**Dennis R. Nayor**
**Module 4 Assignment: Organizations as Brains**
**LEPSL 560: Organizational Theory and Change**
**February 8, 2020**

Metaphorically, there are many ways by which organizations may be viewed, but conceivably the most powerful is to see them as a brain. This metaphor vividly encapsulates the elements of thinking and learning, both of which are not only vital, but synonymous to the functioning of the human brain. When an organization is viewed as such, it is recognized to have the ability to process information and make decisions in an analogous manner.[1] As decision-making systems, organizations must perform just like a brain for activity to be properly regulated and managed.[2] Whether viewed from an analytical or an intuitive perspective, this metaphor is a supporting and reflective means to illustrate how an organization processes information and operates.[3]

To emphasize the power of the brain metaphor, scientists have been exploring methods to develop operational and management-based tools to facilitate thinking and activity-control within an organization, akin to a "centralized brain." [4] Through advanced technologies, some organizations may even be described as *electronic* brains since they function devoid of any human resources.[5] For most organizations which operate through people however, it is essential to understand the vital nexus between learning and organizational growth.

As written by Gareth Morgan in his award-winning publication, Images of Organization, *"the idea of developing capacities for individual and organizational learning has established itself as a key priority in designing and managing organizations that can deal with the challenges of a turbulent world."*[6] This connects directly with the work of Chris Argyris and Donald Schon who originated the theories of single-loop and double-loop learning. Single-loop learning, which maintains that all decisions and actions are derivatives of pre-established operating procedures, is limiting since it only works well when there are no anomalies. Double-loop learning, however, aptly allows for a review of a condition and permits adjustments to the operating standards when

the circumstances dictate.[7] Powerfully, this describes a way in which organizations can effectively learn to adapt to the ecological and environmental situations which will occur.

As asserted by Chief Gary Morrison (Ret.) formerly of the Carlsbad, California Police Department, *"Studying organizational theory is so important because you are striving to make your organization the most effective and accountable to the public, the citizens, and ultimately your boss; you also want employees to be happy to come to work."*[8] In accordance with that position, he underscored the need for promoting creativity and allowing mistakes to occur as part of the organizational culture. This is crucial in that it fosters an atmosphere of learning, while enabling growth and adaptation.[9] For leaders, this acknowledges that experimentation is a vital factor in defining which best-practices align with an organization's needs. In human evolution, it is from this method whereby growth occurs, thus reinforcing the power of the brain metaphor.

Humans beings are social creatures by design and as such are naturally hardwired to connect with others. As authored by Baish Nair on his article entitled, Effectively Leading Diverse Teams, *"The success of projects and programs is increasingly becoming dependent on how collaborative and enabled team members are. This calls for a specific focus on leadership and project management especially when leading teams comprised of members of diverse backgrounds that have different needs and different ways of maximizing throughput."*[10] This passage correlates to exactly why an organization must perform as a brain. Organizations are comprised of people, therefore understanding the psychology behind what motivates individuals and groups to become fully engaged is essential for cultivating productivity and team cohesion.[11]

According to a Gallup report, engaged employees are not only more likely to remain with their organization, but they also equate to a large cost savings. This report revealed that disengaged employees cost organizations between 483 and 605 billion dollars in lost productivity annually.[12]

To offset such dramatic losses, organizations require leadership, critical thinking, and the ability to build the platforms required for success. Studies have shown this to include creating work-life balances and accelerated career pathways, particularly for millennials.[13] Further studies have indicated that utilizing a strategy known as "Gamification" creates the mechanism by which employees can earn badges, points, and other rewards based upon work-quality and task completion. This incentive-based method is the perfect way to create engagement, improve morale, and increase productivity.[14] Clearly a cerebral and brain-based approach to business.

In further understanding organizations as brains, it is essential to realize that a strict top-down approach to leadership is not necessarily conducive to the creativity and engagement that is needed for an organization to continually evolve. Moreover, this type of approach is likely to perpetuate single-loop learning.[15] Consistent with the brain metaphor, an environment must exist in which risk-taking is supported, the ability to challenge the status-quo is permitted, and innovation is revered.[16]

The brain is the most powerful metaphor for many reasons. It inspires an organization to learn to learn which subsequently creates a state of continuous evolution and adaptation. The brain's ability to create redundancy within all parts as shown through the holographic design, enables efficiency and in extreme cases, even survival.[17] No other metaphor truly captures what is most essential and universal to an organization, which is thinking, learning, progressing, adapting, creating, and ultimately leading. For these specific reasons, the brain is undoubtedly the most powerful metaphor through which to view organizations.

## References

[1] Images of Organizations; Mogan, Gareth; Sage Publications; 2006; P. 76
[2] Ibid P. 76-77
[3] Ibid P. 78
[4] Ibid P. 77
[5] Ibid P. 80
[6] Ibid P. 84
[7] Ibid P. 85
[8] LEPSL 560 Presentation 4.1; Organizations as Brains; Fritsvold, Eric Dr. and Morrison, Gary Chief (Ret.)
[9] Ibid
[10] LEPSL 560; Effectively Leading Diverse Teams; Nair, Baish; Project Management.com; September 5, 2017. https://www.projectmanagement.com/articles/402912/Effectively-Leading-Diverse-Teams
[11] Ibid
[12] Ibid
[13] Ibid
[14] Ibid
[15] Morgan; P. 91-92
[16] Ibid P. 94
[17] Ibid P. 97-99