
Preface

To get this book together has been a long but joyful as well as inspiring journey. My own journey began in Sweden in 1993. A colleague of mine had recommended me to study literature on the learning organization. He said that it might have relevance to the project that I was working on, which was related to knowledge transfer and competence. I did as my colleague suggested and started to read some literature on the learning organization idea. However, I did not understand much. As a matter of fact, I started to worry that there was something wrong with my intellectual capability. This was the starting point of a very long excursion during which I tried to understand the learning organization idea. During the main part of this period I was quite sceptical about the idea, primarily because I thought it was both strange and, actually, worrying that an idea as vague and ambiguous as the learning organization could be so popular.

As a rather long sidetrack to my journey, I learnt that most or all organizations are unable to learn. I have had the opportunity to observe how organizations actually do everything they can to avoid learning. They simply do not want to learn. These observations have slowly made me become convinced of the need for ideas such as the learning organization idea. It is a somewhat strange feeling to become a supporter (or at least a curious explorer) when, simultaneously, some of my colleagues who used to support the idea have abandoned ship and turned sceptical. I guess that a fair interpretation of myself is that I am somewhat of an 'anti-fashion' person.

I have also experienced a physical journey during the process of getting this book together. For a few years I have lived and worked in China, which of course has been quite exciting in many ways. One thing that I have learnt is to appreciate Chinese people. In particular, I have met many kind and good Chinese students, some of whom have helped me with this book. A group of students participated in my 'research school', where they reviewed previous literature on the learning organization in various contexts. These students have been mentioned in Chapter 3, some as co-authors. In particular, I want to mention Ziyun Fan who has served as the leader of this group of students. Zi Ling and Jiageng Duan, also students of mine, have helped to make sure that the chapters were adapted to the Edward Elgar house style.

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My sincere thanks to all of you!

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