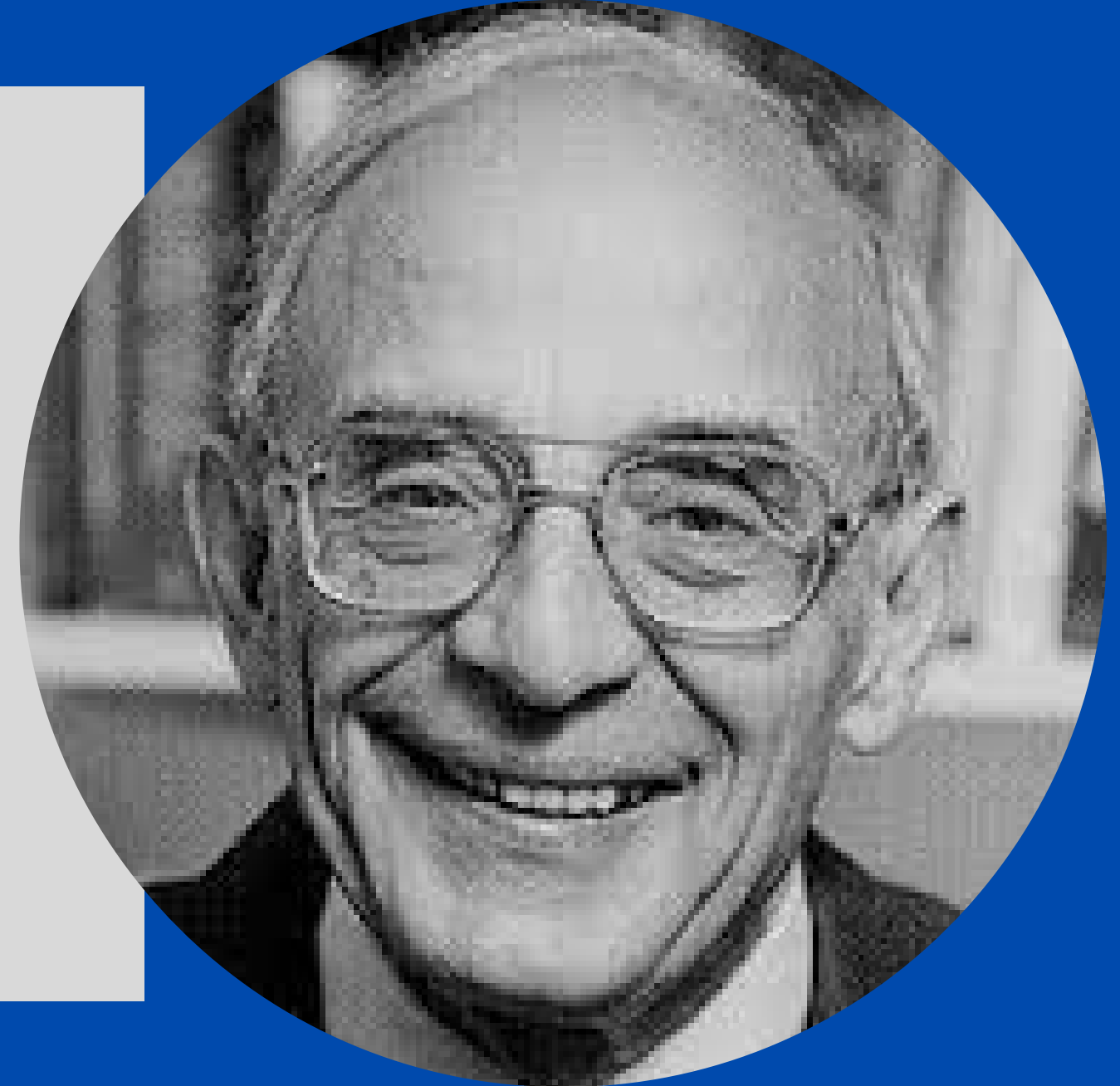


CHRIS ARGYRIS

Organizational Learning Theory



Marhaennia English
DEPM 604 - Dr. Warner
UMGC, Fall 2024

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THE PRESENTATION GOAL

To introduce Chris Argyris' theories of organizational learning, single-loop and double-loop learning, and ladder of inference; how his theories advance leadership/management and the application in distance education (DE)

CHRIS ARGYRIS (1923–2013)

- Management theorist
- The father of organizational learning
- Chris Argyris & Donald Schön developed the theory of:
 - Single-loop learning,
 - Double-loop learning, and
 - Action research (Anderson, 2013).
- Chris Argyris & Peter Senge developed the "ladder of inference," a powerful tool for decision-making (Vliet, 2020).

ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING THEORY (OLT)

"A meta-theory that considers the socio-organizational context of learning about new knowledge, the individual level factors that influence learning the new knowledge, the macro-environmental influences on knowledge application and learning, the impact of the nature of the knowledge or innovation on the subsequent learning process (Berta et al., 2015, p. 2)."

ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING THEORY (CONT'D)

- Organizational Learning (OL) is a social process.
- OL is more than the sum of what individuals know and learn; it can persist beyond the tenure of individuals.
- OL is related to organizational performance.

(Berta et al., 2015, p. 2).

ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING THEORY'S PROCESSES

Single-loop
Learning

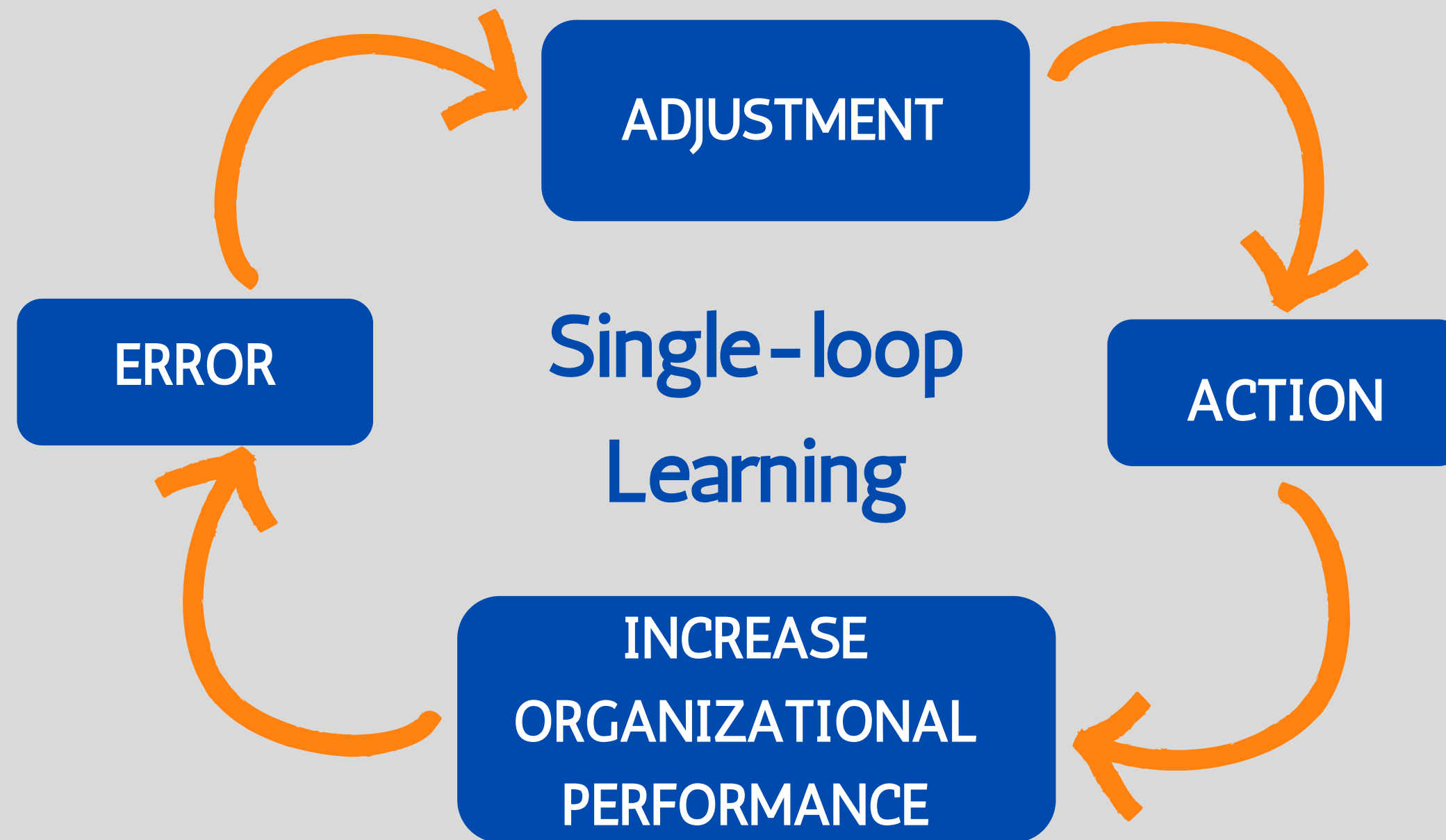


Double-loop
Learning

SINGLE-LOOP LEARNING

- Corrective actions to performance failures by improving the efficiency of existing processes without changing the governing values or norms (Berta et al., 2015, p. 2; Reychav et al., 2016, p. 417).
- Original processes, values, and goals are preserved (Berta et al., 2015, p. 2).
- The dominant mode of organizational learning – behavioral change.
- Theories of action: Espoused theories of action and Theories in use.
 - **Espoused theories:** "[theories of action] that people report as the basis for action."
 - **Theorie-in-use:** "theories of action inferred from how people behave" (Argyris & Schon, 1974, as cited in Reychav et al., 2016, pp. 416 – 417).

SINGLE-LOOP LEARNING (CONT'D)

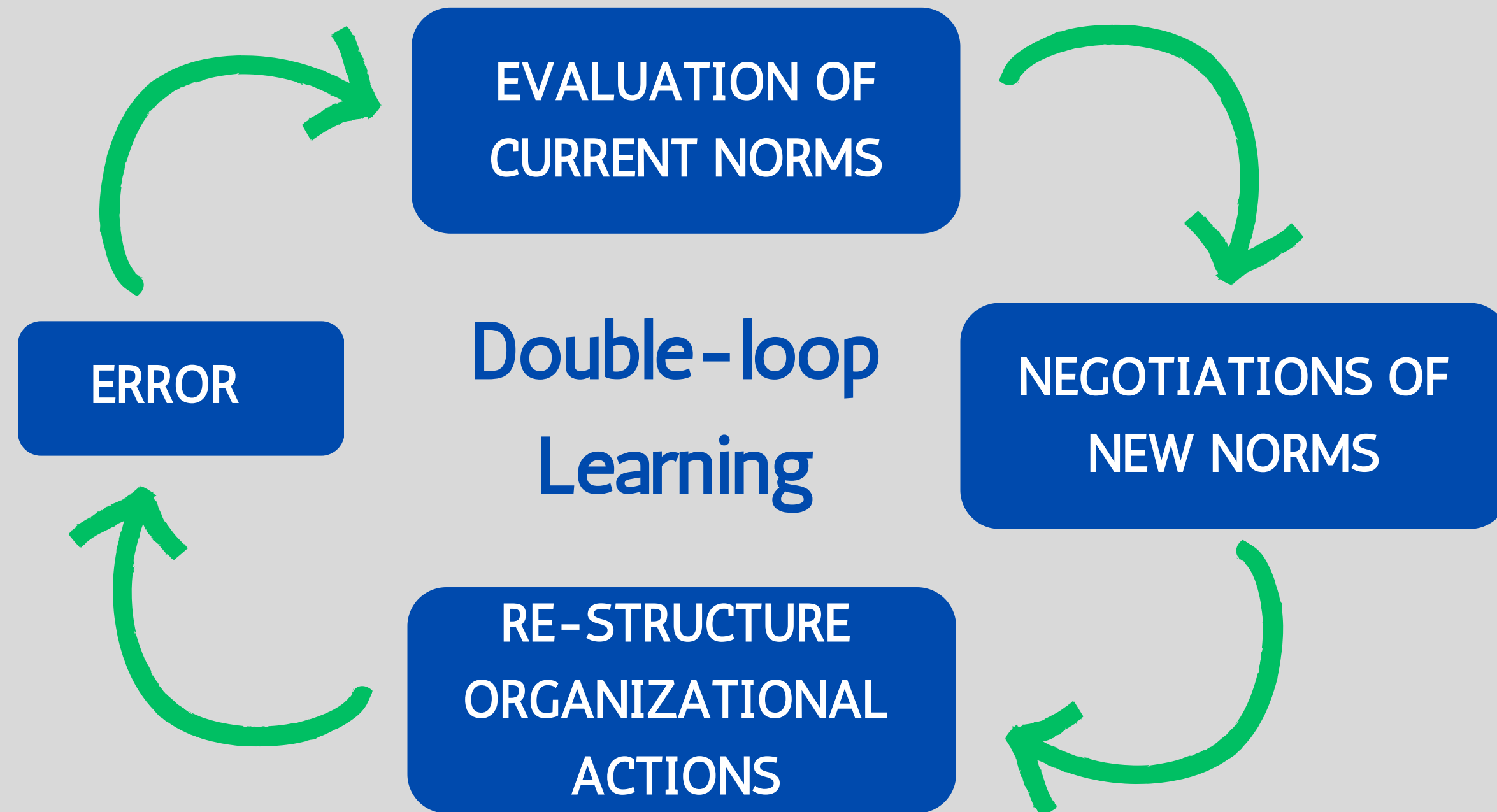


Adapted from Michael D. Williams's figure of single and double loop learning (Williams, n.d.).

DOUBLE-LOOP LEARNING

- Corrective actions to performance failure by going further into the root cause of the problem.
- It questions the initial assumptions, values, and goals of the processes.
- It can lead to a significant adaptive and transformational change in workplace behaviors, routines, goals, values, and processes (Berta et al., 2015, p. 2).
- "Occurs when errors are corrected by changing the governing values before performing the needed corrective actions" (Reychav et al., 2016, p. 417).

DOUBLE-LOOP LEARNING (CONT'D)

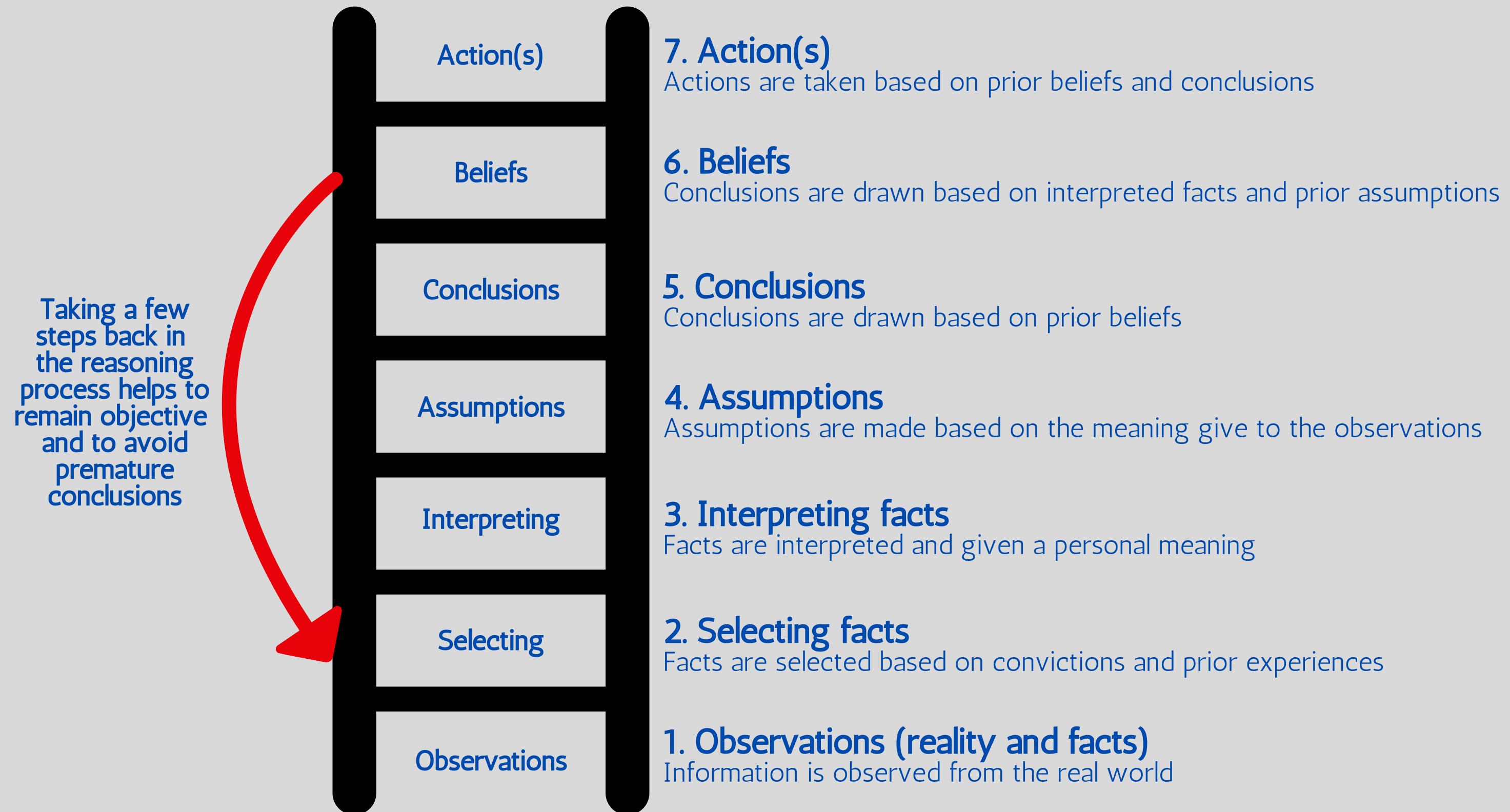


Adapted from Michael D. Williams's figure of single and double loop learning (Williams, n.d.).

THE LADDER OF INFERENCE

- Developed by Chris Argyris and Peter Senge.
- "A decision-making tool that helps people not jump to premature conclusions and to reason based on facts" (Mulder, 2024, para 2).
- A valuable tool for raising self-awareness is increasing leadership balance and flexibility, which supports human-centered leadership (Dickerson, 2024).
- It consists of seven steps; the reasoning process starts at the bottom of the ladder (D'Eon, 2022).

THE LADDER OF INFERENCE (CONT'D)



Adapted from Toolshero's figure of Ladder of Inference Model by Chris Argyris and Peter Sange (Mulder, 2024).

CHRIS ARGYRIS' THEORIES IN LEADERSHIP /MANAGEMENT

Organizational Learning
Theories (OLT) improve the
performance of individuals,
teams, and organizations

Leadership /management fosters a learning
culture, trust, and a safe environment

Leadership /management improves flexibility
and adaptability to thrive sustainably

Leadership /management encourages risk-
taking and rewards innovations

CHRIS ARGYRIS' THEORIES IN LEADERSHIP /MANAGEMENT

Single- and double-loop
learning strategies to
achieve better performance
leadership/management

Leadership/management recognizes
challenges and opportunities more timely

Leadership/management identifies the
complexity of errors and which learning
strategies are chosen as corrective actions

Leadership/management designs and
implements strategies for correction or
enhancement purposes

CHRIS ARGYRIS' THEORIES IN LEADERSHIP /MANAGEMENT

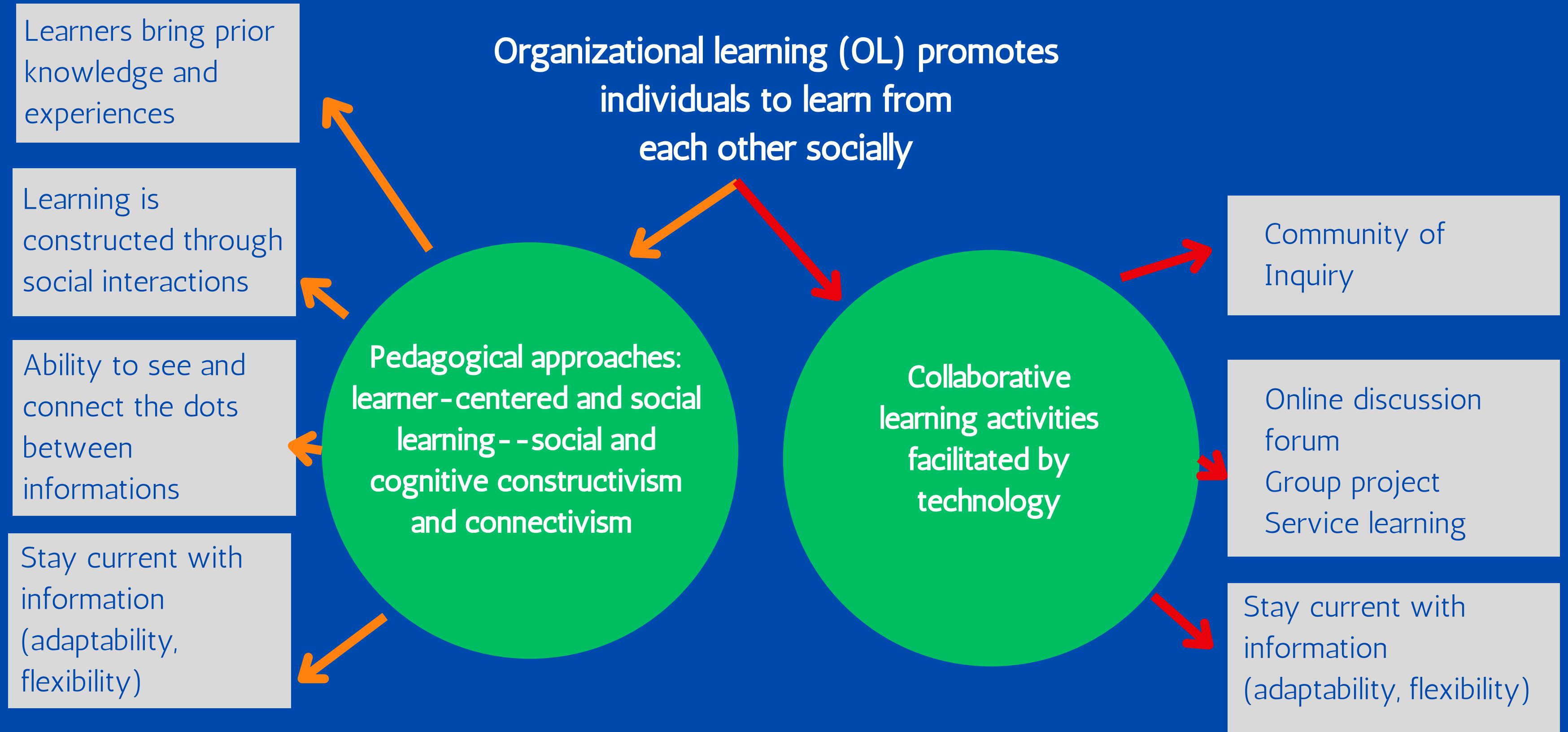
The Ladder of Inference for
better decision-making
skills and human-centered
leadership/management

Leadership/management reduces bias
judgement formed over false pretenses and
assumptions

Leadership/management improves flexibility
and adaptability to thrive sustainably

Leadership/management encourages risk-
taking and rewards innovations

ARGYRIS' THEORIES APPLICATIONS IN DISTANCE EDUCATION



ARGYRIS' THEORIES APPLICATIONS IN DE (CONT'D)



Single-loop learning:

Fosters critical thinking skills:

- Conducting online research

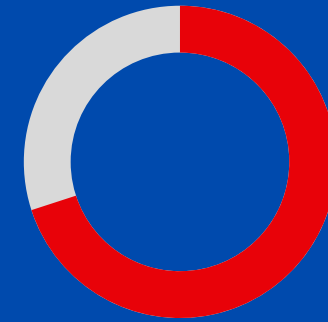


Double-loop learning:

Fosters critical thinking skills:

- Critically examining and questioning relevant ideas and information

(Ervin & Slife, 2019)



The Ladder of Inference:

Provides learners with a tool to develop and improve self-awareness and critical thinking:

- Informs learners how thought process influences actions
- Hinders misunderstanding and conflict during interactions and decision-making processes
- Improve healthier and harmonious relationships that is essential for collaboration and collaborative learning
- A higher level of self-awareness is crucial in distance education due to a likely higher number of learners with diverse background

(Peterson, 2023)

REFLECTIONS

- Chris Argyris's management theories are human-centered focus.
- Organizational Learning Theory, Single- and Double-loop Theory, and the Ladder of Inference emphasize continual learning processes and activities in educational and workforce settings to foster and generate knowledge, solve problems, and innovate.
- The theories provide frameworks for social and collaborative learning.
- The theories provide guidance and tools for improving productivity by identifying the sources of problems:
 - Single-loop learning helps identify errors like routines, practices, or performance failures
 - Double-loop learning helps identify mistakes that are more substantive in nature as they relate to the governing rules
 - The Ladder of Inference helps improve self-awareness and avoid cognitive pitfalls, which is essential in human interactions in distance education and workplace settings. It also allows individuals to become better people socially and cognitively.
- However, Double-loop learning and the Ladder of Inference pose some challenges:
 - The double-loop learning concept is "complex to understand and challenging to implement" (Auqui-Caceres & Furlan, 2023, p. 742).
 - Despite the Ladder of Inference being a great tool to improve self-awareness, cognitive biases are prompted by emotions, social influences, cultural conditioning, and availability of information, which could hinder individuals from implementing the steps in the tool ("What is cognitive bias and how does it affect our lives?," 2024).

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