Book Review: Developing Third-Generation Learning Organizations: A Heuristic Discovery Process (2023)

Book Authors: Kazimierz Gozdz & Ruth-Ellen L. Miller

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VUCA – an acronym for volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity – is a meme summarizing the challenging conditions increasingly facing leaders in all sectors of society. Developing Third-Generation Learning Organizations: A Heuristic Discovery Process (2023), by Kazimierz Gozdz, PhD and Ruth-Ellen L. Miller, PhD., is a new book focusing on how to handle such challenges with new ways of convening for work.

As these authors point out, organizational cultures are a microcosm of the larger culture, and both must be transformed to deal with (or, as they put it, "thrive in spite of") the disruptions of the emerging business, and global, environment.

Integrating understandings in fields ranging from anthropology to cybernetics, from learning theory to applied metaphysics and transpersonal psychology, the authors have laid out a set of processes and a framework for organizational transformation, with case examples of its application, that could well be a model for the larger culture transformation that is emerging. In doing this, they offer an alternative paradigm to business audiences wishing to go beyond yesterday's obsolescent approaches.

The practices they offer merge Peck's (1993) community-building, Bohmian (1996) dialogue, Vygotsky-style (1978) scaffolding, and Wilber's (1986) integral vertical development, with traditional financial analysis and performance measures – in an ongoing "organic framework, not a linear formula," that can be seen as describing some of what is happening in grass roots movements around the world.

Developing Third-Generation Learning Organizations weighs in at 217 pages and is priced at £72.99. Thus, a goal of this review is not only to inform readers about the contributions this book makes, but to give readers enough of a feel about its content and style to make informed decisions whether to buy it.

Toward that end, the book's Table of Contents is appended as Figure 1 at the end of this review, and I highly recommend reading the 14 page Foreword, available for free by clicking the "View Extract" button at https://www.cambridgescholars.com/product/978-1-5275-9449-4. This foreword is especially useful, due to both the way it sets forth the historical foundations of the authors 'thinking, and to the way it exemplifies the authors ' readable writing style.

Things I especially like and/or find useful about this book include:
- The very detailed Table of Contents (appended as Figure 1), that makes it much easier to navigate the book.
- The relatively long section in the book's front matter that can be read for free on the publisher's website.
- The way the book uses the meme of Heuristic Discovery as a powerful organizing rubric.
- The way the book integrates the transcendental ethos of transpersonal psychology and whole-systems dynamics with that of the currently dominant ethos of scientistic materialism.
- The various step by step outlines on how to transform organizations from "top-down" management to developmental learning organizations.
- The premise of "Nothing Extra" as the keynote of using the actual workplace as a learning laboratory where business leaders proactively and deliberately utilize work to enhance human development.
- The case studies that allow the reader to readily imagine the recommendations of the book being implemented by clients/client organizations.

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- How this book could enable and help format a desired future for social, governmental, and business systems facing the rapidly changing (VUCA) environment we are encountering.

Most importantly, the book demonstrates that organizations can be designed, governed, and led to enhance, rather than reduce, human consciousness and development at a time when such development is absolutely essential.

However, I find it difficult to imagine – if I was a managing executive and read this book to resolve the pressing problems I am faced with – how I would actually operationalize what the book recommends without hiring Gozdz and company as a consultant? Obviously, this is a not-so hidden agenda of the book, and Part Four of the book comprises five chapters detailing successful case examples of this style of consulting in practice.

Examples of Gozdz 'results have been described by other writers, notably Kegan and Lacey (2016) in *An Everyone Culture,* and Jaworsky (2012) in *Source: The Inner Path of Knowledge Creation;* but this book provides the first published explication of the theory and methodology on which Gozdz 'and Miller's work is based. So, perhaps, this is a text for not only academics and their students who are interested in theory and methodology; but also, the many professionals who observed the actual development and implementation of these ideas. For such readers, this book is a well annotated, clearly written description of the development of the ideas underpinning the authors 'approach. That may explain the relatively abstract level of writing, with few concrete examples until Part Four.

Sadly, the cost of the printed edition of the book makes it something that I fear only a few people will read. I hope the authors may find ways to provide low-cost alternative formats – e.g., pdf or Kindle – as this book contains a really important set of ideas for human society at this time, and important to become widely recognized and adopted.

In summary, our world beset by ongoing VUCA-like change, and what Gozdz and Miller offer is a framework for choosing processes and creating structures that have the flexibility and adaptability that may, indeed, make it possible for both companies and the larger society to thrive in the chaotic times that lay ahead.

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