

# How Do Leaders Learn ?

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# How do I (we all) learn?

Bernard Lonergan S.J “Insight”

Acquiring knowledge is a permanent cycle consisting of four steps:

- Experience
  - Everything flows from experience
- Intellection
  - Understanding our experience
- Judgment
  - taking positions according to values
- Decision
  - Drives me towards practice

# Two special features of knowledge- acquisition process

- Accumulative
  - Each cycle adds new piece of knowledge
- Integrative
  - Each new knowledge acquisition challenges my previously acquired knowledge, and incorporates to the whole, sometimes transforming it and changing perspectives

The background features a dark blue gradient with several sets of concentric circles in a lighter blue color. The circles are arranged in a way that they overlap and create a sense of depth and movement. The text is centered in the middle of the image.

What makes the  
leader's forum special?

# What is a leader, anyway?

- There are of course diverse kind of leaderships
- Identifying goals

Aristotle's final cause as  
cause of the causality of all other causes

- Identifying means to reach goals
- Creatively design potential efficient and effective arrangements of available means to reach the goals  
– assess possibilities
- Capacity to move other person's will for a joint effort in the proposed strategy

# How do we leader's learn by acting ?

- **Strategic approach**
  - To align available means towards goals
- **Comparison of potential positions –**  
chess (static -> dynamic)
  - Factors in place
  - Mechanisms – Links, relations, sum of vectors
  - Potential scenarios (own movements and then rival's one)
  - Risk evaluation and accepting reasonable challenges
- **Process orientation –**  
creative innovation & reaction capacity in front of any new position  
– reality much more complex than a chess match
- **Pace and risk management** (hardly control) – sailing
- **Simultaneously search for interpretative principles –**  
theory, studies, information, etc.

# Condensed learning at the ILF

- Close personal exposure
- Intensive weeks
  - Our most scarce resource: time
  - Get out of our own process to reflect about it from a distance
- Follow up the evolution of different processes through the years. Grasp significant changes.
- Plunging and deepening key issues, individually and as a group

# Members' Experience

- Our own experience is not only one observation perspective, but rather works as launch platform
- All members are experienced rooted practitioners, not academicians
- Most of us have had the experience of being founders of our own institution – own idea put into practice and pushed forward. Reasonably risk accepting minds
- Everybody's experience is a more or less mature one – Accumulated experience time enough to reflect upon

# Institutionalized Experience

- We were selected and invited because:
  - Recognized leading institution
  - Innovating approach and methodology
  - Large Size. Experienced the rocket kind scaling-up process... and survived
  - Successful institutions – results driven

# Sharing my own experience as a way of learning

- Systematic reflection and synthetic presentation:  
Mining the mind to extract the essentials, to  
present to experienced practitioners –

sharing the clues, and getting free advice.

Newton's acceleration  $9.81\text{m/s}^2$

- Significant context to explain the experience:  
Designing a field visit to quickly communicate  
the richness and complexity of my experience as a  
case study.

Reality: "I am I and my circumstances" Ortega y Gasset

# New light to our own experience

- Highlighting crucial aspects: Targeted questions that impinges on sharp points of my own experience. – Unexpected challenges from other perspectives
- Deeper reflection: Group dialog allows to explore and reflect on key issues, and encourages research on crucial subjects
- Private comments pointing to dangerous or weak aspects. Free advise

# Understanding others experience

- Selected essentials: Listen a synthetic presentation explained by its very creator.

Looking at a car, understand the design of its mechanics and esthetic and then look how the creator drives it.

- Meaning and potential of ideas deriving from context: the field visit allows to allocate the pieces of experience in the context that explains it. Diverse perspectives: questions from other experienced practitioners highlight important aspects
- Deep reasoning: answers from presenting leader provide a rich reflection regarding the rationale of the organizing framework
- Witnessing the changes arising from the process through the years

# Creatively adopting and adapting

- Exploring different applications in different contexts: Reflecting upon and commenting during the field trip, allows us to freely explore possibilities and limitations of potential applications of the experience in other contexts of our own. -> What is the strategic value in a different position.

# Understanding common issues

- Identifying relevant common issues:
  - governance, impact assessment, scale-up, capital plus, methodology of sharing and sustainability of this process of learning, etc.
- Listen different approaches to the issue
- Intellectual effort to understand why they see it differently
- Widen our own comprehension horizon

# Judgment

- Opportunity to revise and enrich judgments
- Permanently thinking what ideas are useful and valuable for my project, perhaps at this time of the process now or probably later.

# Decision

- Learning oriented to action, not to theory
  - Minimum level of understanding needed to lead action: principles of interpretation
  - Opposed to theory: maximum understanding of causality
- Others' experience as a vectorial force.

Meaning in physics: Vector is a line that represents force, with magnitude, direction and sense
- Freedom to decide changes and course of action: personal decision. Not consensus needed.

# Decision leads to action

- Action will be a new source of experience, continuing the cycle

And that is the start of the story

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