

# QUALITATIVE LEARNING FUSION: AN EPISTEMOLOGICAL JOURNEY TO CONFIGURE COLLECTIVE LEARNING AND CHANGE FROM WITHIN

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## ABSTRACT

This paper presents a doctoral research methodological and epistemological journey departing from a central question: “how and why management teachers collectively learn and change at a fifty-years-old private Brazilian Business School”. This interpretive qualitative research was accomplished through an inductive socio-constructivist methodology that included ethnographic complete participant observation and insider approach. This decision permitted her to taste organizational learning and change phenomenon’s complexity but it also required research design changes to follow generated field insights and to examine not only individuals but episodes. In this way methodological and epistemological learning iteratively enhanced researcher’s awareness demanding also a reflexive qualitative methodology to prevent confusion. So, phenomenon was analyzed in four interpretive levels as recommended by Alvesson & Sköldbberg (2001). In this way researcher’s epistemology changed from seeking phenomenon understanding “out there” in a objective monologue logic towards developing phenomenon comprehension “from within” in an intersubjective multiperspective logic, that resulted in an integrative conceptual analytical framework to describe collective learning and change microprocesses. Therefore, at the studied Business School, teachers change through learning because technical and social systems coexist due to permanent emotional, rational and political dynamics reconstruction that objectively and subjectively manifest its individual, collective and power structures interests within dispersed communities of practice.

## 1 STUDY AIM, CONTEXT AND RELEVANCY

Organizational learning and change phenomena had been studied and theorized in prescriptive and normative ways as if it were only cause-effect linearly interrelated variables and without considering different perspectives than the researcher’s. More OL inductive, descriptive deep case studies centered in existent micro-practices work is needed (Easterby-Smith & Araújo, 1999). But what exactly does “a linear cause-effect interrelated variable” means? How is it different from non-causal interrelated phenomenon? Experiencing a doctoral research as a complete participant helped to understanding what OL researchers alert about and also identifying OL interconnections to change processes.

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This paper presents researcher’s methodological and epistemological mind walk to answer her doctoral research question: “how and why management teachers collectively learn and change at a fifty-years-old private Brazilian Business School” and, shares its methodological and epistemological resulting knowledge about achieved interactive collective learning and change processes among studied teachers and herself. It is pertinent because joining Business School teachers’ staff for a four-years-period permitted unexpected rich data set arousal and enhanced initial understanding and self-awareness of her teaching and researching practice. It is also relevant to describe how teachers learn and change and to understand organizational ways by which Business School coordinators could foster teaching (and research) capacity through collective and individual learning processes.

Inward perspective or “*inquiry from the inside*” (Evered & Louis, 1981:385) is “*characterized by the experiential involvement of the researcher, the absence of a priori analytical categories, and an intent to understand a particular situation*” and seemed to be a nearer way to research her own professional community because she is a management researcher and undergraduate teacher also. So, this OL researcher decided to “eat her own food” and to “taste” both the studied phenomenon and its research process in similar way as medicine and cuisine researchers do. Although initially it seemed to be an easier and more reliable way to obtain field data sets, at the same time it demanded more attention not to “marinate” with field data. “Over identification” was an expected risk that she’d have to learn how to overcome as she decided to research her own “nest” (Edwards et al, 2002:125).

As the research process went on, it brought out unexpected discoveries and revealed a complex phenomenon instead where abundant generated field data and episodes demanded multi methods adoption and a reflexive qualitative methodology. It decisively prevented confusion guiding and contributing not to “salt” or to “sweeten” the “food” she was preparing for her doctoral dissertation research. This “under construction” knowledge taste guided whole research process stimulating “insights” generation and researcher’s awareness to season it.

So, two emergent parallel research processes were at first separately studied, but as its mutual influence was revealed, iteratively analysis followed to develop a research answer. One research process related to the studied phenomenon: management teachers’ collective learning and change process (L&CP) and another related to researcher’s own learning and change process including her own teaching practice together with studied teachers. This suggested a complex problem embedded in the study object: to research her “own nest” learning and change process (L&CP) and researcher’s L&C P as well.

Now, though recognizing that both are intermingled and interdependent research processes, paper focuses on researcher’s methodological choices for examining phenomenon as it unfolded, and also her epistemological enhancement that guided a more conscious research process about collective organizational learning and change from within.

The remainder of this paper contains: research methodology; field emergent concepts on OL&C to describe generated microprocesses; an empirical discussion followed by an

epistemological discussion. Finally, an integrative analytical framework to describe OL&C microprocesses as well as its implications for OL&C research is presented.

## 2 STUDY RESEARCH METHODOLOGY (560 WORDS)

### 2.1 Research adopted methods

This interpretive qualitative research (Morgan & Smircich, 1980) was organized as an instrumental case study (Stake, 1994). It was accomplished through an inductive socio-constructivist methodology that included ethnography, complete participant observation (Crawford, 2003) and insider approach (Evered & Louis, 1981: 392). Thus, researcher joined teachers Business School staff for a four-year period.

Complete participant observation was configured according to Crawford's (2002:88) depiction because during the research period researcher worked within the Business School where its workers (teachers) and managers (coordinators) knew that they would be object of this research and accepted the researcher as member of their groups. Qualitative data was generated through informal open-ended, formal semi-structured interviews, field observation and introspection. These were interpretively and reflexively analyzed.

Describing and explaining a way to learn how teachers learn and change from the inside demanded, as recommended by Wallendorf & Brucks (1993), to turn researcher's attention to her own thoughts and report what is discovered in her mind. It is a rich way to advance research but demands taking care to equilibrate rigor and openness when using introspection as data set.

So, reflection guided attention toward “researchers inside” and to consistently consider various dimensions behind the interpretation task. Reflection was defined as “*the interpretation of interpretation and the launching of critical self-exploration of one's own interpretations of empirical material (including its construction)*” (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2001: 6).

Thus, following Alvesson & Skoldberg (2001) recommendations, field insights and conceptual data were systematized at first and second interpretation levels. Afterwards, their implicit meanings were examined to clarify power and ideological contexts at a third interpretation level. Finally the language use and text production identified researched participants` as well as researcher interests and their authority claims at a fourth interpretation level.

Conceptual data was systematized considering its epistemological assumptions in order to identify and distinguish OL studies compatible with:

- relational perspective that would allow researcher to study the intersubjective and interdependent nature of organizational life (Bradbury & Lichtenstein; 2000);
- methodological relationalism which recognizes the individual's embeddedness in the social network (Cheng & Sculli, 2001).

Research process went interactively ranging from the field observed and experienced practices towards organizational change and learning theory. As research evolved to a

“dense description”, emerging relations and concepts were deepened leading to an integrative framework to interconnect group and organizational learning with organizational change phenomenon.

## 2.2 Study object and selection criteria

Researched Business School was studied because at the beginning of the research process, it constituted a critical case. Year 2000 Education Ministry evaluated its students knowledge with a “C” grade obtained at national undergraduates test called “Provão”.

This problematic situation would be overcome by Business School managers through strategic investment and organizational change decisions involving staff teachers’ improvement and new teachers hiring in order to sustain its competitive position among private educational services Brazilian market.

**Table 1 – Study Object and Business School General Data**

General Data	Business School in Brazil	Studied Business School in Rio de Janeiro
Foundation	1951	1988
School Units	5	1
Education Ministry year 2000 Examination called “ <i>Provão</i> ”	Grade C	C
Undergraduate Business Students	3000	800
Undergraduate Teachers	170	40
Total undergraduate Students	10, 000	1500

Source: Document on Business School evaluation data corresponding to year 2000

Research interviewees worked at the Business School as coordinators, tutors, and teachers, participated in the focused episodes from year 2000 to 2003.1.

## 3 CHANGE, LEARNING AND KNOWING AS COLLECTIVE MICROPROCESSES

The conceptual study about change through learning micro processes departed from Crossan et al. (1999)’ organizational learning framework to develop interactively an in-depth analytical integrative framework to configure field emerging concepts such as: dispersed communities (Kan, 1999) or distributed communities of practice (Tsoukas, 1996) where situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991) developed change constrained by its power relations (Huzzard, 2003), where teachers’ bounded emotionality (Mumby & Putnam, 1992) coexisted with their bounded rationality (Shrivastava et al, 1987) in permanent tension.

Micro processes are micro level explanations related to individual and collective practices that might help to explain macro level change (Tolbert & Zucker, 1996).

### 3.1 On organizational change through collective learning

Specifically for studying collective learning processes, a socio-constructivistic approach was followed because it considers knowledge development as physical, biological, cognitive, social, cultural and political phenomenon. It also considers according to Easterby-Smith (2000): (a) Theory as a dynamic social practice where knowledge is developed; (b) Individuals as active actors in knowledge acquisition, apprentices that learn - in different ways-, research and pedagogical routines as well as innovative practices; (c) Cognitive processes as social construction of meanings.

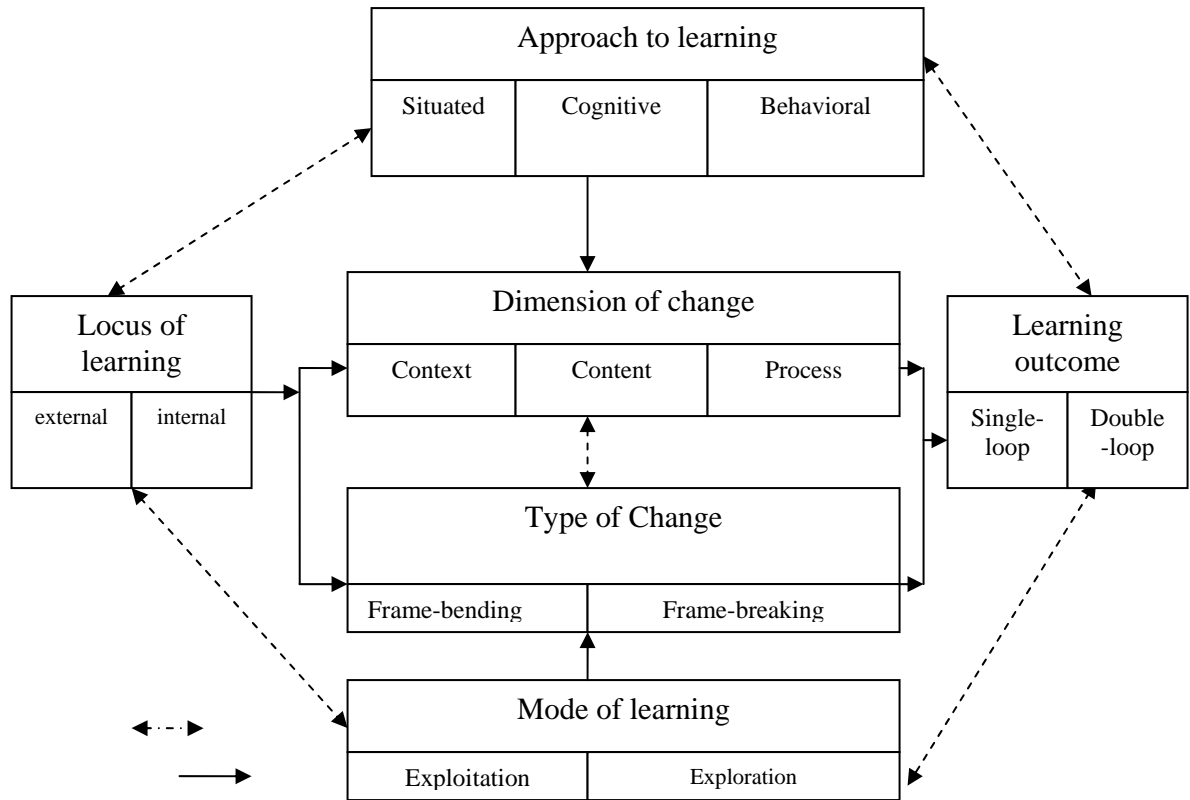
Differently, collective learning processes have been discussed in isolated ways in organizational theory studies on organizational learning and change. More systemic and multilevel understandings were developed by researchers such as Crossan et al. (1999), who developed a conceptual framework where learning processes of intuition-interpretation-integration-institutionalization interact with knowledge exploitation and exploration dynamics throughout three analysis levels: individual, group and organizational ones.

These authors emphasize that they used verbs to describe these four learning processes in order to capture their cognitive and behavioral perspectives as well as their process aspects. They also recognize tension among exploration and exploitation learning processes; examine three learning levels and their relationships; connect learning and innovation processes and recognize that organizational learning involve cognition and action interaction. Intuition is defined as a pre-conscious recognition of a pattern or of inherent possibilities among a personal experience which may affect individual's behavior, but it would also affect others if they interact with the first individual. Interpretation is a personal explanation for one's self and for others about individual's *insights*. This is a learning process that requires verbal manifestations and language development. Integration is a process through which shared understandings among individuals occur and coordinated actions through mutual adjustments result. For this to happen, dialogue and conjoint action are crucial for developing shared understandings. This will be initially an informal and *ad hoc* process but if coordinated action is recursive and meaningful and if managers recognize it as a valuable practice, it might be institutionalized. Institutionalization is a process of guaranteeing the occurrence of routinized actions. For this to happen, tasks are defined, actions are specified and organizational mechanisms are made available. Institutionalization is the process of embedding individual's and group learning within organization including its systems, structures, procedures and strategies (Crossan et al. 1999: 525).

Although this framework recognizes cognitive and behavioral elements of change and learning processes as well as its non sequential and non linear nature, nonetheless embedded emotional and power dimensions are not explicated and seem to be considered as factors/variables in a mechanistic way. A rational and managerial perspective prevails, so, researcher continued looking for “process” instead of “factors” in OL studies.

Recently, Dutta & Crossan (2003: 16) recognized that in order to accomplish change, organizations necessarily learn, so *change is intimately linked with organizational learning* and proposed a dynamic integrative model to explain theoretically how OL may inform change studies. In this way prior understanding on OL and change developed by Crossan et al. (1999) was extended. To accomplish this they analyzed organizational learning and

change literature to identify parallels and divergences in order to delineate change and learning connections. This analysis resulted in ten propositions which are illustrated in Figure 1.



Source: Dutta & Crossan (2003:14).

**FIGURE 1 – Change and organizational learning (dynamic integrative model)**

These researchers synthesized their main contributions as that of:

- showing that it exist parallels between the two streams of literature and that learning can be a powerful lens to understand complexities associated with organizational change. Change and learning literatures come together when change is emergent rather than when it is deliberate.
- pointing out that it is important to adopt an organizational perspective to manage change and it is also important to understand change as a process with elements in constant mutual interaction, *change and organizational learning interact with each other in a spiraling relationship that is path-dependent as well as emergent ...*” (Dutta & Crossan, 2003: 15).

But it appears that this model still considers interacting “elements” in a mechanistic way, understanding OL and change processes through its perceived manifestations. In this way, it does not consider embedded organic interdependent interrelations or concomitant power dynamics that pervaded the configured OL processes during our fieldwork.

Differently, although still assuming a unitary view of organizations but departing from an organic systemic perspective that recognizes organizing and learning as a collective sense

making process, Carter & Colville (2003) discussed tension between organizational leading and learning to link it with change after speculating on two non-considered issues by the predominant change and OL perspectives:

- it exists a tension among organizing and learning because they conceptually pull in different directions; while to learn is to increase variety (disorganize), to organize is to reduce variety.
- it exists a gap among living life forward (present and future) and understanding it backwards (past).

So, Carter & Colville (2003) questioned: How, if it is possible, to balance the forward living of life with its backward understanding of what happened? To develop an answer, they established organizational change concept as a bridging concept for “leading” and “learning” processes. In this way, based on empirical data drawn from two organizations, they considered organizational change as generated by sense making processes within collective learning and alerted that organizations tend to simplify and believe too much in past actions as future indicators maybe because of their forgetting that organizational change is defined by its ‘enactment’ instead of its ‘enthinking’.

Carter and Colville’s discussion about the tension between organizing and learning and change as its synthesis as well as their consideration of sense making as a series of ongoing conversations, led the researcher to reflect on collective change and learning processes’ simultaneity and about learning through action.

### **3.2 On organizational learning through collective knowing**

Advancing research on OL as organizational “knowing”, Nicolini et al (2003) consider that to reflect on action and in action constitutes an important locus of learning in organizations, where learning at the individual, group and organizational level sustain each other.

They developed a program to promote reflection at the organizational level and examined how personal reflection, group support and organizational change were bridged drawing upon a three-year initiative to introduce critical reflection as a legitimate practice among a group of middle managers. Based on this experience, they described the role of public reflection as a basis for learning and change and suggested that:

- developing reflection generated insulating forces within groups;
- only when the program participants got rid of an organizational myth - about the organization as an stable system-, they were enabled to become skilled in knowing when with whom and how to connect as well as, when such connections needed to be dropped, thus reformulating the meaning of engagement to promote managerial effectiveness;
- reflection works at individual and organizational levels if it is public, participative and authorized.

In this way Nicolini et al. (2003) understood that the recognition of the centrality of power distribution is critical for organizing processes, especially those of learning and changing. It signaled a more complex and diffuse nature of OL phenomenon, which had showed for

example, that manager’s job was not so much to get rid of dilemmas, ambiguities and problems, but to accept that these are integral to their work.

### 3.3 On dispersed communities-of-practice and power dynamics within learning

Group learning ways and types of resulting OL was the focus of Kan’s (1999) research on two organizations where he emphasized group as locus of OL for considering individual learning different from organizational learning, disagreeing with the accepted reifying assumption that OL would be only the sum of individuals’ cognitive rational processes.

Based upon empirical findings, Kan (1999):

- pointed out to a pluralistic view of organizations’ nature as opposed to a unitary view, to better explain OL. He doesn’t consider organization as a unified whole but consisting of individuals who interact with each other in a far more complex social process. In this way, the accepted believe on organizations as consisting of individuals and groups sharing common goals and vision and of OL as a unified process is challenged. Instead OL is considered a product of social construction and occurring in a dispersed form.
- suggested to redefine OL recognizing the importance of power relationship within groups.

So according to his study, learning “*actually takes place through interactions among and between individuals and/or groups.... this process would occur simultaneously in various groups of the organization ...in a ‘dispersed’ form rather than a ‘holistic’ form described in the existing literature*” (Kan, 1999: 2).

OL would then be a negotiation process within individuals and groups constituting dispersed communities-of-practice where individuals learn collectively all the time through social processes by enacting power interactions that can affect how they learn. They negotiate to defend their own goals and protect their interests, not necessarily for having common goals (Kan, 1999).

Communities-of-practice where individuals learn and innovate from working together in Brown and Duguid’s (1996) terms, according to Kan are not restricted only to non-canonical but also exist in canonical communities that are dispersed in the organization because although people may belong to functional formal specialized working groups, they also develop subcultures and sub-groups over time and can still decide most of the time whom they want to interact within informal groups of colleagues. These groups are not necessarily guided by hierarchical or functional criteria and, interactions can be formal, structured but also informal and spontaneous. In this way individuals in an organization would learn all the time, with colleagues they select and not only through formal functional groups and in formal OL processes. Kan (1999) also identified three types of OL: programmed (POL), autonomous (AOL) and spontaneous (SOL) where relationship tends to be less hierarchical (vertical) and more equal (horizontal) within its members.

With this in mind, the researcher continued on looking for studies that developed understanding about the complex and relational nature of OL. Amongst them Cook and Seely (1999) based on a three cases study, confronted an “epistemology of practice” - that



considers and explains knowledge as action found within individual and collective practice throughout organizations - as opposed to an “epistemology of possession” - that considers knowledge as something that people “have”. Their intention was to demystify priority given to explicit knowledge as superior than tacit knowledge and, consequently,

- to discuss that organizations would be better understood if explicit, tacit, individual and group knowledge were considered complementary forms of knowledge;
- to configure knowing process and knowledge as mutually enabling.

This led researcher to considerate change through learning as resulting from interactions not as punctual divergence from an ideal stable state, but as a permanent learning flux and, organizational learning process as generated through frequent social interactions within workers. It seems then that a relational viewpoint is also needed to allow studying, according to Bradbury and Lichtenstein (2000), intersubjective and interdependent nature of organizational life.

After drawing a framework of learning in organizations through collective processes and as a collective experience, researcher pointed to understand also how learning processes at group level (Gherardi & Nicolini, 2002; Gherardi, Nicolini & Odella, 1998) emerge from bounded emotionality (Mumby & Putnam, 1992) and bounded rationality (Shrivastava et al, 1987) coexistence, in permanent tension, among communities-of-practice.

### **3.4 On bounded rationality and bounded emotionality within organizations**

Shrivastava et al (1987) pointed out critically non rational actions prevailing within organizational life. Rationality is defined as the way alternative behaviors are selected considering organization’s value system by which behavior consequences could be evaluated. This implies that conscious selection among a set of means to achieve predetermined successful ends characterize organizational life. Disagreeing Shrivastava et al (1987: 90) critic prevailing assumption that organizations are rational entities, instead they affirm it is “*a mystifying limitation that obscures important organizing actions*”. That is why they discuss that an organization’s value system integrates what they call ‘organizational frames of reference’ (OFOR) which they argue, guide organizational actions and include methodological, epistemological, ontological and ideological assumptions that permit organizational members to create shared meanings. In this way OFOR determine what it is to be considered valid information as well as the conditions to obtain information. So, OFOR assume a single perspective and don’t consider others. This is why according to Shrivastava et al (1987), OFOR are considered rational by benefited ones and irrational by others.

At the same time Shrivastava et al (1987) define social and emotional rationality considering organizational members as affective, emotional human beings with feelings and deciding on emotional basis. So, ‘emotional rationality’ affecting OFOR’s cognitive components is recognized. On the other hand, ‘social rationality’ would permit generating and maintaining conditions for rational argumentation development by opening communicative spaces free from psychological and ideological distortions. Shrivastava et al (1987) ask managers and researchers not to ignore OFOR’s ideological basis and its unconscious influence because an OFOR favors some stakeholders and oppress others fostering a way where contradictions and irrationality arise. Fineman (2001) also discusses

rational organizational actor myth presenting three perspectives by which emotions had been studied in organizations: a) emotions interfering rationality; b) emotions serving rationality; c) emotions and rationality intrinsically interrelated.

Differently Mumby & Putnam (1992) defined bounded emotionality as an alternative organizational construct where nutrition, care, community and interpersonal support walk together with a responsibility for molding organizational experience. ‘Bounded’ refers to intersubjective restrictions within community members to recognize others subjectivity. This would be a necessary condition to understand organizational life and for choosing appropriate organizational actions based on ambiguity tolerance systems instead of trying to reduce ambiguity as proposed by bounded rationality concept. For example, under bounded rationality action system, hierarquical objectives and values function in linear and rigid way, under bounded emotionality actions system heterarquical objectives exist within flexible values.

#### 4 THE BRAZILIAN CASE

##### 4.1 Generated field data sets

Research initial focus was Business School teachers and their main tasks listed in Table 2:

**Table 2 – Teachers tasks and occurrence period – Illustrative list**

Teachers tasks	Year.Term
1. Joining Business School teachers’ staff in an hourly basis working contract called ‘special dedication’	2000.2
2. Curriculum elaboration participation	2001.1
3. Inquiry participation related to unsatisfied students and Business School Coordinator	2002.2
4. Interdisciplinary evaluation participation	2000.2
5. Syllabus and testes unification participation	2001.1
6. Class council participation	2001.1
7. Teacher’s regular training seminars participation called <i>Academia</i>	2001.1
8. Conjoint discipline syllabus elaboration and teaching (Organizational Behavior I)	2002.1; 2002.2
9. Scientific research initiation project participation and paper presentation to academic management conferences	2001.2 2002.1 2003.1
10. Teaching at <i>in company</i> Courses	2002.2 2003.1
11. Final Course Monograph advisor and participation as evaluator	2002.2; 2003.1
12. Informal teachers discussion group called <i>Barraco Connection</i>	2002.2
13. Formal regular meetings with Business School Director and Coordinator	2000.2, 2001.1, 2001.2, 2002.1, 2002.2

Source: Field research and working contract data from 2000.2 until 2003.1

Each teacher’s tasks at this Business School were sometimes individual ones but other required their working together. By this time, the researcher used to remain at the teacher’s room from 8:00 to 21:30 to observe them preparing their classes, correcting testes and to prepare and correct her own. During this period the researcher informally interviewed teachers identified as being central actors in performing each task. Table 3 lists them below.

**Table 3 – Non structured informal interviews relating routine tasks – Illustrative list**

Teachers’ tasks	Interviews concerning each task	Business School interviewed teachers (only code identification)
1.	2	m1, n1
2.	2	p1, n1
3.	5	p1, m2; c1, b1, l1
4.	3	n1, t1, s1
5.	9	p1, t1, d1, b2, m3, m4, v1, k1, u1
6.	4	a1, a2, z1, b3,
7.	2	t1; t1
8.	8	m5, m6, t2, g1, p2, b4, p1, h1
9.	5	p1, i1, n1, b1, g1
10.	1	a1
11.	2	g1, u1
12.	5	a3, s2, m6, s1, m3
13.	2	s1, p2
	Total 50	50

Source: field research years 2000.2 until 2003.1

When teacher accepted to be interviewed, formal interviews were marked and tape – recorded. They are listed in Table 4.

While analyzing interviews transcriptions, during texts interpretation in comparison with researcher’s field experience at the Business School a “missing something” feeling arouse. This initial frustration opened space for insights emergence related to:

- Researcher’s insistence to exhaustively register interview transcriptions and field notes leading to an “still incomplete portrait” feeling;
- emotional and personal approximation developed within teachers that wanted to overcome frustrating students’ test results;
- teachers, coordinator and Director emotions manifestation as a way to show their power at work;
- power relations constituting organizational tissue and activating Director, coordinator as well as teachers emotional intelligence

Then research focused in four main Episodes examination until data saturation occurred:  
1<sup>st</sup> episode: TQM implementation and undergraduate curriculum structure change;

2<sup>nd</sup> episode: Undergraduates scientific research initiation;  
 3<sup>d</sup> episode: Business School scientific research centre formal implementation;  
 4<sup>th</sup> episode: Distance learning implementation for undergraduates and postgraduate courses.  
 First episode description and explanation will be presented in this paper.

**Table 4 – Semi-structured interviews - Illustrative interviewees list**

<b>Professional and academic background</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Role &amp; age</b>	<b>Working time at School &amp; type of contract</b>
Psychologist & Psychology Master	t1	Psychology for managers & Organizational Behavior I teacher, age 34	6 years Special type (Hourly payment)
Philosophy Doctor in Aesthetics	s1	<i>Barraco Connection</i> group Coordinator & Philosophy I, II & Ethics teacher, age 35	5 years part-time
Strategic Planning Executive	m1	Business School Director; age 45	5 years Full time
Engineer & Master in Business Administration	p1	Business School Coordinator age 43	5 years Full time
Information Technologist & e Master in Business Administration	n1	General Management Theory; Organizational Behavior II teacher; in company tutor, age 40	3 years Special type (Hourly payment))
Sociologist & Anthropology Doctor	m5	Research Centre Coordinator & Methodology teacher, age 40	2 years Full time
Statistician & Master in Business Administration	t2	Consumer Research teacher & Researcher at the Research Centre; age 35	2 year Part time
Anthropologist & Master in Business Administration	b4	Consumer Anthropology & Researcher at the Research Centre, age 35	1 year Part time
Engineer	p2	Business Consultant, Researcher at the Research Centre, age 35	6 months Part time
Total	9		

Source: Field research year 2001.1<sup>st</sup> term until year 2003.1<sup>st</sup> term

#### **4.2 First Episode Empirical - Theoretical Discussion – Illustration**

First episode: Business School TQM implementation and new curriculum structuring

This Business School first examined episode was configured connecting its field data with corresponding conceptual data developing a descriptive and explanatory case study relating first two years of complete participant observation research. It was presented to Business School teacher staff during its formal training meetings and also at a management conference. In this way co-authoring papers stimulated research interest within participant teachers. Since that time and for two more years, every episode was elaborated in co-authorship with participating teachers and the researcher submitted and accepted for

discussion at management academic conferences. In this way academic research was collectively practiced as teacher’s new task and rewarded correspondingly.

By this time, nine members were formally interviewed ranging from Director, Coordinator and teachers. Semi-structured in-depth interviews lasting in average 50 to 75 minutes each, begun asking about their personal and professional history in the Business School. Content analysis was used to analyze collected data and to identify emerging categories, relations and concepts.

Research process went interactively ranging from the field to related theory that described and explained observed practices. In this way, concepts as: change resistance - individual emotional intelligence - organization emotional capability - informal relations leading to collective learning and change (communities of practice) and power dynamics were evidenced and discussed as follows:

#### **4.2.1 How and why collective learning and change occurred within teachers through Business School TQM implementation**

Any survival and growth strategies include organizational learning process that occurs between individuals and within the whole organization, that is, include individual dimensions attaining workers -their way to solve problems- and organizational operational standards. These learning processes may result in incremental -routine- and transformational –radical changes. (Easterby-Smith et al, 2000).

The problematic situation of overcoming a Grade C evaluation stimulated this Business School to search for quality improvement and excellence in services development. So, an organizational change was initiated implementing Total Quality Management (TQM) including teachers work. Process is examined as follows to configure 1<sup>st</sup> analytical framework.

#### **4.2.2 On TQM implementation for universities’ educational services**

Quality systems are used for evaluating how and why activities are accomplished and for registering its results in order to serve as reference. So, an adequate evaluation instrument for undergraduate teaching must identify methodological deficiencies, conception or structural course inadequacies.

Knowing universities’ internal organization and service quality only gained interest since 90’s, following American and European trends (Xavier, 1996). Brazilian Education Ministry (MEC) too aims at elevating exigency quality levels for Brazilian teaching services. So, annual national exam (called “Provão”) and other technical regular evaluations were implemented. Measuring teaching quality through a confident set of indicators is considered as fundamental as obtaining quality inputs and its management (Schwartzman, 1997).

At a macro sociological perspective, new institutional theory suggests that an institutional sector is where several organizations competing for scarce resources aggregate. Institutional sectors elaborate norms and rules to which an organization conforms in order to be recognized as legitimate player and to get other social actors’ and organizations’ support. Organizations adopt an institutional model through four basic isomorphic

processes: coercion, induction, appropriation and normalization (Scott & Meyer, 1981). Normalization process, initially, explains TQM implementation decision at universities. Managers that are concerned simultaneously with two objectives: searching production system's efficiency and external legitimacy improvements, have implemented ISO 9000 usually associated with “Total Quality Management” (TQM) Program as well as with a set of other management systems like Balanced Score Card (BSC) aiming to control and increase production system's performance.

At a micro organizational learning perspective, institutionalization embed learnt behaviors that worked in the past converting them into organizational routines. It is a means for organizations to leverage individual members learning. Institutionalization occurs when, over time, individual and group learning become less prevalent and prior learning guides organizational members' actions and learning (Crossan et al, 1999).

At the Business School, changes towards educational services quality and excellence began December 1999 when a new Director for the Business School was hired. He, a postgraduate professor of the School since 1995 and a strategic planning consultant promoted as new Coordinator one active teacher with academic and executive background who was already working there for three years. Director decided this would be the emphasis for future hiring: to imbalance teachers' staff with academics and corporate executives. Traditionally this organization teacher's staff was totally formed of successful corporate executives without any academic background.

#### **4.2.3 Emergent power dynamics, informal groups and communities of learning**

At this Business School “old” professor's group questioned these TQM implementation decision. This group didn't just question universities' strategic planning content, but also the way that it was being implemented, they perceived it as an “authoritarian imposition”. They resisted “silently” trying to form coalitions and recurring directly to the founder, every time a new hiring happened.

The next Coordinator's action following the major hiring at the Business School was focused in Course and disciplines content to develop a new curricular structure. Professors were asked to reflect on their disciplines and to critically analyze it avoiding “overlap” between disciplines content. This request was done slowly maybe because communication between the “old” and “new” became more difficult. Although interpersonal relationship was respectful, if the matter was to change identified problematic contents, (“over dimensioned”, “under dimensioned” or “overlapping”), debates were avoided, delayed and effective changes in disciplines didn't happen on time to be included at the beginning of the term. Some discipline syllabus “disguised” some terms but they remained the same because its teachers didn't revise its contents.

As students' compliances concerning “overlapping” disciplines perception continued unsolved, TQM implementation appeared to school Director and Coordinator as a means to consolidate new norms, values and behavior patterns to overcome old teacher's resistance firing them. But they didn't explicitly communicate this intention.

This second action provoked new power disputes. “Old” professors considered Coordinator's invitation to participate in the elaboration of new contents and disciplines as

a menace to their technical “expert” power over the courses they ministered. And again resisted to what they considered to be a decrease of their autonomy and an inadequate increase of Business School’s control.

Some “new” professors agreed that they also needed autonomy to create and decide about their disciplines content, methodology and teaching techniques. Both “old” and “new” justified this position saying that “students are not prepared to choice what they need to study to gain professional competence, only we do”. So, power disputes became more complex and more informal groups appeared, labeling and separating teachers in small groups: “old” - “new”, “humanities”-“management”, “exact hard disciplines”- “soft subjective disciplines”, “theoretical” – “practical”. In this way, obstacles to individual, group and organizational learning aroused explicitly constituting “learning deficiencies” (Senge, 1990) and barriers (Argyris, 1993).

Director then declared that he had always worked only with “the best” professionals thus, paid the best market salaries and his Coordinator declared that he recognized teachers’ autonomy and their technical competence. In this way, teachers realized that their discretion over contents and methods must fall within the boundaries of standardized educational services methods. Consequently, a paradox (Klein, 1994) was perceived between consistent disciplines with a minimum of integration and without content redundancy and, on the other hand, teacher knowledge and their teaching autonomy. Paradox refers to the simultaneous existence of two inconsistent states within organization (Eisenhart, 2000) such as “autonomy and conformance” “old and new”.

For individual and organizational learning processes to happen, paradoxes require a guiding framework: a tool to help the exploration and management of contradictory tensions and reinforcing cycles. Breaking the reinforcing cycle between “old and new” that perpetuated and exacerbated organizational tension and defensive reaction would be a fundamental step to restore cooperation and dialogue among social actors (Argyris, 1993). Organizational learning literature tends to be overoptimistic regarding the weakness of barriers to learning, so it underemphasizes the difficulties involved in the learning process because information that *“threatens an organization’s collective self-concept is ignored, rejected, reinterpreted or hidden”* (Brown & Starkey, 2000:105).

Business School Director stimulated teachers to suggest changes individually and collectively, declaring that *“it’s up to professors’ own competency the courses quality improvement and that he will follow-up all initiatives and support them”*. He also emphasized that *“it is expected of best paid- professors as ours to have knowledge and responsibility for accomplishing improvements rapidly”*. In this way some barriers diminished.

Regular meetings for “upgrading teachers pedagogical abilities and for sharing problems and solutions in classroom” begun. There were also meetings before and after exam periods to share observations about students’ performance. (“Academias” & “Class Councils”). School Coordinator met more frequently with professors, individually and by areas, so resistances were diminishing. Initial teacher’s resistance to develop standardization requirements in their courses may have been provoked because they perceived curricula and organizational changes as a loss of their authority and the uncertainty feelings related to a new way of working (Pagès et al., 1987).

At the end of year 2001 accomplished results were: two interdisciplinary evaluation conjointly developed, (Costs and Psychology), one academic research paper presented at the annual undergraduate national faculties meeting (called “ENANGRAD”), two interdisciplinary seminar proposals for the “Students Welcome Week” and one detailed proposal of two teachers teaching a course together in the classroom first tried in this School (Organizational Behavior I). It was thus revealed, a fertile teacher’s collective learning process concerning educational services improvements. Presently, new curriculum structure was accomplished too, avoiding overlapping. Each discipline methodology and its evaluation criteria is still up to each teachers’ decision but new performance evaluation and rewards system were elaborated and formally explained to all members by the School Director.

Maybe the way working motivation was developed by Director and Coordinator or the way they built his *symbolic capital* within organization (Migueles, 1999) at this Business School would explain educational service quality results. It seems that School Director succeeded in creating an adequate relation among teachers’ staff and their educational activity at this organization.

#### **4.2.4 Organizational emotional capability, emotional intelligence and change**

TQM implementation and new curriculum structure instigated intense emotional individual and collective reactions that ranged from humor, fear, enthusiasm to fear, irony and silence. This intensity signaled teacher’s perception of an on going radical organizational change. In order not to impede neither individual nor collective learning dynamics both School Director and Coordinator acted intensively acknowledging their own and colleagues’ feelings and emotions and manifesting theirs also. They revealed clear discrimination among their feelings and emotions and distinguished which would guide their thinking and actions. This process of self concept and conscious decisions defines an emotionally intelligent individual (Huy, 1999).

In this way, Director had contributed for developing organization’s ability to acknowledge, recognize, monitor, discriminate and attend its member’s emotions but it is too early to identify this as an organizational capability.

Nevertheless, if emotional capability represents a necessary condition for organizations to implement radical change, it can be developed over time and does not require a large number of emotionally intelligent individuals in influential position (Huy, 1999). For example, teacher’s receptivity led to intuition of needed changes and facilitated sense making and sense giving activities during the interpretation process of learning in this episode. Coordinators and teachers mobilization propelled different areas teachers to undertake conjoint actions that resulted in interdisciplinary student evaluations. Teachers’ mobilization success inspired more knowledge sharing and, consequently more individual and organizational learning until institutionalization process happened such as the academic production as new criteria included in the Business School rewards system.

#### **4.2.5 An organization learning integrative framework to describe organizational change.**



Emerging Power dynamics and intense emotions within teachers staff revealed interactive relationship between individual cognition and action generating individual tension when, for example, disciplines content were analyzed and changes were made to avoid “overlapping”. This signals an initial intuition process as proposed by Crossan et alli (1999), where after receiving Director request for course standardization, images like “Chaplin’s Modern Times Worker” or “gardeners” better expressed initial individual feelings and influenced teachers learning capacity.

Afterwards, collective interpretation happened, characterized by increasing and enthusiastic conversations taking place at teachers’ lounge room where it was explained that “*it’s the cookies at teachers room the responsible for so many ideas to help solving our common problems*”. As dialogue between professors was installed, shared understandings arouse when for example four of them realized: “*we together can manage to help students our discipline meaning and contribution, to make their “coin fell”(to help students’develop synapses connections)*”, signaling an initial integration process. This integration rendered concrete when first research paper -developed conjointly by four school teachers-, reporting their interdisciplinary experience to bridge student’s philosophy, management and psychology knowledge, was accepted for presentation at the academic annual meeting of undergraduate Brazilian faculties in year 2001 (called XXII ENANGRAD). Institutionalization process began when Business School Director formally congratulated paper authors and supported their presentation expenses and included “academic Production” as a new criterion for promoting and rewarding teachers work.

Based on Episode 1, first understanding concerning OL&C processes was delineated in Figure 2 showed after presenting some findings and implications for continuous OL development at this Business School.

#### **4.2.6 Initial findings and implications for Organizational Learning at Business School**

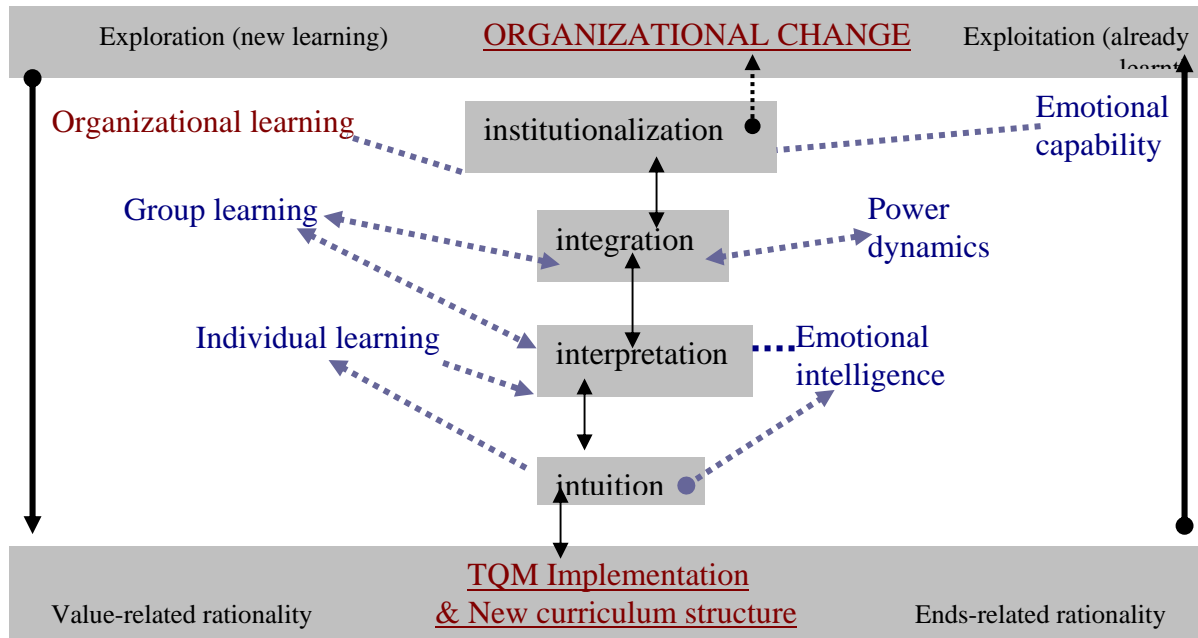
Initial findings revealed that:

- What guided TQM implementation and curricula changes seemed to be a value-related Business School rationality concerned with organizational effectiveness and with external legitimacy in a profound way, it didn’t seem to be only concerned with external legitimacy in an instrumental way. So changes were not superficial ones.
- Change resistance appeared among teachers. It also provoked intense impact on organizational power games and on informal structures that form communities of practice (Brown & Duguid, 1996).

Some implications for continuous organizational learning and change:

- Organizational learning process at this School stimulated organizational continuity and change. It was possible because existing tension between learning exploration and exploitation dimensions were recognized and stimulated by its coordinator.
- Permanent improvement and flexibility are not focused by TQM. It only focuses on standardization processes to stabilize and exploits what has already been learnt leaving unexplored new ideas so, a radical organizational change wouldn’t be accomplished only by TQM implementation, it would require OL&C processes activation.

Based on 1<sup>st</sup> episode description, and analytical framework was configured below, Figure 2.



**FIGURE 2 - Analytical Framework to describe Organizational Learning & Change Processes including first field emergent concepts**

Although first analytical framework delineated field 1st episode, it only described its manifested actions and some roughly identified interrelations (see connecting arrows above) without explaining its implicit reasons. It lacked understanding also of researcher’s lived experience at the field and generated inter subjective data among teachers, so as methodology appeared insufficient, an epistemological reflection was necessary.

## 5 METHODOLOGICAL AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL CHANGES

### 5.1 Methodological changes and reflections from the field

Initially, field data was to be collected through participant-observation method followed by grounded theory method to develop OL&C integrative analytical framework. Specifically, interview transcriptions and field observation notes were iteratively analyzed considering its content and comparing to relate theoretical studies as prescribed by Strauss & Corbin’s (1994) grounded theory methodology. Next content analysis method procedures as proposed by Bardin (1977) were followed in order to identify learning and change categories out of texts. Soon, this research design revealed insufficient to account for a complex diverse individual, collective and organizational (continuous) flux of learning and change micro processes.

This new unexpected field awareness regarding researcher’s intent to “accumulating data”, got in touch with her feeling of “a frustrating attempt to record interviews data, transcribing and grouping it in pieces of paper which supposedly “register” and constitute as “evidences” that would be perceived and evaluated by the amount of detailed written pages”. This preliminary frustrating reflection drove researcher attention to her own post-positivistic assumptions guiding her understanding to “take a picture” that still

misperceived: a) Teacher’s and researcher’s authentic subjective learning and change processes that didn’t result in a specific, clear or unique knowledge; b) Teacher’s intermingled role and responsibility towards peers and students; c) Socially constructed nature (Astley, 1985) of change and learning processes.

Researcher also realized that looking at her own “nest” had fostered not a participant observation perspective but a “complete” participant observation one generating more and insightful field data. So, a phenomenological perspective followed in order to include subjectivity understanding comprehensively (Morin, 1999) emergent phenomena by its field actions. Therefore new interviewing preparation was accomplished to develop inter subjective interrelations (Snell, 1988). More methods were then applied to interpretively analyze and synthesize what no more was understood as “collected” but as “generated” data, such as:

a) Introspection, to access researcher’s own subjectivity (Evered & Louis, 1981; Wallendorf & Brucks, 1993; Alvesson, 2003). This circumstance turned out the research process more complex because examining her own “nest” required her single and double loop learning (Argyris, 1976) and deuterio-learning (Bateson, 1972) capacity as well as a philomatic (Antonacopoulou, 1995) attitude.

b) Critical interpretive and reflexive methodology (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2001) in order to critically and comprehensively understand the emerging reality. Specifically this methodology works at four interpretation levels. 1st level: field data interpretation concerning empirical data interactions focusing interviewee’s individual interpretations about themselves and their realities; 2nd level: conceptual interpretation of the empirical interpretation focusing on embedded meanings; 3rd level: critical interpretation of emergent concepts embedded assumptions and corresponding developed knowledge. It focused on power, ideology and social reproduction processes. This level is opposed to the naïve notions about social science neutrality; 4<sup>th</sup> level: interpretation of researcher own critical interpretation and vertical reflection of all levels. It focused researched and researcher authority claims as well as represented voices and interests.

Interrelation between the studied phenomenon and researcher experience brought insights and guided research continuity pointing out:

- that during the research process she was not “collecting” data but “generating” them due to her interaction at the field;
- a need for an analysis unit change from individuals (teacher performance) to episodes performed by teachers working together;
- “micro processes” concept more descriptive capacity instead of originally expected collective learning “processes” “out there”.

Consequently researcher’s epistemological enhancement occurred. In this way, four examined collective learning episodes emerged within teachers’ day-to-day interactions, apart from formal job descriptions or training programs were interpreted using compatible OL&C literature after identifying its metatheoretical assumptions.

## 5.2 Metatheoretical Discussion

Epistemology examines knowledge development processes and served this research simultaneously as foundation and as path to advance research about learning and change processes.

In this direction, acknowledging differences in theory building across paradigms and metatriangulation—a strategy of applying paradigmatic diversity to foster greater insight and creativity—would contribute to more insightful, innovative, and comprehensive theory building (Gioia & Pitre, 1990). As existing multiparadigmatic approaches still remain ambiguous and fragmented, it required deeper awareness of alternative modes of inquiry, and their intricate connections and implications for theory-building processes. In this direction, paradigm interplay organizational cultures analysis (Shultz & Hatch, 1996), parallel paradigm analysis (Hassard, 1991) need to be followed regarding organizational learning and change processes

Metatriangulation addresses the challenges theorists face as they select a research topic, collect and analyze data, theorize, and evaluate resulting theory using multiple paradigms (Lewis & Grimes, 1999) during research this kind of studies were not identified within OL&C literature.

Meanwhile, organizational and management learning area already recognized that:

- There are a number of distinct disciplinary perspectives that have tackled organizational learning over last few years, and each of these has its own ontology and methodology. Application of these disciplinary perspectives led to distinct contributions on OL nature and problems.
- Each discipline provides distinct contributions and conceptions of problems so it would be better to consider organizational learning as a multidisciplinary field containing complementary contributions and research agendas. These various perspectives and disciplines each have their own methodological traditions.
- More qualitative field work that studies success and failure is needed, as well as more longitudinal designs and more attempts to conceptualize organizational learning as a normal process in every organization involving reciprocal exchanges between individuals, groups, and other organizational entities (Easterby - Smith, 1997).

In this way, paradigm incommensurability acknowledgement within OL area would difficult multiparadigmatic research advance in order to grasp phenomenon complexity and its corresponding knowledge. Complex paradigm epistemology to examine OL&C and its corresponding methodologies was not identified within OL literature.

Nevertheless among social sciences, new knowledge integration methodologies are recommended. Multiple perspective ‘macroscopical’ synthesis obtained with new instruments, which emphasize global approach to problems or to studied systems and concentrate on interactions among their elements, appears more adequate if a new way of seeing, understanding and acting is also developed (Rosnay, 1979).

However, as teachers (of both managers and managers-in-training), we do more than legitimize our students, we also expose them to the products of our scholarship and

influence them to pose questions about managing their organizations that otherwise would have gone unasked. If the effect of our research on managers is indirect, subtle, and often unconscious, we need to ask ourselves who we, as management scholars, serve and develop our critical thinking (Brief, 2000)

Considering this epistemological and role issues, some provoking questions were recalled:

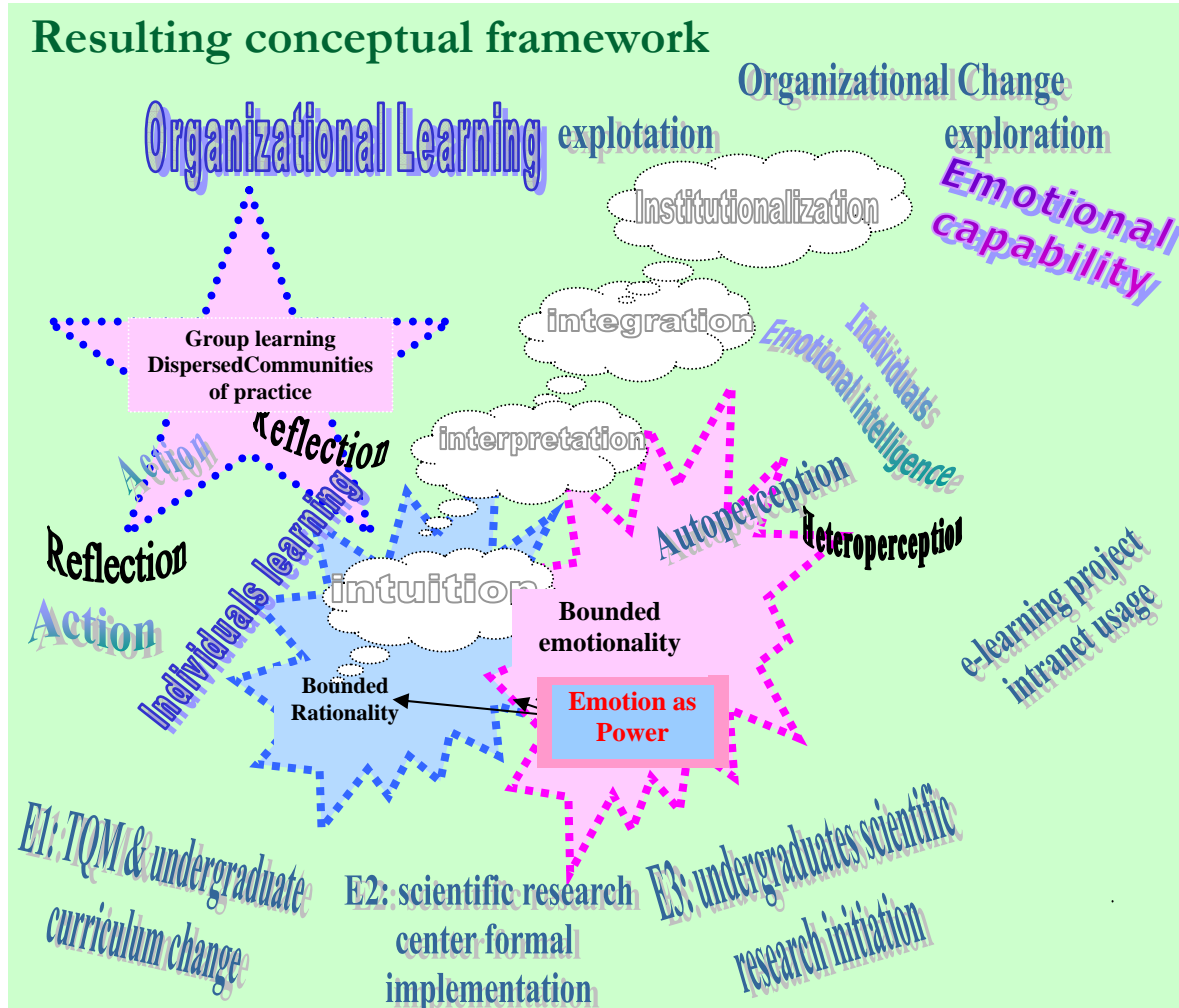
- Why different research fronts that have defined scientific area of organizational studies are still integrated, in their vast majority, within the functionalist paradigm (Acedo et al., 2001; Brief, 2000)?;
- How alternative methods such as unstructured observational studies explore administrative practice’s new world and gain new meanings (Kingsley, 2000)?;
- Constructivistic methodologies and a way to interconnect them to develop a knowledge tissue reveal ‘live’ knowledge processes in an organic way, not only through post fact ‘symptoms’ mechanical dynamics?

In this way, researcher’s epistemology changed from seeking phenomenon understanding “out there” in a objective monologue logic towards developing phenomenon comprehension (Morin, 1999) “from within” developing intersubjective multivoiced logic, which resulted in a analytical integrative framework to describe collective learning and change micro processes. There is an epistemological distinction between comprehension and explanation (understanding). Explanation is an abstract process were logic demonstrations are achieved departing from objective data as result of model or structure adequation. Comprehension understands through projected identification transfers while explanation regards empirical-logic pertinence demonstration. Comprehension is not a pre-rational type of knowledge instead it is a kind of knowledge that turns intelligible to an individual, another one and also everything marked by subjectivity and affection (Morin. 1999:162). But, comprehension is also limited, thus Morin (1999) recommended combining it with verification instruments and explanation methods to acknowledge error and incomprehension risks. For this reason, research adopted triangulation methods and metatheoretical analysis too and aimed at answering “how” and “why” collective OL&C microprocesses occurred.

Thus, a second comprehensive understanding was developed concerning research question: “how and why management teachers collectively learn and change at a fifty-years-old private Brazilian Business School”. This is that, at the studied Business School, teachers change through learning because technical and social systems coexist due to permanent emotional, rational and political dynamics reconstruction that objectively and subjectively manifest its individual, collective and power structures interests. In this Business School learning and change occurs because its individuals feel, think, act, reflect, learn and change among individual and collective interrelations where work meaning and professional identity are constructed and deconstructed in a day-to day basis. Individually they are enthusiastic professional teachers, satisfied with the organization expectative upon them. Collectively, teacher’s organizational learning and change result because of an established physical proximity and personal affinity which is fostered by an activated emotionality were philomatic attitude is stimulated by their coordinator and Director. Synthesizing, at the studied Business School, teachers change through learning because technical and social systems coexist due to permanent emotional, rational and political microprocesses

reconstruction that objectively and subjectively manifest its individual, collective and power structures interests within dispersed communities of practice.

Based upon epistemological results reflection a 2<sup>nd</sup> integrative understanding (comprehension) was accomplished and configured in Figure 3.



**FIGURE 3 - An integrative framework to delineate and understand emo-rational microprocesses of collective change through learning**

OL&C phenomenon comprehension was possible because reflexive methodology guided researcher epistemology to change a monologue perspective by which she had unconsciously imposed researched phenomenon her external logic. Comprehension knowledge opened space for “listening” what emerged from the field and in this way it enhanced researcher awareness also facilitating intersubjectivity development through researcher self-critical practice. So she could recognize that concerning organizational learning and change research, the way is also the destiny and that “*knowledge is not separated from the knower*” (Steedman 1991: 53).

Finally organizational learning and change research accomplishments as well as future research recommendations are explained.

## 6 RESEARCH RESULTS AND IMPLICATIONS

I argue that learning, changing and knowing are multi-dimensional processes, and that analyzing them reflexively at a micro-level of groups interacting in a specific context allows more detailed descriptions of OL&C dynamics. Additionally, researcher inclusion as a complete participant made it possible to evolve from understanding to comprehensively knowing.

Reflecting on the research experience and on how each research design decisions were taken, allowed the researcher to point out four research accomplishments and three unexpected discoveries. Accomplishments were:

1<sup>st</sup> multi methods selection for field data generation including complete participant observation and introspection;

2<sup>nd</sup> multi paradigmatic examination (Gioia & Pitre, 1990) to interpretively analyse generated field and conceptual data;

3<sup>d</sup> researcher’s learning process enhancement while changing her self-awareness about her own practice and “her own nest” dynamics.

4<sup>th</sup> an analytical framework to integrate emergent concepts within organizational learning and change micro processes (Villard, 2004) to integrate bounded emotionality (Mumby & Putnam, 1992; Huy, 1999; 2002), emotions as power dynamics (Huzzard, 2003) dispersed communities of practice (Kan, 1999) coexisting with bounded rationality (Shrisvatava & Alvesson, 1987) in interactive processes of intuition, interpretation and institutionalization (Crossan, Lane & White, 1999) processes. Fourth accomplishment was reported in another paper concerning a socio constructivist analytical framework to understand group level processes of organizational learning and change. First three accomplishments were developed in this paper.

Taking into account that results of a dissertation are as important as the results on researcher’s learning results (Callahan & Schwandt, 1999) and that researcher’s teaching practice also changed, it was revealed that reflecting on researcher’s epistemological transformation would also contribute for OL knowledge development and, may contribute towards more conscious and reflective management research actions.

Specifically, accomplished interconnected learning related to:

a) how research design, organizational theory paradigms and organizational learning studies a.1) were experienced by the researcher during conceptual and field research practice, a.2) guided theoretical and methodological choices to accomplish management research objectives and, a.3) led researcher’s to question paradigmatic incommensurability discourse.

b) how the studied phenomenon called for deeper examination and combination of research perspectives, theories and organizational paradigms of different management knowledge traditions such as realism and constructivism in order to understand emergent complex phenomenon and compatible explanations of learning and change micro processes taking place at this working space such as that of Brown & Duguid (1991), Vince & Broussine (1996); Gherardi et al (1998), Blacker & Mc Donald (2000), Contu & Willmott, (2000);

Vince (2002), Gherardi & Nicolini (2002), Huzzard (2003), Elkjaer (2003) and regarding knowing as focused by Cook & Seely (1999) and Sturdy (2003).

At the end, this research process instigated three additional unexpected questions for future OLKC research agenda concerning learning and change micro processes knowledge.

At OL theoretical level: How bounded emotionality, cooperation and trust processes are considered within organizational interactions and how may they be constructed to imbalance competitive relations as an organizational capability?

At an epistemological level: Is scientific research and knowledge development a matter of revealing researchers’ assumptions and theory constraints instead of trying to “separate researchers feelings and thinking” from the research process?; Is paradigm incommensurability a fact? Whose interests does this paradigm debate have served and serve to? (Gioia & Pitre, 1990; Lewis & Grimes, 1999);

In this way, this paper contributes to think new ways of thinking, researching and knowing about organizational learning, knowledge and, invites other OL researchers to “taste” (feel) it in a reflexive way because a “fusion experience” of living ontological, epistemological, theoretical and methodological interconnections actually changed researcher’s teaching and research practice.

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