Learning to Learn: The Challenges in Russia

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Generalizing about organizational change in Russia is difficult.   The education of managers in eastern Europe generally includes an initial five-year degree equivalent to a U. S. masters degree, specific post graduate work in management   and some re-qualifying education every 3-5 years.   In the old Soviet Union, there were four levels of management training, and in the new Russia several universities have opened MBA programs.   In many ways the curricula of Russian managers exceed the rigor in U. S. training (McNully, 1992).   This training structure might lead to the false conclusion that change would be easier and more welcome by the managers of Eastern Europe.

Transforming the economies of the new republics has not been easy, nor have the results been the same in every country (Shama, 1993).   Some training under the old Communist regimes was illusory, and in some countries, including Russia, party bureaucrats were suspicious of managers and discouraged most advanced management training except for party indoctrination (Cakrt, 1993).   All the new economies suffered higher levels of inflation, recession, a drop in exports and distribution problems, and all managers in the new economies faced higher competition.   Managers report reductions in demand, higher inventories and increasingly choosy consumers in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland, but the reverse is true in Russia (Shama, 1993).   Managers in Russia have been slow to adjust their practices to accommodate a market economy (Shama, 1993).

Some difficulties in Russian organizations are due, no doubt, to an unstable shifting political climate. Some difficulties are due to the challenges of managing paradoxical organizational demands and adapting contemporary management theories to the current economic conditions. Other producers of these difficulties may be traced to historical Russian educational practices beyond management training.

This essay approaches these transformational difficulties with an appreciation for the importance of speech communication to developing the individual and the society. Speech communication is central to the works of Lev Vygotsky, A. R. Luria, and other Russian scholars investigating the relationships between speech communication and thought. These Russian researchers focus on spoken language, speech communication (Dance, 1967; Dance, 1982). For example, Vygotsky's *Thought and Language* (1962) was not just concerned with words or with the rules for using words but also with how words were spoken and how actions involved in using language related to thought and higher cortical functions.

Speech communication influences the development of social relationships.   An important concern is the development of emergent social structures and the social and psychological well being generated from the cooperative use of speech communication. Just as higher cortical functions develop as a function of speech communication, so too do interpersonal relationships develop as a function of the communication episodes created by the individuals in those relationships (see Dance & Larson, 1976). Just as individuals develop as a function of their speech communication, so too do societies exist as a function of their communication activity.

This essay begins with an abbreviated description of human learning. The next section describes the learning organization and two levels of organizational learning. The section ends by highlighting the influence of culture.   The final section explores Russian cultural values and the prospects for social transformation.

Learning

From Russian research, human behavior may be the product of three systems. The sub cortical system directs reflexive actions to stimuli. The first signal system involves responses requiring attention, elementary

thinking and minimal anticipation. The second signal system is the locus for higher mental processes such as human language, planning and evaluation.

All living organisms are capable of monitoring their behavior. That is, the behavior itself and the outcomes of behavior may be perceived. As an organism learns, it adjusts its behavior to accommodate its environment, a process of adjusting the complexity and variety of the organism's behavior to the complexity and variety in the organism's environment (Ashby, 1956). Behavior becomes habitual when the organism has "learned" to react to similar stimuli with similar behaviors. The original behavior that may have been initially selected through activities in the first signal system or, in the case of humans, in the second signal system as well, may be reduced to the level of reflex.

There are three conditions for learning: (1) a healthy organism, (2) a serendipitous environment, and (3) rewards. From a Western perspective, the living organism perceives a cue, reacts or responds, and obtains a reward (Miller & Dollard, 1941). If the organism is damaged in some way, the stimuli are not perceived, the reaction or response does not occur, or there is no or less value on the assumed reward. If the environment is not serendipitous, the stimuli may not occur, or no reward may be provided. Without the potential for reward or punishment, the organism may fail to recognize stimuli as a cue.

As humans mature and develop higher mental processes, rewards become internalized and environments can be imagined. Behaviors can be rehearsed mentally. Learning may be vicarious and the product of an imagined or symbolic reality (Bandura, 1986). Furthermore, learned cue-response-reward sequences can be stored and recalled. Stimuli are capable of cueing tacitly held sequences with little or no delay as reflex replaces reflection. Even dogs salivate when the bell rings.

These tacit assumptions about behavior are often modeled as rules. They may be called coding rules, action-assembly rules (Greene, 1984) or assembly rules (Weick, 1979). When the rules are about interactions between humans, the rules are called social rules, communication rules, or, at the highest level of generality, norms (see Shimanoff, 1980).

Humans tend to enact behaviors that conform to already held rules and expectations (Weick, 1979). That is, even when confronted with novelty, humans tend to respond reflexively. For example, in interpersonal conflict

there is the tendency to react reflexively and to enact previously performed rituals that are destructive to a relationship (Hocker & Wilmot, 1991). Organizational planning often becomes an exercise in creating explanations for behavior already performed (Weick, 1979). The tendency is to alter behaviors within the framework of already held expectations, but the expectations do not change.

Autopoesis is the ability of an organism to reform itself, to restructure itself (Maturana & Varela, 1972). That is, the organism responds to novelty by altering its assembly rules or creating new ones. The organism learns, but it continually invents new ways to learn. For a human, this is a process of changing the perceptual frames of reference for perceiving the environment. The Greek expression for this is metanoia, a change of mind (Senge, 1990). Creating and inventing assembly rules is common in the child, appears to be rare for a mature adult, and rarer still for a social unit such as an organization.
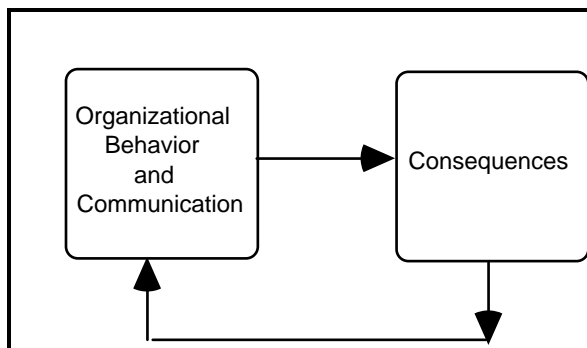
Organizational Learning

Single Loop Learning

Feedback is input that is output. An organization obtains feedback when it monitors the outcomes of its behavior. When it adjusts its behavior to produce more rewarding outcomes, it shows learning.

Figure 1

Single Loop Learning

Argyris (1993) called this type of learning single loop learning. Single loop learning requires precise definitions and measures of output, well-defined organizational structure and processing, and well-defined goals and objectives. When outputs fall short of goals, the organization recognizes a performance gap (Rogers & Agarwala-Rogers, 1976). The organization can adjust the behaviors to more efficiently accomplish its goals.

Single loop learning also relies on communication since learning will not take place without the free flow of information. Organizations with relatively open boundaries and active scanning and monitoring of the environment are more likely to learn (Huber & Daft, 1987). Decentralized, less formal structures with labor divided into smaller, more autonomous work groups will increase the flow (Jablin, 1987a). Information flows are more likely to increase if the managers and workers are skilled at interpersonal communication and can maintain healthy and supportive relationships (Falcione, Sussman, & Herndon, 1987). Of course, leadership is important.

Learning problems at this level may be the result of several factors. There may be imprecise definitions of output, processes, structures, or goals. The organization may lack a knowledge of alternate behaviors, or there may be little slack available to engineer change. Communication may be designed so that information flows are inadequate. An organization may have little motivation to learn, failing to hold itself accountable to clients and customers. Any or all of these difficulties will limit the organization's ability to recognize performance gaps and to initiate innovation (Rogers & Agarwala-Rogers, 1976).

Double Loop Learning

Single loop learning is common in Western organizations. It is part of the tool kit of management information systems experts, classical bureaucracies, and even the current efforts at quality control. In the end, behaviors are adjusted to improve the likelihood for desired outcomes.

Although the intentions may have been to adjust behaviors and learn, organizations are similar to individuals in that organizational behaviors may become habitual. Learning will only be adjustments of degree. Innovation will be limited. Organizations will stop learning to learn. Understanding

the limitations to organizational learning requires an understanding of organizational culture.

Organizations are perceptual constructs shared by the members of the organization (Weick, 1979). That is, humans play roles in an organization, and their communication includes the sending and receiving of messages about their role concepts, role expectations and relational expectations performing in the organization (Katz & Kahn, 1978). Organizational members use these tacit and shared understandings to guide their own behavior and to make sense of organizational life (Weick, 1979).

As noted earlier, these shared perceptions may be described as rules (Weick, 1979). Some rules are about labels and symbol-referent relationships and are called constitutive (Farace, Monge & Russell, 1977) or cognitive rules (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). When a subordinate learns that the manger's "offer of an opportunity" means a request to do extra work, the subordinate is learning a constitutive rule.

Regulative rules are about patterns of behavior (Farace, Monge & Russell, 1977). They are sometimes called normative rules (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). When a newcomer learns the accepted way to address the boss, the subordinate is learning a regulative rule.

There are also political rules that explain how to get resources and what counts as resources or rewards (Frost, 1987). The rules specify preferred behaviors, and the preferences are reflected in who gets salaries, promotions, bonuses and other obvious forms of material reward. Some rules remain informal such as the rules for obtaining respect and consideration while some preferences are legitimized in the formal rules for obtaining rewards.

Taken as a whole, these rules are sometimes called the governing variables or the frame of reference for organizational behavior (Argyris, 1993). The rules are inferred from observing behaviors such as emblems, symbols, folklore and ritual. Studying these artifacts reveals the organizational culture (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1982).

Newcomers are socialized into an organizational culture (Jablin, 1987). They learn about the culture from the organizational communication. Although some formal means of communication contribute to socialization, the primary means of getting information and learning how to make sense of organizational life is through the social information provided informally (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978).

No rule may be so specific as to limit behaviors absolutely since there is always more variety in behavior than can be assumed by a rule. However, organizational behavior varies within the constraints of the organization's culture. That is, if the organizational rules value deception, several forms of deception may occur as long as there is deception.

Inevitably, behaviors will arise that are not covered by existing rules. When the variety of human communication exceeds the capacity of rules, new rules must be created to account for the variety (Weick, 1979). The situation is similar to any organism adjusting to overload. Living organisms will first adjust to overload by the easiest and simplest means before attempting more complex and difficult means (Miller, 1978). Organisms will attempt to escape the overload or live with the error before attempting to shut off the flow of information or attempting to increase their processing capacity. Similarly, organizational members will ignore exceptions or live with error before attempting to change behavior or attempting to adjust the organizational culture (Argyris, 1993). Furthermore, organizational members are likely to reinforce already existing and limiting rules before they examine and change the rules. These efforts at reinforcement tend to increase the likelihood of exceptions and inconsistencies rather than limit their occurrence.

Argyris (1993) identified a typical pattern. First, the organizational member denies or ignores the exceptional behavior. Second the organizational member communicates as if the exception did not exist, clearly an inconsistent message. Third, the member then acts as if the message were not inconsistent. Fourth, the organizational member makes the inconsistency in the message and the acting as if there is no inconsistency undiscussable. Finally, the organizational member makes the undiscussability of the undiscussable also undiscussable.

For example, in the mid-70's, a growing university attempted to change its informal and inefficient operating procedures by creating a formal documentation system. All the members of the administration were instructed in a uniform procedure for creating operating letters and job procedures. At first, the changes resulted in improved processing of university support services and academic administration. In the end, university operations ground to a halt as university personnel spent more time writing reviewing and consulting procedures than in providing services

(see Gratz & Salem, 1985).   A system intended to improve efficiency reduced efficiency.   Why?

In this instance, many new policies failed to provide guidelines for critical services (e. g., accounting) while some departments continued to develop very precise procedures and policies for unimportant activities. When exceptions and contradictions occurred, the administrators either ignored them or continued to write additional policies.   Existing and new policies were made available for review by all university personnel affected by the policy.   Personnel seldom reviewed the policies during the assigned periods, and reviews seldom resulted in rewriting existing polices or in any meaningful discussion about the structure of the policies.   The result was that exceptions were common and that most people tended to ignore them or continued to write new policies in an attempt to cover the deficiencies of older ones.   This produced policies that not only failed to guide existing conditions, but also contradicted earlier policies.   Ignoring the exceptions led to inconsistencies that led to more inconsistencies.   The intervention designed to clarify through documents produced meaningless, ambiguous and paradoxical documents.

The pattern of paradoxical messages reinforces the organizational culture until the time that the consequences of organizational behavior and communication can no longer be ignored.   At this point, however, the crisis appears mysterious and it has been camouflaged by the pattern of dysfunctional communication.   The "root causes," part of the organizational culture, have been reinforced.   The crisis will be handled by configuring other organizational behavior compatible with the organizational culture. Again there will be a lag before the next "crisis" emerges, and so on.

What type of organizational culture encourages paradoxical communication? In America, such an organizational culture may include the following rules and preferences (Argyris, 1993):

1.   maintain control;
2.   be rational;
3.   advocate your views without inviting inquiry;
4.   minimize losing and maximize winning;
5.   don't express negative feelings;
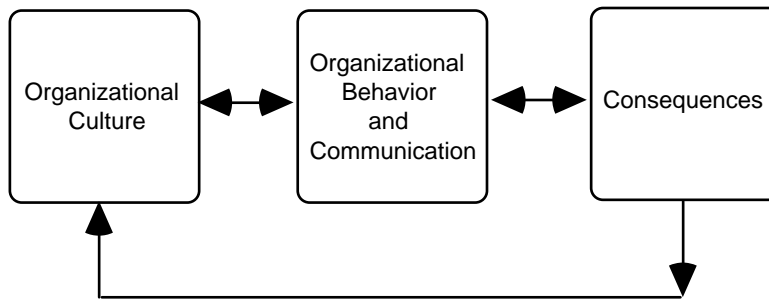6.   save face, both yours and others.

These are common regulative rules in traditional and contemporary organizations. When an organizational culture contains such rules, paradoxical communication and the emergence of a crisis are inevitable.

For example, the chair of an academic department, a well-known author and trainer, employed the techniques advocated in her discipline when confronting a faculty member performing below professional standards. She gave positive feedback, encouraging the faculty member to improve, rather than describing any of the negative feelings of other faculty members. At the request of the senior faculty, she scheduled private meetings with the faculty member to stimulate him to action. She designed projects for him in an attempt to reinforce his self worth and to empower him. All efforts failed. In fact, the faculty member perceived the chair's efforts as singling him out for some type of punishment. The behaviors normally associated with effective interpersonal communication backfired.

In this case the rules noted earlier worked to initiate and sustain a pattern of paradoxical communication. Everyone involved wanted to be in control and rational, at least to be perceived as such. The senior faculty did not examine their own criteria for evaluation, and so they could advocate their own views without questioning them. Everyone wanted to find a way to paint the picture in a positive light. The faculty member continued to deny deficiencies in performance in spite of the evidence, blaming the chair to save face. Communication around the case was sufficiently ambiguous to allow everyone to perceive most actions as reinforcing their positions, even though the positions were contradictory. The crisis developed when the faculty member who had been receiving poor evaluations actually applied for a promotion.

Figure 2

Double Loop Learning

Double loop learning means that organizational members use data to challenge their own assumptions about behaving and communicating (Argyris, 1993). To engage in double loop learning means that the organization continuously learns to learn. Processes are set in place to alter the organizational culture, and the perceptions and expectations of the members. Without this challenge, organizational cultures will change very slowly, and changes in organizational behavior and communication will only be changes in degree, conforming to the organizational cultural rules.

Changing organizational cultures and deeper values can be accomplished. The process is often called reframing (Watzlawick, Weakland & Fisch, 1974). It suggests that the perceptual lenses for viewing reality be adjusted and altered, and that individuals should periodically behave in a way that challenges the legitimacy of any frame.

There are several methods for accomplishing this. The common features of these methods include the following:

1. awareness that change is needed;
2. identification of problematic behaviors or consequences;
3. analysis and evaluation with special attention to the explanations of behavior;
4. brainstorming alternative behaviors;
5. testing and practicing the use of behaviors;
6. routine use of behaviors, but
7. recycle and return to step 1.

These steps are common to many other problem solving procedures besides reframing.

Argyris (1993) described one intervention that included the first three steps. He asked clients to select an organizational problem they felt was important and to imagine a conversation with the person most likely to be presented with the problem. Trainees composed the script of the conversation as they imagined it. They were asked to also indicate what feelings and ideas they would <u>not</u> say. In the ensuing discussion, participants could analyze and evaluate their assumptions about organizational norms.

Moving to actual changes in behaviors is the most difficult part. It will probably not happen in one session or in ten. It will take repeated efforts at change to uncover the deepest organizational rules that restrict change. Furthermore, organizational members must abandon the working habits associated with those older rules as they discover and practice new behaviors. They must learn new ways of learning. Without the attempt, however, organizations will repeat old errors in novel ways.

<u>Multiple</u> <u>Loops</u> <u>and</u> <u>the</u> <u>Influence</u> <u>of</u> <u>a</u> <u>Society's</u> <u>Culture</u>

The previous models do not go far enough. Just as an organization's culture frames organizational behavior, so too does a society's culture and an individual's values frame an organization's culture. Newcomers come with their own sets of cultural values and interpersonal needs. The culture outside the organization provides its own set of preferences and expectations (Hofstede, 1991). Organizational members from one culture may expect highly differentiated masculine and feminine roles, but members from another culture may anticipate less gender specialization. Some members may thrive on uncertainty while members from another culture will avoid uncertainty to the point of violence. Some cultures hold the individual in high esteem, but others may subjugate individual desires to the group. In some cultures status means observable differences in behavior, but members from other cultures would be insulted by a display of status. Some cultures are inclined to focus on the short term while others look far ahead. In the end, membership in one culture or another constrains an organizational member to anticipate and be comfortable with organizational cultures that

are consistent with that member's culture outside the organization (Hofstede, 1991).

Newcomers develop their interpersonal needs as part of becoming an adult (Schutz, 1958). One individual's maturation experiences may predispose the individual to anticipate and endorse more interaction, more communication, than an individual with significantly different experiences. The needs for belonging, social support, order and control vary. Individuals are more likely to participate and remain in organizations whose culture is compatible with individual needs.

Cultural values and individual needs are similar to organizational culture in that the preferences and rules of all are tacit. That is, cultural preferences, interpersonal needs and organizational cultural rules seldom reach consciousness unless expectations are violated. As such, all three act as silent constraints on behavior.

Cultural values and interpersonal needs are deeper than the organizational counterpart. As such, cultural values and interpersonal needs constrain the creation and use of an organizational culture. For example, individuals with varying, but high needs for interaction from a culture that values uncertainty will create an organizational culture that is radically different from the organizational culture created by individuals that have low needs for interaction and have lower tolerances for ambiguity.
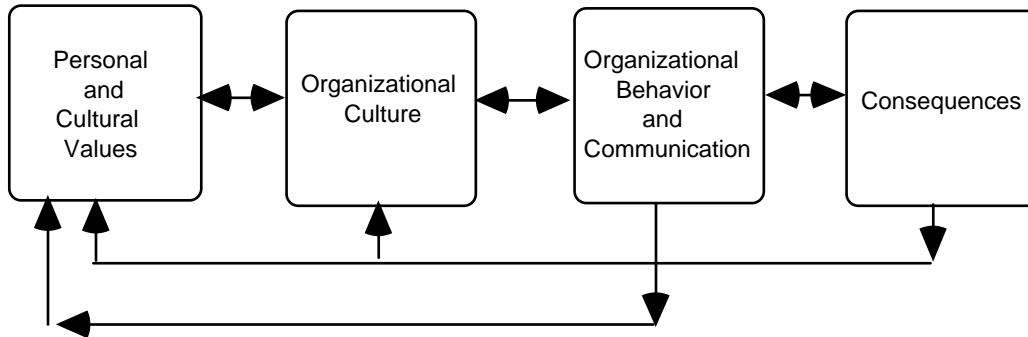
The relationship between cultural values and interpersonal needs with organizational culture is similar to the relationship between organizational culture and actual communication behavior. Organizational cultures will vary, but they will stay within the boundaries set by the cultural values and needs. For example, there is greater variance between organizations from differing cultural values than there is between organizations generated from similar cultural values (Hofstede, 1991).

To summarize, there are four important predictors of organizational communication: cultural and personal values, organizational culture, the communication behavior itself, and the consequences of past behaviors. Cultural and personal values act as a constraint on the other features. Organizational culture acts as a constraint on communication behavior.

The mutually causal relationships between constructs are displayed in Figure 3. Influences from left to right tend to take less time, but influences from right to left are slower. All factors influence each other both directly and indirectly.

Figure 3

The Relationships Between Psychological, Sociological and Cultural Factors
and Organizational Communication

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┌──────────┐     ┌──────────┐     ┌──────────────┐     ┌──────────────┐
│ Personal │     │          │     │ Organizational│     │              │
│   and    │◄───►│Organizational│◄───►│  Behavior   │◄───►│ Consequences │
│ Cultural │     │  Culture  │     │    and      │     │              │
│  Values  │     │          │     │Communication │     │              │
└──────────┘     └──────────┘     └──────────────┘     └──────────────┘
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Consequences can affect organizational behavior and communication directly and immediately. Consequences can affect organizational culture directly, but the effects are delayed. Similarly, consequences can affect values directly, but the impacts on cultural and personal values will take longer. Consequences also influence organizational culture indirectly through communication behaviors, and consequences influence cultural personal values indirectly through communication behavior and organizational culture. Again, the indirect impacts will be slow.

Communication behavior has direct consequences, and communication behavior directly influences organizational culture. The influence on consequences is immediate, but there will be a lag on the influence of communication behaviors on organizational culture and a still longer lag on the influence on personal and cultural values.

Organizational culture directly affects communication behavior and personal and cultural values, but the impacts on the latter are slower. Organizational culture affects consequences only in an indirect manner, through organizational cultures direct influence on organizational communication and behavior. Similarly, personal and cultural values directly affect organizational culture while the impacts on behavior and communication and the consequences of actions are only indirect. This

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indirect influence is due to the tacit nature of values and organizational culture.

The model in Figure 3 displays a cybernetic system, one capable of correcting its own perceptions and behavior. At the very least, organizations could monitor direct effects and correct antecedent conditions if the effects are undesirable. For example, if organizational behaviors are not profitable, the system can probably learn this and to correct its behavior. An organization and its members could learn and adapt.

Learning will be more likely if cultural and personal values encourage it. A culture that avoids uncertainty and sees exceptions as threatening is unlikely to monitor or correct (Hofstede, 1991). Differences would be unwelcome. Conflict would be avoided, and homogeneity would be enforced.

Organizations with organizational cultures that discourage unpleasant news, either personal or task related, will not monitor behaviors or consequences. Similarly, personnel must be trained to monitor and communicate effectively. An organization cannot learn if its personnel do not know how.

Figure 3 differs from Argyris in three ways. First it suggests mutually causal links and lags between all factors. Second, it models an additional double feedback loop between personal and cultural values. This suggests that cultures and individuals may change more readily if they monitor their behaviors to examine their deeper values. Finally, the model contains a triple feedback loop between personal and cultural values and consequences, again suggesting a way to change deep values.

Russia

The problems of transforming state owned enterprises into free market competitors are learning problems. The goal is to install continuous learning as part of organizational cultures. Concerns run beyond organizations, to the nature of the society itself. Can cultural values be transformed? Should they be transformed?

Cultural Values

Hofstede (1991) identified four cultural values in a study of employees of International Business Machines around the world. He used a variety of

methods including a survey. Statistical techniques suggested four factors. Although newer research suggests a fifth factor, only the first four will be presented here.

Power distance (PD) is the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country express and accept that power is distributed unequally. In high power distance cultures, there is a wide range in the distribution of resources, the less powerful may appear to be dependent on the powerful, the powerful are expected to lead, and status symbols are common. High power distance countries include Mexico, Venezuela and the Arab countries, and low power distance countries include Austria, the Republic of Ireland and the Scandinavian countries.

Individualism (IN) refers to the extent to which ties between individuals are loose. Everyone is expected to look after himself/herself or his/her immediate family. Collectivism, the opposite of individualism, is when people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive ingroups, which throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty. In collectivist cultures, children are taught to think of "we," extended families are important, harmony is more desired than honesty, and who you know tends to be more important than what you know. Denmark and Australia are high individualism countries, and Indonesia and Panama are more collectivist countries. Furthermore, wealthier countries have greater individualism values than poorer ones.

Masculinity (MA) refers to countries in which the social gender roles are clearly distinct. In masculine cultures men are supposed to be tough, assertive and competitive, and women are supposed to be more caring, tender and nurturing. In feminine countries social roles overlap, and males and females play more flexible roles. In feminine cultures relationships are more important than money or property, mothers and fathers deal with both facts and feelings, and men and women study the same subjects in school. The romance countries (e. g., Italy) tend to be the most masculine, but feminine countries include Costa Rica and Thailand.

Uncertainty avoidance (UA) is the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by uncertain or unknown situations. In high uncertainty avoidance countries different is dangerous, there is greater stress and less risk taking, and the individuals are motivated by security, esteem and belongingness. Higher uncertainty avoidance cultures include Greece,

Portugal and Belgium, and the lower uncertainty avoidance areas include Singapore and Hong Kong.

Cultural values are related to organizational cultural values. That is, organizations in a given culture tend to vary in their norms and values, but they tend to vary within the norms and values of the host culture. Table 1 on the next page displays Hofstede's cultural values and contrasts them with some of the organizational cultural values suggested by Quinn (1988). The organizational values suggest something more specific than the cultural counterparts since the organizational values are more about organizational practices. More specific still are the communication practices suggested.

In high PD cultures, organizational communication is mostly downward and imposed. When feedback is given about performances, it tends to be negative. In low PD cultures, organizational information can travel upward, and communication is sought. Since all workers tend to see each other more equally, there is more frequent feedback, and it is encouraging. In low PD cultures, leaders act as brokers between units, but in high PD cultures, organizational leaders act as monitors.

In high IN cultures, organizational communication relies on verbal cues and directness. The content of messages is dominated by task concerns. By contrast, low IN cultures organizational communication is indirect, and there are more rituals and tightly defined contexts. Face and relationship issues are a more frequent content in organizations in low IN cultures. In low IN cultures the primary function of leadership communication is facilitating teamwork, but in high IN cultures leaders who can improve production get the greater rewards.

Table 1

A Comparison of Cultural Values to Organizational Cultural Values

Cultural Values (Hofstede, 1991)	Organizational Values (Quinn, 1988)
High Power Distance	Standardization, Measurement, Objectivity
Low Power Distance	Growth, Recognition, Rewards

High Individualism	Productivity, Impact, Achievement
Low Individualism	Belonging, Teamwork, Affiliation
High Masculinity	Direction, Purpose, Role Clarity
Low Masculinity	Sensitivity, Consideration, Support
High Uncertainty Avoidance	Coordination, Predictability, Control
Low Uncertainty Avoidance	Challenge, Variety, Stimulation

Managers in high MA cultures tend to resolve differences by persuasion, coercion or appeals to authority. The managers in low MA cultures expect to negotiate with each other and to act as mediators in the conflicts of others. In high MA cultures, the communication style would be more dominating and argumentative, but communication in low MA workplaces tends to be friendlier and supportive. In high MA cultures, leaders gravitate toward directing others, but in low MA cultures, leaders act as a mentor.

The organizational communication in high UA cultures is structured and predictable. Formal communication is important, and communication policies, speeches and structured interviews are common. When groups meet, they are staff meetings in which subordinates are told what to do. When groups meet in low UA cultures, individuals compare differences and solve problems. Conflict is expected and natural in low UA countries, but workers in high UA countries avoid conflict or appeal to the formal rules to manage it. In low UA cultures, the innovation is the focus of communication, but in high UA cultures, coordination is the more important communication function.

Individuals from different cultures are predisposed to learn in different ways. They bring these predispositions with them when they become members of an organization. These predispositions become part of the values in an organization. If the culture values only certain types of learning, it is unlikely that any organization within that culture can sustain learning in any other manner. If organizations limit their learning, their

communication will be limited. There will be limitations on the ability of organizations to adapt and to grow. Organizational limitations will only reinforce cultural limitations. In the end, there will be limitations on the abilities of societies to adapt and grow.

Adaptation and Transformation

Russia today is faced with two great tasks.   First, Russia must examine its current cultural values. Russia must decide which of those values are important to retain, and which of those values should be changed are altered. Examining and transforming cultural values is a long range task.   Although it may take generations to complete any kind of transition, the process of examination can begin now.

Table 2

A Comparison of Cultural Values across   Ten Countries

Country	'D	
Costa Rica	5 L	L
France	8 H	H
Germany	5 L	H
Great Britain	5 L	H
Indonesia	8 H	L
Japan	4 M	M
Netherlands	8 L	H
USA	0 L	H
Russia	5 H	M

China   0 H   L

Table 2 compares the status of cultural values across ten selected countries.   The scores are the weightings of each dimension based on Hofstede's initial study in the 1970's.   Scores for each dimension could range from 0 to 100.   Designating a score as high (H), medium (M) or low (L) was based on how the score fell <u>within</u> a category.   For example, a score of 62 might be one of the highest scores in one dimension, but a 62 might be a middle score in another.   Comparing the actual scores within a category will indicate how different one culture is from another.

<u>The scores for China and Russia are estimates (Hofstede, 1993).   I know of no systematic study comparing cultural values that included Russia. There is a need to conduct such research as part of examining Russia's cultural values.</u>

The second major task confronting Russia is finding methods of surviving for the short term and maximizing on current cultural values. The first task is one of transformation, but this second task is one of adaptation.   How can Russia use its already exiting cultural values to create and store economic resources?

Table 3 is an adaptation of Hofstede (1991, p. 240).   It suggest that every culture has its own strengths and competitive advantages.   No country can be good at everything, but a country's cultural predispositions may give it specific competitive advantages in the marketplace.

Russia's high PD values suggest that Russia has an advantage on work which requires discipline.   Its middle range IN values indicate that some parts of the country may do better at work that requires employee commitment, but other parts of the country may do better in organizations that feature considerable management mobility.   The relatively low MA scores point to service industries and custom made products, a considerable advantage in information societies.   Russians will do better in work requiring a greater emphasis on precision than innovation, a conclusion based on the high UA values.

Table 3

Competitive Advantages of Different Cultural Profiles

	Intensity	
Dimensions	Low	High
Power Distance	acceptance of responsibility	discipline
Individualism	employee commitment	management mobility
Masculinity	personal service custom made products agriculture biochemistry	mass production efficiency heavy industry bulk chemistry
Uncertainty Avoidance	innovativeness	precision

Russians would have the advantages in organizations featuring frequent downward communication (high PD), but there must be opportunities for horizontal communication, and the communication must be supportive (low MA) and precise about the task (high UA). In the most successful Russian organizations, openness of interpersonal communication would vary from one locale to another (middle IN).

These descriptions and conclusions may be exemplified by three cases. The Landa is a Russian automobile manufactured under government sponsorship, and it is a fine example of the failure of traditional mass production practices in Russia. Although a rigid bureaucratic structure may be consistent with Russia's high PD estimates, strict work schedules and a concern for outcome run counter to a shortened sense of time and to low MA culture. Russians do not regard the car as a good product. A common practice is to reject a new Landa in favor of an older Volvo or other foreign car, even if this choice means having to save money for the more expensive used car and delaying the purchase of any vehicle.

Russian schools are good examples of organizational features that are more culturally aligned. Typically, both elementary and secondary

education happens within the same physical space, but there are complex and enforced differences between grade levels and levels of learning. For example, nearly all aspects of the curriculum have an introductory, intermediate and advanced level. Furthermore, some member of the faculty will be designated as the "director" of a level or course of instruction even if that instructor is the only one teaching that part of the curriculum. Since the staffs are small, the titles and levels do not interfere with the interaction between instructors, serving more to clarify responsibilities within the staff and to help students and parents in assessing student progress. Sometimes, instructors use their status to distance themselves from students, but a more typical use of their status is to persuade by using their designations as an indicator of their credibility. The staffs strive for good academic performances, but they exhibit an almost familial care for some of their students. Educators tend to regard each other as professionals and as part of an identifiable family. It is as if each school has created an enclave from the larger education system.

Sales and marketing reflect the transitional difficulties. The older values are represented by the specialized and hierarchical arrangement in the shops. In even a small shop, a customer acquires and pays for merchandise in a two-step process. First, the customer identifies merchandise by viewing it at a distance such as from across a counter or through a display case. The sales person gets the displayed item for the customer to inspect, and if the customer is satisfied, the sales person packages the merchandise, either the one displayed or one in stock. The customer then takes a second step by taking the merchandise and the sales slip to a cashier to pay for the merchandise.

The sales staff exhibits some transitional tension. On the one hand, some sales people act in the traditional ways, simply standing or sitting motionless waiting to be summoned by a customer. Some sales people are more customer oriented or more involved in sales. These people greet prospective customers, ask if the customer needs them, etc. This second set of sales people are more aggressive than the traditional ones, but they are not as aggressive as the "peddlers," merchants or artists selling wares in small kiosks on the main streets or from tables near tourist attractions. Although Russians seem to appreciate the need for such aggressive behavior, the contemporary approach is foreign and uncomfortable.

The above descriptions are tentative inferences. Again, there is a need for cooperative research comparing Russia's cultural values to others. The long range task can begin, and the short range task will be more certain of success.

Conclusion

This paper began by describing human learning. Over time and due, in part, to maturation, humans become more efficient, but they also become more habitual. They develop expectations and tend to alter their behaviors to adjust to external stimuli only within the constraints of past expectations. They may learn, but they will seldom challenge their perceptual frames. They may stop learning to learn.

Organizations have similar problems. They may monitor the outcomes of organizational behaviors and adjust those behaviors, but they tend to fall into habitual patterns that reinforce their organizational cultures. Double loop learning, learning to learn, is difficult unless organizations reinforce those processes that continue to challenge older values.

Organizations are constrained by social culture. If cultural values do not encourage learning, organizations will not learn. If cultural values do not encourage challenges to those values, organizations cannot be expected to examine their own rules and expectations.

Communication is critical to all learning. Higher mental processes will not develop without speech communication. Organizations cannot learn if the flow of information is restricted. Cultures cannot learn if the values discourage the open exchange of ideas.

Russia is at a crossroads. It must examine its old values, but it must do so in a manner consistent with those values. It may seek to transform some values, but it must not lose sight of the competitive advantages some of those values bring. Open communication and the free flow of political, cultural and personal information are prerequisites for this examination.

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