the theory of knowledge. There could be a connection with Soft Systems Methodology. See 'Soft Systems as a learning model' in my earlier paper 'Is ISO 9000 worth another look?' The most recent book by Peter Checkland has got the word 'learning' in the title - **Learning for Action: A Short Definitive Account of Soft Systems Methodology, and Its Use** Practitioners, Teachers and Students . Available at the end of July, direct to paperback, it seems designed to reach a wide audience. There is an extract on the Amazon uk site. Soft Systems relates to quality assurance in that the systems model is seen as just a model, to contribute to learning. This could include a set of procedures. In a paper on 'model validation', Checkland wrote that 'the question of whether or not a given model of a human activity system is relevant or not in a particular study has to be answered by the learning process itself'. How this learning actually happens within a soft systems project has not been much studied by those who concentrate on learning more directly. At least I have not found much published.

## **Trust**

At a recent workshop on organisations I heard about Paul S. Adler and work on trust in the Knowledge Based Economy. I have started to look at this and found an article about 'Flexibility versus Efficiency', a case study of a Toyota plant. The NUMMI plant at Fremont CA was closed by GM but started again as a joint project with Toyota. I have not studied this in detail yet but it deals with both quality issues and learning. There is reference to work by Argyris and Schon as well as quality circles or 'pilot teams'.

A striking aspect is that Adler quotes from Hill's chapter in the 'Making Quality Critical' book as evidence

that there is a "cultural" transformation required by TQM. This interpretation is different to the guidance in the book's introduction.

Adler looks at trust as one aspect of the knowledge economy, together with markets and hierarchy. It would be interesting to look at co-operatives and other social enterprises to consider if trust has contributed to how they develop knowledge.

### **Web site as part of a system**

To demonstrate the relevance of quality assurance, here is a look at two sites, *M@n@gement* and OhmyNews. Neither is explicit in publishing a quality policy but both are worth watching to see how online publishing can evolve. Some of their activities can be seen to relate to quality assurance.

OhmyNews is a Korean site, an example of 'citizen journalism'. At a recent forum, OhmyNews founder and CEO Oh Yeon-ho said that citizen journalism is 'the most advanced model' for both Web 2.0 and UCC (user-created content). "Underlying both concepts is the belief that collective participation will lead to an optimum solution or conclusion. In other words, decisions will best be made when there is truly mass participation through the Internet." He said that citizen journalism "depends not only on the participation of the masses but on the participation of those who think critically and creatively." He went on to explain the difficulties of sustaining this. "Though we are an open platform accessible to everyone, not everyone can write a news story. Only those citizen reporters who are passionately committed to social change and reporting make our project possible. The main reason that citizen journalism has not grown and spread more rapidly is the difficult task of finding and organizing these passionate citizen reporters in waiting."

The 'open platform' and the organizing can be seen as quality issues. The culture changes through learning. In other sessions Todd Thacker explained that some reporters learn from comparing their submissions with the published version. The submission software is now fairly sophisticated, with stages to check that all required words and images have been submitted. Some reporters have requested more html options on a menu but it is possible to write code directly. The story is on a database as soon as submitted though there is a warning that it has not been edited. So a reporter can at least tell friends about the link. There is a bulletin board for story ideas and also email communication between reporters. So some articles are developed online as bits of text. During the conference something kept coming up that I would describe as a quality issue. What is the credibility of facts from a citizen reporter? How can information be checked by the editors? Learning by reporters will follow from this discussion.

Only some articles are featured on the opening page or the main page for each section. Some require further work. But most stories will be accepted. The prominence depends partly on how readers respond. If there are many stories on one issue they may be grouped with one in the lead.

*M@n@gement* is also online, a journal for academic articles. The original web design was influenced by the look of a paper publication. Much space was taken up by a list of the editorial board. This has now changed with this list on a subsidiary page and a prominent spot for a search engine based on Google. An

earlier note claimed that a search engine would be available so this issue was resolved. Now there is a note that the form for submitting papers will be available in the autumn. This is very close to the form of a corrective action with a target date.

According to different figures at different times, at least 80% of proposed papers are rejected for publication. This seems to me to be a quality area worth working on. Just because there is an 80% reject rate there is no reason to think the 20% are any better. Obviously *M@n@gement* insists on high standards for publication but would it be possible to improve the process such that most proposals resulted in papers of an acceptable standard? How this might happen could involve aspects of both quality and learning ideas. It seems this reject rate of at least 80% is not unusual. The special issue of Management Learning on "Organisational knowledge, learning and capabilities" published in June 2006 followed a conference in April 2004 attended by 250 people. Of these 50 submitted articles of which 42 were reviewed and 4 were published. The KBE has developed in part because of the personal computer and the web. News publishing is currently changing fast towards something widely distributed. Academic journal publishing has gone online to a large extent but the format often remains as defined by print. This is an area where quality attributes could be considered, such as speed and scale.

### **ISO 9000**

There is a question whether ISO 9000 can contribute to a learning organisation or whether it limits everything to conformance. In the UK there has been less interest recently than during the '90s. However there is continuing growth in certification, particularly in China. There is not much information yet on how the standards are being used so this is an area for future study.

### **An experiment with Swickis**

A Swicki is a new form of search engine combining some elements of a wicki. It appears as a 'word cloud' of related terms. Anyone can start one. You can choose your own or a favourite website to give priority. Also suggest words that are always part of the search. On the results page there is an option to promote or demote a site so the search engine remembers this for future searches. There are stats available on which words have been used for searches so these can be added to the original word cloud. Swickis are hosted by Eurekster, who provide similar services to large sites.

I have set up several, partly to offer a search facility for the websites I work on and partly to find out more about how this can work. I am aware of a discussion about weak links on the web and how this may change ideas on 'communities of practice'. Chris Jones spoke about this at the workshop on Education. I don't understand all the arguments around this and also can't follow the discussion about a 'linguistic turn' and a 'realist turn'. A search engine is about the weakest link around. It is used for a very short time by large numbers of people. However so far the Swickis do seem to work in that the searches are what I would expect and there is feedback. On the 'learn9' one, 'soft systems' is the most used word. This encourages me to do more about this on the site. 'Anti-performativity' is getting more traffic than learn9 as it happens. Main problem is that CMS turns up weblinks on Content Management Systems as well as critique. Maybe this is actually quite relevant or could be. The Swickis can change over time so there will

be a combination of words and stats that can be studied through various lenses.

There was a range of values around the 'Learning Organization', sometimes looking back to the '60s, sometimes connecting with new interpretations of Foucault and Habermas. My own view is that these ideas would have had more influence if there had been more inclusion of topics such as organisation and output. The discussion around the KBE may have a similar direction. By including quality there could be a better chance of relating to outputs from systems while values may be maintained as part of this.

"Networked Management Learning" relates to both a manifesto and publications concentrating on dialogue. The manifesto is clear enough to understand but it is not easy to relate practice to some of the recent writing (Ferreday, Hodgson, Jones 2005). My own understanding is that dialogue is only part of what happens on the web. There is a value for information access as well. I favour using simple terms such as 'the web' and 'learning'. It may not be encouraging to state that a website can be designed as if it was the documentation for a quality system. Disciplines such as 'Information Systems' seem to be constructed from other sources. Recently 'technology-enhanced professional learning' has been promoted by PROLEARN and others just as the technology aspect became normal for people learning online at work. There is still a project to work through all the words. The manifesto refers to 'e-quality' so quality could be part of the discussion.

Burgoyne and Turnbull James (2005) consider 'design science' as part of their discussion on Mode 2 research.

"Questions about 'know-how' are the focus of design science (Van Aken, 2004, 2005). He offers the notion as 'professional' or 'prescriptive' science aiming to guide practice from an informed science base through the application of technological rules. He is careful to argue that design science produces research-based guidelines to inform action choices, rather than specific prescriptions for action. He contrasts design science – which produces normative guidelines and 'management theory', with explanatory science – which seeks to describe and understand producing 'organisation theory'.

How would design science relate to Networked Learning?

## References

### Weblinks

*Guardian* Talk - "QR - what is that about?"

<http://educationtalk.guardian.co.uk/WebX?13@QR@.7753ad79/5>

James Dyson report in *Guardian*

<http://education.guardian.co.uk/egweekly/story/0,,1817000,00.html>

Stats for Swickis

<http://www.learn9.net/stats.html>

*Information World Review* blog

[http://blog.iwr.co.uk/2006/07/elearning\\_thoug.html](http://blog.iwr.co.uk/2006/07/elearning_thoug.html)

Deming SIG next meetings about Deming and Ford

14 September 2006

7 December 2006

[http://www.iqa.org/deming%5Cdeming\\_events.shtml](http://www.iqa.org/deming%5Cdeming_events.shtml)

Likely to include video from Management Wisdom

<http://www.managementwisdom.com/>

Chris Grey

Against Learning

JIMS Working Paper 0104

[http://www.jims.cam.ac.uk/research/working\\_papers/abstract\\_01/0104.html](http://www.jims.cam.ac.uk/research/working_papers/abstract_01/0104.html)

OhmyNews <http://english.ohmynews.com>

Google Scholar citations for 'Making Quality Critical'

<http://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&lr=&cites=3676956807295994094>

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