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Evaluating Selected Examples of One State Legislative Chamber's Processes from the Perspective of Learning Organization Theory

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By

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This research paper is dedicated to those who serve in the Florida Legislature, either as elected policy makers or as staff. Each performs an invaluable service for the people of Florida. It is also dedicated to my wife, Kathleen, and my children, Casey, Allison, Ashley and Brady, for all their support during this project and for their understanding of my being absent more than I had wished, and to my Mom, who is proof that you are never too old to learn. Special thanks go to those who gave me the valuable commodity of time, offering such splendid comments on the process as I went about the interviews for this study. And thanks, too, to my committee who helped guide me through this process and to those who helped to review the manuscript.
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ABSTRACT

Argyris and Schon (1996, p.xvii) contend, “it is conventional wisdom that business firms, governments, nongovernmental organizations, schools, health care systems, regions…need to adapt to changing environments, draw lessons from past successes and failures, detect and correct the errors of the past, anticipate and respond to impending threats, conduct experiments, engage in continuing innovation, build and realize images of a desirable future.” Argyris refers to this as “the learning imperative.” All of these organizational types and the tasks they perform directly relate to the constant activities of a legislative body. These organizations and the actors within each, as described by Argyris, are engaged but outside the internal processes of a legislative body. They seek to influence both the process and final product of a legislature, but now must do so in Florida in an environment of constant change due to the imposition of term limits.

The legislative processes in the Florida House of Representatives consistently provide examples of single-loop learning. Errors and problems emerge, legislation is introduced, designed to provide remedy, and the cycle is repeated. But, according to Argyris (2000, p.4), “genuine learning involves an extra step, in which you reflect on your assumptions and test the validity of your hypothesis,” which is characterized as double-loop learning, a critical ingredient for a learning organization.

This paper identifies weaknesses in the learning activities of the Florida House of Representatives as well as impediments to the implementation of improved organizational learning processes.

It identifies the various factors that affect the policy consideration process in this setting, including frequent turnover of membership, leadership, staff leadership, and committee staffing and membership. By using interviews with key actors it focuses on how turnover is perceived by participants to affect institutional efforts to obtain knowledge about substantive issues.
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION: ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING & THE FLORIDA HOUSE

There exists a large body of research concerning organizational learning theory but there has been no discoverable application of these theories to the highly political, multivariate, legislative setting. Further complicating the application of organizational learning theory in this type of setting is trying to apply what is essentially a business/commercial enterprise model to a political entity faced with constant turnover of not only the chief executive, but also all significant key executive and line players. This political environment turnover does not seem to have been considered in the literature on learning organizations. However, there is substantial literature in both public administration and business research areas on the organizational impact of turnover.

This paper identifies how it is necessary for the largely business oriented learning theory literature and research to be expanded into the public sector, elected actor, environment. This paper documents a very high frequency of turnover in the Florida House using key committee roles for members and staff. It offers options for internal structures and processes that can serve to mitigate the impact of change in an environment of high turnover. The extraordinary level of turnover impairs the ability of the House to function as an effective learning organization. This dissertation documents several ways in which organizational learning has been impaired in the House processes. It then presents and explores options to enhance the House’s prospects toward becoming a more effective learning organization.

Pfeffer and Sutton (p.47), conclude, “Creating a culture that fosters an evidence based approach to management and problem solving is one of the leader’s most crucial tasks, regardless of whether they are in charge of a business, a non-profit or a government agency.” A
policy making arm of government should benefit as much or more from an institutionalized learning organizational structure as a business or non-profit organization.

Organizational learning and the related learning organization theory has been studied in depth for decades. While a clear exclusionary differentiation between these two models in not evident since each has a dependence upon the other to succeed, Easterby-Smith, et. al offer the following description of how the two theories have developed along divergent literary tracks.

The literature on organizational learning has concentrated on the detached observation and analysis of the processes involved in individual and collective learning inside organizations; whereas the learning organization literature has an active orientation, and is geared towards using specific diagnostic and evaluative methodological tools which can help identify, promote and evaluate the quality of learning processes inside organizations. (p.2)

To this author this seems more of a distinction without a clear difference. We are seeking to split hairs between the machinery of organizational learning and the process within the organization. In a legislative setting there is a need to approach both the cognitive machinery and the collective action in the same analysis. The literature on improving the learning capacity of organizations is considerable, yet an extensive search of the literature indicates there is no published application of these concepts to the legislative arena.

In deciding policy, legislators rely upon a highly complex and differentiated system of knowledge acquisition and utilization. Policy research, retention and dissemination of information largely occurs at the sub-unit level of the Florida House; at the committee member and staff level, generally independent of an integrated research agenda and driven by the subject matter differentiation of the committee structure. Linking these resources to each other while building a knowledge capacity system that captures what has been done before while projecting options for the future is a major challenge for a legislative body. According to Agranoff (2005) “most knowledge creation and learning occurs when people are reacting to other’s thinking. Communities of problem solvers are thus important parts of contemporary knowledge program architectures.” He continues, “Successfully collaborated integrated strategies build on interactive platforms, based on such qualities as trust, creative opportunity, and continuous learning, which have the potential to add value.” Mannheim (1985, p.29) offers that “knowledge is from the very beginning a cooperative process of group life.”

The legislative branch of state government, the entity most charged with developing policy initiatives, can be viewed as such a cooperative process. It is a network of constitutional
officers, each with their own constitutional status and authority, but each hugely reliant on the network of fellow officers for information and support to accomplish their authorized tasks. A depiction of some of this network is shown in Figure 1. Collaborative learning is a critical element for effective organizational learning. (Agranoff 2005, Senge 1990) Berry and Brower (2005) add to the emphasis on the need for collaborative learning, “not only does network management imply major new challenges for learning on the part of individual managers; the network’s collective participants must learn how to learn together.” This author would maintain that this necessity applies equally to those who develop policy initiatives and to those who implement policy. But more than learning new materials is involved. Berry and Brower contend that the change in behavior required for this awakening of collective learning is of a third order nature (Bartunek & Moch, 1987), one requiring “an awareness of the network’s own change processes, learn from these processes, and work collectively to adapt the network for greater effectiveness.”

Argyris and Shon developed the Theory in Use Model II concept along these same patterns (Argyris, 2004, p.10). In this theory Argyris contends “Double-loop learning is the detection and correction of errors where the correction requires changes not only in action strategies but also in the values that govern the theory-in-use” (p.10). Theory -in-Use, according to Argyris, is comprised of the action strategies we use to address issues based on pre-set designs for behavior we have in our heads (p.8). Argyris and Shon developed the Theory in Use Model II concept along these same patterns (Argyris, 2004, p.10).

A Theory-in-use that creates double loop learning and emphasizes inquiry and persistent testing requires:

1) production of valid information
2) a situation of informed choice
3) consistent monitoring of the chosen action to determine effectiveness

Fosler (1992) asserts that “state government needs to conceive of itself as a learning system encouraging a constant flow of useful and useable information coming from whoever has it and moving to whoever needs it.” This flow of information is constant and non-static, constantly affecting choices made from the Argyris Theory-in-Use tri-list of criteria double-loop-learning. How then to filter the “noise” created by this flow and separate the good information from the bad and the useful from the distractions?

The following Figure, developed by this author, depicts how legislatures are subject to multiple sources of information and ideas.
Figure 1- Origins of Ideas and Information Exchange Flow in Legislative Process
This paper examines the impact of large scale turnover of both decision makers and staff in a policy making setting, and how it might impact the ability to maintain the “awareness of the network” processes, both current and past. To do this an organization must be, according to Senge, “continually expanding its capacity to create its future,” where adaptive learning is combined with creative learning (Senge, 1900, p. 14).

This paper explores the application of existing organizational learning theory literature, combining the descriptions and components of many of the lens used in studies of organizational learning such as; Senge’s concepts of the Fifth Discipline; Theory in Use and Double-Loop Learning as used by Argyris, Schon and others to the structural realities of the Florida House of Representatives, to explore how these concepts might provide a template for analysis of current investigation and development of policy issues. These concepts will be explored more thoroughly in this study as I seek to link these concepts with the actual knowledge acquisition and retention activities of the Florida House of Representatives, seeking to identify possible additions or modifications to the House policy consideration processes to better model that which might be described as an ideal learning organization.

It would appear to be an imperative for a legislature, that creates laws and policies that impact the operations and behavior of the businesses, the non-profits and the government agencies of Florida, to strive to emulate a learning organization. This paper examines how an organization that is dependent upon the acquisition of information for the decision making processes is affected by high rates of turnover. It reviews how this turnover has an effect in a legislative environment, where longer term strategies for policy development are constrained and shorter term perspectives are more easily adapted. (Rosenthal, 2004).

The Sunrise Report, a study commissioned under the direction of former Florida House Speaker Jon Mills, (1987) offers that changes in Florida House leadership (leadership turnover) is a positive as he wrote, “for the most part our political leaders are under constant pressure to focus upon the problems of the moment. Our legislative practice of selecting new leaders every two years assures a high degree of responsiveness to current problems, and a willingness to explore better ways of doing things” (p.15). Leadership turnover has been present in Florida since the creation of Florida as a state in 1845. Since that time, it has been the practice of the Florida House and Senate to choose new presiding officers every two years with only rare exceptions to this practice. This paper will document how the application of an improved
learning process can be possible even within the institutionalized turnover processes, while examining how the frequency of turnover can serve to frustrate organizational learning.

This might require a new lens for examination of complex issues, patterned after the concept of Model II, “Theory-In-Use” advocated by Argyris and Schon (1974). The Florida House of Representatives could use this concept to develop processes designed to foster a more efficient learning organization. Consideration of an ideal organizational learning model might be a useful tool for consideration of highly complex issues before a legislature. Since Members and Committee Chairs are reassigned every two years, knowledge content and subject matter background are important criteria for role placement in an organization.

The Florida Setting

Vast changes in governance structure have occurred in the Florida Legislature during the past decade, ranging from citizen imposed term limits where members are restricted to serving no more than 8 consecutive years (four consecutive terms in the House), to a reversal of party control for the first time in over a century. If one couples these significant key structural changes with a constant, significant restructuring of the internal committee structures every two years, resulting from the traditional leadership turnover every biennium with the attendant appointment of new committee chairmen and reassignment of members as frequently, it is apparent that Florida faces an environment where long term strategies for policy development are potentially hindered while short term needs take center stage in the fight for the short amount of time available for policy discussion. It remains to be seen whether changes to the organizational structure, combined with any organizational operational changes needed to create a formal learning organization apparatus within the House structure, can be implemented due to the realities of the changes occurring constantly in this policy environment.

Wrestling with member turnover and the impact on policy making processes has been a topic of concern for decades in Florida. One option was the formation of the Speaker Advisory Committee on the Future, established in 1985 under Speaker James Harold Thompson and ended with Tom Gustafson, all Democratic Speakers. Earlier, Speaker Ralph Haben had created in
The efforts prescribed in the Sunrise Report fell prey to the same critique the report offered of earlier House efforts, such as was done under Haben in 1981. “However, as with the earlier effort, the Committee’s deliberations were not integrated into the overall decision network of the House. Instead issues were attacked singularly. The breadth of the effort was narrow. Its impact on the routinized policymaking process of the House was confined to a small part of the legislative agenda” (p.49).
The Sunrise effort did provide an ideal prescriptive model which the committee used as a part of its own investigative process. It laid out a roadmap for the activities of this committee to use in exploring critical issues and identifying goals, obstacles and pathways to success. However, it did not bind the subsequent Speakers and with the change in control of the House to Republican leadership in the 90’s, new priorities for leadership emerged.

What was missing from the Mills approach was a binding of future legislatures to function as evaluators of what has been passed before into law and also creation of an embedded program of exploration of future issues and trends that can be forecasted.

![Figure 2- Sunrise Report- Action Model](image)

Figure 2- Sunrise Report- Action Model

What would be required in this process to create a double-loop or third order process would be a feedback loop-line from Phase 6 back to Phase 1 Identify Issues and Existing
Solutions. Then there would have been the need to identify strategies for embedding this process and binding future legislatures to pay attention to what transpired during the creation of this Speaker’s Advisory Committee and to maintain a similar effort on the topics outlined as being an integral part of the identified critical or priority issues for review over time. Neither of these took place.

The second major, ‘organizational learning activity’ mentioned above occurred in the year 2,000. The Florida House of Representatives faced the first real impact of the four term limits imposed by the voters in the “Eight is Enough” constitutional amendment passed by the Florida voters in 1992. In the spring of 2000, then Speaker-designate Tom Feeney gathered his advisors and representatives of the James Madison Institute, a public policy think-tank, to explore what the House might do to adjust to the reality of having 63 new members in a 120 member body. Feeney directed the Institute to develop a plan to create a training program that would substitute for what would usually be the first three weeks of committee meetings after the regular organizational session in the November following the elections, at which Feeney would take office as Speaker. These three weeks were filled with programs based on subject matter topics and all members of the House were invited to attend (Appendix E). Topics ranged from health care to finance to education issues and panels of experts were brought in from around the country to offer varied perspectives on issues these new elected officials would be facing as legislators in the years to come.

This was the largest event of this type to be offered in any legislature in Florida, received national recognition by the National Conference of State Legislatures, and was featured in Governing magazine. Feeney and this author, who created and directed the program, traveled to San Antonio for a NCSL national conference to present to the body on how best to train incoming legislators on policy matters. According to Feeney:

We began with two simple concepts: first a better informed legislator is a better legislator. Second, ideas are never to be feared.” (Moore, p.2) “Leadership Now was designed to assist new lawmakers with the learning curve and to provide a broad introduction and review of the issues they will be called upon to address on behalf of all Floridians. (p. 4)

This level of policy training only lasted for this singular event. Due to the traditional one-term role of the Speaker in Florida it is up to the next Speaker to set his own agenda and priorities. The next Speaker, Johnnie Byrd, decided to not offer this program to new or returning
members when he took office in 2002 and it was not renewed during the term of Allen Bense as Speaker from 04-06.

It may well be that there exists a transition phase where institutions such as elected legislative bodies adjust to the influences of such radical changes in organizational structure and actors, but it could also be found that the prior environment, where one political party had control for decades and structural change was not as radically imposed, allowed for a more statist control of government and policy. During the more recent, post Republican takeover in the Florida House, there has been an increase in the number of ballot issues for constitutional amendments that have been initiated through the citizen initiative process. Rosenthal (2004, p.69), explores this as a national phenomenon and concludes that the citizen initiative process, “usually prompts legislators to introduce their own bills rather than have something else pass in a popular referendum.” (p.69) Even his reference to this process concludes that this is a more reactive than a pro-active process resulting in “serious treatment in the process, since there is general agreement that the alternative is substantively worse and the initiative mechanism allows for neither the deliberation nor negotiation that are possible in legislative lawmaking.” (p.69) Note there is no reference to policy content or extensive research, just consideration of political considerations.

In Florida many of these citizen driven constitutional changes were passed immediately prior to the Speaker term of Johnnie Byrd (2002-04) and ended up becoming many of the primary issues deliberated during his first session as Speaker. These included classroom size restrictions put forth by a group called The Coalition to Reduce Class Size, a statewide ban on smoking in indoors sponsored by a group named Smoke Free for Health, an amendment focused on how pregnant pigs were housed sponsored by Floridians for Humane Farms, the establishment of a new voluntary state funded pre-kindergarten program sponsored by the “Pre-K Committee” and the creation of a new governing board structure of the eleven state universities sponsored by a group called Educational Excellence for Florida. Many of these issues might not have been issues preferred by leadership to take up the time, resources and energy for consideration during a sixty day session, but due to this citizen initiated process they were forced upon the legislative agenda. It is not clear at this point whether these are lasting trends, or merely adaptations to opportunities presented by transitions of power, however, what is suggested is that
there is a need to examine how the legislature has prepared to anticipate the challenges offered by these amendments in addition to planned agendas.

What is perceived as missing in this process is an absence of consistent structures in place and attendant program evaluation and assessment processes that remain constant over time, which would enable the legislature to either circumvent these initiatives by precipitous action or, once passed, meet them with the intellectual resource capacity necessary for solving the policy basis for these amendment drives. A central research question for this paper was to seek to determine the existence or absence of these structures and to seek options for usage of formal learning organization mechanisms within the highly political process of a state legislature subject to constant, institutionalized changes in both participants and structure. The researcher used interviews and written question sets with key actors in the House to identify mechanisms which would be considered as useful in creating a learning organization. While the topic of learning organizations has been explored by others such as Argyris, Senge, Schon, and others, no theorists appear to have integrated the learning organization concept into the legislative organizational structure.

Legislative-Dual Learning Process

This study has found that, unlike most organizations, the legislature accepts a significant new “worker” pool every two years, not just in line roles, but key roles, with a significant number of each pool being generally inexperienced in either process or content or sometimes both. Private corporation hires come in part from two primary sources, some come directly into the workforce from higher education, where they have developed some expertise in the subject matter area but may not be familiar with the processes, which can then be learned on the job. Corporations also hire people with both training and expertise, experienced workers with time on the job. For example they might hire MBA’s with system knowledge or engineers with extensive content knowledge.

Pervasive turnover is problematic in an organization. According to Carley, “When people leave, without mechanisms for transferring personal experience among decision makers, the
lessons of history are lost, knowledge disappears, the institution’s memory is reduced” (p.20). In short, pervasive turnover is likely to result in a consistent, possibly systemic, loss of the “lessons of history”.

This is, in part, where the application of organizational learning theory departs from the traditional applications in corporate settings. There is institutionalized turnover at the elected official and staff levels in the Florida House. As an example, while the 2006 elections occurred and the Speaker-designate Marco Rubio was structuring who his committee chairs would be and who would be assigned to which committee, there was also a turnover in staff hires and staff roles, with 18 new primary staff hires announced on October 18, 2006 (St. Pete Times, October 19). Rubio was faced with losing the gained knowledge of nineteen elected members due to term limitations and the additional loss of two others who left to seek higher office and were appointed to regulatory positions and a third leadership team member who resigned from office after qualifying for election. The net turnover of House members was 30%, 36 new members out of 120 seats. While this was not a new trend, since 63 members were newly elected in 2000, it, coupled with the staff turnover discovered in this inquiry, has had an effect on the institutional knowledge base and the ability to sustain a learning organization in the body. Member turnover is a critical deterrent to effective learning. “There is widespread agreement among political scientists that turnover in state legislatures is excessive and that rapid turnover detracts from the performance of both the lawmaking and watchdog functions and weakens the institution” (Rosenthal, 1974, p. 609).

Carley developed a model of organizational behavior to examine the influences of turnover. (1992) She refers to these decision processes as *quasi-repetitive integrated decision making tasks*. (p.23) In this model, which could serve as a description of legislative decision making where jurisdictional committees address similar, but altered, issues year after year, tasks are quasi-repetitive when the same problems are faced multiple times but the decision variables are altered. The task is integrated when the ultimate decision is derived from a combination of smaller level decisions decided by other actors within the organization.

Key items in this model were four observations from previous studies:

1) Organizational Behavior is historically based, relying on experience and adaptation of responses to previous decisions based on feedback (Lindblom, 1959)
2) Organizational learning depends on memories of actors and the individuals ability to learn
3) Organizations are disorderly (Cohen, March and Olsen 1972)
4) Organizations face similar, but varied problems. No issue is exactly alike when it returns for consideration
5) No one decision maker holds all of the information required for decision making

To be clear, Carley was not illustrating the decision making processes of a legislative body. However, the elements she outlined were useful tools in developing the framework for evaluation used later in this study.

Legislators are “hired” by the voters. They generally are newly elected with limited knowledge in either the broad contents explored in legislative settings or in the specific processes of a legislative body. Content knowledge expectations are unique to the legislative process in that there are few jobs in the private sector where the issues are so diverse. Similarly, legislative process knowledge is also unique. No other decision making setting is quite like a legislature. Legislators are expected to know a broad agenda of content areas and are expected to vote on issues in which it is unlikely they have significant “past life” experiences. Choosing between Lindblom’s two methods of decision making, successive limited comparisons or the rational comprehensive method, are not full options unless the decision maker(s) can maximize their resources available to enact either model in a learning organization (1959, p. 81). Lindblom contends “If agreement directly on policy as a test for “best” policy seems a poor substitute for testing the policy against its objectives, it ought to be remembered that objectives themselves have no ultimate validity other than they are agreed upon” (p.84).

It is a characteristic of the legislative process that the issues under consideration are agreed on their face as worthy of consideration while the potential solutions are the subject of review. This is a conundrum of sorts, but when a bill is filed by a member of the legislature it is assumed by that member that the solution to whatever subject is being addressed lies within that bill language. The other members, perhaps the ones assigned to the committee of reference for the bill at the onset of review and debate, may not agree with the ‘solution offered’, but the element under discussion (the bill topic) is agreed upon as worthy of the time taken for staff review and committee consideration. A large component of this dissertation is the exploration as to how best to conduct the processes for consideration of issues under review, gather pertinent information, use that same information to improve the effort, disseminate the collected
information as the bill moves through the process so other members, constrained by the limitations of time for consideration of issues, can be best informed and then retain the information for a later evaluation of the effectiveness of prior actions. To truly be an effective learning organization these processes must be integrated into the bill consideration processes. If any of these elements are missing weaknesses in organizational learning will exist.

To expand upon the concepts put forth by Lindblom; comparisons are only effectively possible when rational consideration of issues occurs and that can not be done effectively without the availability of as much related information on each topic as possible. The agreed upon objectives may get lost in the exchange of actors and roles in an environment of high and pervasive turnover. Blair and Henry (1981) note, “Beginning with Hyneman’s seminal study in 1938, and for all the decades since, high turnover in state legislatures has been …deplored as a serious obstacle to legislative effectiveness and accountability” (p.55).

March views turnover (although perhaps not contemplating the degree of turnover in the decision maker or content roles to the extent found in the legislature) as a benefit as organizations are “regenerating their capabilities through turnover of personnel”. However he does contend “More generally organizations learn from experience, repeating actions that are successful. As a result they gain greater experience in areas of success than in areas of failure” (1981, p.566). This study will seek to discuss with actors in the process how aggressive they are in seeking review of areas of success or failure or if the standard procedures are more generally to address problems that emerge with little attention focused on identifying success fit for expansion and replication.

The high degree of turnover at the elected and staff levels fits the context of uncertainty and randomness described in the Cohen, March and Olsen “Garbage Can Model” of organizational choice. (1972) The organized anarchies described by these authors include three major properties, 1) the organization is a lose collection of ideas, a “variety of inconsistent and ill-defined preferences”, 2) unclear technology with the members not fully understanding the tools and processes, relying on “simple trial and error procedures, the residue of learning from the accidents of past experience, and pragmatic inventions of necessity” and 3) fluid participation where the “audience and decision makers for any particular kind of choice change capriciously.” Each of these criteria could encompass limitations to a learning organization if applied into the legislative setting. This study takes an optimistic view of the intent of the legislative process.
Some previous studies, (Fiorina, 1977, Weingast and Moran, 1983, Lowi, 1969) emphasize what I perceive to be a negative view of the process, that members and institutions off-load problematic issues to the bureaucracy, where legislative bodies intend to have a “scarcity of conspicuous oversight activities” (Epstein and O’Halloran, p.23) so that “legislators can step in, undo any wrongs imposed on their constituents and reap all the credit for making things right” (ibid, p. 22). Certainly the impact of term limits has hastened the required attention to issues, but this writer, having decades of experience in these areas, assumes a priori that members much prefer to take one bite of any apple, finding workable solutions the first time, in areas where they earnestly seek positive solutions to problems, since the time allotted is short for any given issue and there is so much to be done.

High member turnover presents unique challenges to complex agendas. Even if, for example, one enters legislative service with many years of experience in the insurance industry, the role as a member will require one, should you be appointed to the Insurance Committee, to make decisions ranging from medical liability, workers compensation, property and casualty, and storm related coverage, to mold abatement and much more. In addition to Insurance, these same members will also be appointed to serve on several other committees, all of which will engage them in areas with which they had little or no previous experiences prior to serving. In addition to the extensive content knowledge they will be required to learn quickly, they will also be expected to learn the procedural processes of the legislature, most of which have no comparable, outside counterparts. The formal rules of procedure and the informal mores of the process are generally specific to the institution to which you are elected, some of which can be taught in a classroom setting, but much more of which is only learned by direct experiences or perhaps by mock sessions designed to give familiarity to the processes. Mason’s Manual of Legislative Procedure lists 40 primary motions in order of preference and over 800 pages of detail on procedural issues. (2000) These rules of procedure are not topics members bring from their experiences as teachers, doctors, lawyers or business owners.

Legislators must learn both content and process quickly and quite often with little formal training in either area. It is often expected that, in large part, the elected members will learn content through the experience gained while sitting in committee sessions and through staff reports prepared for each of the bills introduced. This process of education might have had more relevance when members could run for unlimited terms, collecting insight and awareness of
issues as time passed, but in the post term limits era the condensed time of potential service and the rapid ascent to chairmanship and other leadership roles requires a much faster absorption of content knowledge, even while mastering the rules of procedure, or process knowledge.

Summary

The results of legislative actions are often complex, contradictory and sometimes create unintended consequences. Consequently, the application of learning organization principles might be a useful tool for analysis of the Florida House to determine if changes in processes or structure could be suggested to improve the House learning capacity. This study will seek to frame and explore possible acceptability of options to better institutionalize a double loop learning process within a legislature. In this setting this writer prefers the description of double-loop as used by Argyris (1996, p.21), which describes “learning that results in the values of theory-in-use, as well as in its strategies and assumptions.” In this definition the legislature would use evaluation and analysis to “connect the observed effects of actions with strategies and values served by strategies” (p.21). This paper will identify options for process improvement assuming that the context is one where both staff and elected officials, who would be repositories of these expectations, are constantly in flux and replaced by others who may have limited or no history in the subject matter areas.
CHAPTER TWO

FRAMING THE ISSUES-
SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

This author first became deeply interested in the role of knowledge acquisition, retention, integration, and evaluation while reading “The Policy Orientation” by Lasswell (1951) The line that grabbed my attention, (as one who was Staff Director for the Policy Committee, two Select Committees and Coordinator of Public Security Issues in the Florida House of Representatives at the time of reading) stated, “We have become more aware of the policy process as a suitable object of study in its own right, primarily in the hope of improving the rationality of the flow of decision” (p.3). In this legislative setting it was clear to a participant/observer that processes and structures that could enhance the information flow would be valuable tools in the process.

A first step in this study was to conduct an examination of the literature to explore if research had been conducted on this setting, seeking previous studies that focused on the improvement and expansion of decision making resources available to legislators in their ‘problem solving’ activities. I hesitate to use “problem solving” since, in a highly political institution comprised of elected participants, the actual activity is better described as a search for acceptable potential solutions for emergent problems. In this setting results are often compromised and amended versions of the originally intended concepts (as evidenced by the filed bills), which in large part have been formulated with incomplete knowledge. Simon (1991) concluded there are limits to cognitive gathering and interpretation of environmental clues when problem solving. Simon, like most authors writing about organizational learning, focuses on the corporate setting and not the legislative/political one. However, the limits to cognition and bounded rationality components are well applied in any organizational setting. Simon called for the careful case study, exploring the content of organizational memories, how content is
accessed, acquired and shared (1991, p. 133). So with this I began an exploration of what the literature had to offer as an application of learning organization theory to the legislative setting.

As stated by Argyris and Schon (1996, p. xix) “Organizational success, however defined, is seen as depending on the organization’s ability to see things in new ways, gain new understandings, and produce new patterns of behavior- all on a continuing basis and in a way that engages the organization as a whole.” Fiol and Lyles (1985) define organizational learning to mean “the process of improving actions through better knowledge and understanding”(p.803).

The learning organization literature has primarily focused on the application of learning organization theory to the corporate and bureaucratic settings, where there is an expected resistance to change. Much of the emphasis in the literature is on breaking through structural barriers and the resistance to new processes and ideas, rather than focusing on how to insure a continuation of learning processes within organizations of constant change, especially ones where the introduction of new ideas is constant but the institutional knowledge may be lacking. This is in part due to what Simon (1991) describes as “an important component of organizational learning is internal learning - that is, transmission of information from one organizational member or group of members to another. Individual learning in organizations is very much a social, not a solitary, phenomenon” (p.125). When turnover is constant the exchange of information intra-organization becomes more difficult. How then might organizational learning be applied to a political organization with a structured turnover of individuals? This is a major point of emphasis in this research.

The point of view I am using in this project is to focus on the overall House of Representatives as the subject for analysis. Primary attention is given to how the internal structure, operations and resource allocations are utilized in seeking data and information designed to assist in problem solving. An analysis of how information acquired is then utilized, stored and disseminated throughout the organization are critical elements of effective organizational learning. Use of the double loop learning process would suggest an evaluation as to whether information acquired by an organization is used to not only alter the action under study, but to also ascertain whether the organization used the new findings as a part of a systemic process of self evaluation, questioning the underlying values and assumptions of the organization as an integral part of the process. No organization truly learns fully independent of previous actions or of the environment affecting that organization.
A thorough review of the literature of both organizational learning and learning organization theories offers little in the application of either to a highly political, elective body setting, similar to the one I have selected for this study. The preponderance of the reviewed literature focused on the application of these theories in market settings, mostly corporate organizational structure with some limited application to executive branch administrative settings. This literature might have limited application to executive branch administrative settings, but the applicability of the literature to legislatures is far less evident.

Dilworth (1996) states, “examples have been almost exclusively identified with the private sector” (p.408). However, even Dilworth, who titled his study, “Institutionalized Learning Organizations in the Public Sector”, used mainly private sector references to make his points, citing “There is no real base of research at present, and it is inherently a difficult area to research” (p. 407).

Further complicating the application of these theories is the wide divergence of understanding of a common definition of organizational learning. Fiol and Lyles (1985) state, “Although there exists widespread acceptance of the notion of organizational learning and its importance to strategic performance, no theory or model of organizational learning is widely accepted” (p.803). They conclude that the more the topic is studied, the more perspectives evolve that expand the divergence.

Crossan, Lane and White (1999), while focusing on the strategic renewal focus of corporate organizational learning, go further. While acknowledging the limitations of knowledge due to the equivocation of meaning (citing Weick, 1979 and Daft and Huber, 1987), these authors focus on the roles of interpretation and integration since “equivocal situations are often resolved through a group interpretive process” and “the focus of integrating is coherent, collective action”. Integrating groups so they can engage in collective interpreting is a primary activity of a legislative body. Although these authors, like most found in the review, seek to apply these components of a learning organization in the corporate setting. They do provide critical insight into how these theories can be applied in varying organizational structures. They suggest two areas of research to expand and advance theory; first, “understanding the mechanisms that enhance or restrict the stocks and flows of learning” and second, “understanding of how to reconcile the tension between exploitation and exploration - between continuity and change” (p. 535). Crossan, Lane and White offer a model of organizational
learning that seeks to enable an organization to utilize information gathered while simultaneously exploring for new ideas and information that might either enhance or alter the existing knowledge base.

**Premise One:** Organizational Learning involves a tension between assimilating new learning (exploration) and using what has been learned (exploitation)

**Premise Two:** Organizational learning is multi-level: individual, group and organization

**Premise Three:** The three levels of organizational learning are linked by social and psychological processes: intuiting, interpreting, integrating, and institutionalizing

**Premise Four:** Cognition affects action (and vice versa)

Figure 3- Crossan, Lane, White Model- (p. 523)

These authors expand upon the organizational tensions of exploring for new information while exploiting that which is known and found. March (1991), identifies these processes as essential components for an organization to thrive. Weick (1979) also identifies the important roles of cognition, and integration into action as essential to effective organizational learning. Indirectly this complements the concept of double-loop learning. An organization must be constantly engaged in seeking new information and ideas while at the same time applying these resources towards what has already been decided, implemented or constructed. However, once again the focus of the application is on strategic renewal in a corporate setting, using Apple Computer as the key model for explanation. In any setting it can be concluded, as stated by Lasswell, “the quality of the intelligence function at any given time depends upon the successful anticipation of policy needs before they have been generally recognized. Successful prediction depends upon the cultivation of certain patterns of thinking. For instance, it is important to consider the entire context of events…the practice of thinking of the past and the future as parts of one context…” (p. 4).
There are key concepts embodied in the application of the double-loop learning concepts put forth by Argyris and Schon that need definition for better understanding as to how they apply to this study.

**Definitions:**

**Single-loop Learning** - “instrumental learning that changes strategies of action or assumptions underlying strategies in ways that leave the values of a theory of action unchanged” (Argyris, 1996, p.20) This is best described as how a thermostat functions; constantly bringing the room temperature to a fixed, pre-set level but never analyzing why the temperature in the room is changing or if the determined temperature is actually what should be set for the conditions of the room. In a legislative setting this would relate to committee consideration of bills that restructure an organization to seek positive changes to the effectiveness of delivery of a specific service, for example, while never evaluating whether the service is needed, or if there are better ways of meeting the demand for demand. Legislative jargon would refer to this as program tweaking.

**Double-Loop Learning** - “learning that results in a change in values of the theory-in-use, as well as its strategies and assumptions” (p.21) In a legislative setting this would require that a committee of jurisdiction undertake a full analysis of the reasons a program or agency exists, what were the premises in place at the time of creation of same, do they still exist and what changes have occurred since creation that might have an effect of the need or performance of the agency or program. This level of full scale evaluation seldom occurs as the legislative process is more filled with incremental adjustments and the “tweaking” referred to above. The turnover of members and staff described later in this study serve as impediments to full scale evaluation of purpose, design and performance that would be required in an effective double-loop environment.

**First and second order errors** - First order errors are common and frequent errors that occur in an organization, such as consistently paying too much for items or allowing too much production waste. Second order error would be systemically allowing the errors to arise and persist without inquiry. In a legislative setting this would be evidenced by tracking the subject matter of bills filed in a particular subject matter jurisdiction (committee). If, for example, year after year there were bills filed that altered one particular section of statute without the committee stopping to analyze why this section creates persistent interest by members, then a second-order error would be occurring repeatedly, while the actual bills filed would be done as components of a first order error process.

**Theory of Action** – This is evidenced in two forms. The broadest form is the ‘espoused theory’ of an organization, which is used in the explanation of a pattern of activity. These are the essential elements that bind an organization together, the strategies, the underlying values and all the assumptions generally accepted within an institution. An example in a legislative setting would be to read the five elements of governance used in the late nineties and early in this decade in the bill analysis processes in the staff evaluation of filed bills for committee consideration. In theory these five elements; including less government, increased personal responsibility, lower taxes, individual freedom and stronger families, were used to frame the consideration of bills.
Theory-in-Use—The second form is the actual application of these organizational values and assumptions. The essential difference is best explained as, not what they say they are but how they act, perform and carry on the real activities. This is what can be found in observation of an organization, the interactions that occur and the actual performance of tasks. An example here would be to evaluate the bills passed during the era described above to see how much actual consideration was given to the elements described above, and how many programs were passed into law that did not comply with these five critical elements. Further examination of whether these remain in use, were amended or simply faded into non-use and why would give a better indication of how theory-in-use might differ from the espoused theory of action of the House.

In order to be an effective learning organization the single and double loop processes must be in place and also be consistently used in a recognized and accepted process. Single loop learning is required to make sure that the machinery of a legislature functions properly. Not all tasks require more complex review and evaluation. Single-loop learning “is instrumental and, therefore, concerned primarily with effectiveness: how best to achieve existing goals and objectives, keeping organizational performance within the range specified by existing values and norms.” (Argyris and Schon, 1996, p.22) The Rules of the House are often used to fix routine matters of an operational nature and these are frequently waived without discussion as to the underlying intent of the rules being altered for a temporary purpose. In a double-loop process a more detailed analysis as to why the rule exists would be required, whether the conditions that existed at the time of passage of the rule remain, and would there be a better rule to put into place to substitute for the rule. This kind of detailed process usually only occurs once every two years prior to the assumption of office of a newly selected Speaker. In the interim period prior to the designation of a new Speaker the House takes the time, through the efforts of a select few members and staff, to do a detailed review of the rules and to develop alternative rules and structures for the coming two years. Double-loop learning occurs when organizations “address the desirability of the values and norms that govern their theories-in-use.” (1996, p. 22)

Each of these concepts is a critical component of the organizational learning model that embodies double-loop learning; questioning, gathering information and data and the reflection that is required for double-loop learning (Argyris & Schon, 1994, p. 28). According to these authors, “An organization’s learning system is made up of the structures that channel organizational inquiry and the behavioral world of the organization draped over these structures, that facilitates or inhibits organizational inquiry” (p.28). “Double-loop learning in an organizational inquiry consists in the questioning, information-gathering, and reflection that gets
Double-loop learning as a critical element of a learning organization was supported by a National Conference of State Legislatures study conducted in 2000, (discussed in more detail in Chapter 6). The NCSL study called for legislatures to “Continually Reassess and Refine Their Public Policy Role.”

How then can a legislature populated by members, (those who will be using whatever information and research that is available to them) who will at best be only participating for eight years collectively avail themselves of the best information possible, not just in the present, but from the organization’s history, while simultaneously seeking to cultivate a picture of how the future might impact each issue under consideration? This research will seek, using an interview process with experienced actors in this process and written questions sets with other actors, to identify how these processes function, how information is collected, shared, integrated and evaluated, over time in the Florida House and to further determine if there are improvements to these processes that can be suggested. I will apply several of the main perspectives from organizational learning in this research. As mentioned, there are many divergent paths in this theoretical framework, but Argyris, and Argyris and Schon offer adequate tools for examination of how the organizational learning model can be applied in a highly political, constantly evolving legislative setting.

There are multiple and often interchangeable usages of the terms “organizational learning” and “learning organization” in the literature. Argyris and Schon (1974) offer a prescriptive view of learning within organizations, using single and double loop learning theory to describe two approaches for organizations to use in examining regularly used practices and procedures, with the preferred methodology to be for actors to become reflective practitioners, rising above ground level interaction to examine the causes of results from activities and then applying these findings to the regular practices. Some practitioners would call this a prescriptive view.

Senge, (1993) also offers a prescriptive view, asserting, “the rate at which organizations learn may become the only sustainable source of competitive advantage” (p.3). While legislatures do not compete in any market in the traditional sense, as organizations, they might consider the competitive advantage of trying to stay ahead of public demands in seeking solutions to vexing problems that have staying power in the marketplace of ideas. Argyris and Schon (1996) offer that Senge’s prescriptive approach contains the “mental models” in their own
theory of action approach, with an emphasis on the need for these models to be adopted by actors in an organization, especially those that either set boundaries to or “facilitate reliable inquiry into organizational processes” (p. 184). They continue by citing Schein (1985), where he argues that in an organization it is leadership, in a world of turbulent change, that must foster the ability to “learn ever faster, which calls for a learning culture that functions as a perpetual learning system” (p.372).

Argyris and Schon (p. 187) summarize components of an effective learning organization:

1) flat, decentralized structures
2) information systems that provide fast feedback on performance
3) mechanisms for surfacing and criticizing issues and ideas, with cultivation of systematic programs of experimental inquiry
4) applied measures of organizational performance
5) incentives to promote organizational learning
6) acceptance of concepts needed for a learning environment such as continuous learning, inquiry, openness, quality and reduced boundaries

Argyris and Schon identify ‘enablers’, or mechanisms that might be introduced into an organization to facilitate organizational learning activities. These include; alterations to structures or roles, information systems, incentives, procedures or systems for inquiry, technological innovations, and feedback mechanisms.

There is a need for organizations to confront what Schein refers to as ‘cultural humility’, to enable organizations to recognize they are partially affected by forces outside the control of leaders or participants, and that this must be accommodated within the learning system. This author would add a concept of ‘cultural machismo’, which is the resistance to admission of error, a limited capacity to acknowledge when wrong. In the legislative process there is the presumption that when a bill is filed that the answer to the problem being addressed lies within the bill. Argyris and Schon (1996) maintain that the success of implementation of organizational learning theory in an organizational setting depends upon, “the crucial issue of the levels of aggregation at which organizational phenomena are described and explained and at which prescriptions for organizational action are directed” (p.244). Critical to success is the immersion of this concept into “three levels of aggregation: interpersonal inquiry, interaction among organizational subunits, and the patterns of action and learning characteristic of whole organizations …sustained achievement depends on the organization’s continuing ability to engage in double-loop organizational inquiry” (p.245).
Schwandt and Marquardt (2000, p. 155) focus on how information is diffused throughout an organization; “The Dissemination/Diffusion subsystem’s purpose is to move, transfer, retrieve, and capture information and knowledge.” Dissemination actions are those driven by formal rules and structures. Diffusion actions would be less formal and more conversational. Here is a chart they use to depict this process, which pictures sensemaking in a broader sense but is applicable to the sensemaking that occurs in the legislative processes. This author would suggest that the arrows in Figure 4 would be better used if they were bi-directional since the critical requirement in a learning organization would be a constant feedback loop so that the sensemaking that occurs in Meaning and memory is in a state of constant change and does not become static.

![Figure 4 - Organization Using Information and Reacting](image)

Schwandt and Marquardt expand upon the ‘three levels of aggregation’ using the analogy that organizational brains are segmented, citing Walsh and Ungson. (p. 203) Beyond computers and standard office files, these authors postulate there are six storage bins for data and information in an organization:

**Individuals** – Based on experience and observation
Culture - Stored in shared assumptions, symbols, and values
Transformations – Routines that use inputs to produce outputs
Structures – How individual roles provide a repository for stored memory
Ecology – How the physical plant reflects history and tradition
External Archives – Former employees, competitors, government agencies, external actors

Each of these can serve as sources of information, criticism, reflection, and interaction to an organization seeking to improve organizational learning capacities.

Critical to the Argyris model (2004) is the need for organizations to overcome defensive reasoning that either blinds participants to first order errors or blocks second order attempts to mitigate the errors and prevent future errors by refining the mechanisms that produced the errors. Defensive reasoning however, could be especially effective in preventing unwanted information to enter the process from ‘External Archives’.

The degree of presence of ‘Humility’ and ‘Machismo’ are two roadblocks in this process. Argyris, (1996, p. 250) states: “Practitioners who want to increase their organization’s capacity for continuing productive learning, especially of the double-loop variety, should learn to improve the performance of organizational inquiry, which requires double-loop learning in their own theories-in-use.”

Resistance to change and the impact of defensive mechanisms in the process have a large effect on the amount and quality of information gathered. Schneier and Gross (1993) contend, that if “the information system fails, it fails either because exogenous gatekeepers, interest groups, and executive agencies in particular are blocking or failing to provide full information; or because internal gatekeepers are impeding, misinterpreting, or failing to understand important sources of information.” (p. 86) Each of these factors and actors must be considered when making sense of the participant interviews which are an essential component of this study.

In addition, this study will seek to uncover options for a political, governmental entity to blend the institutionalized structural and participant changes with the need to create a greater focus on the continuity of knowledge obtained and the application of this knowledge to issues under consideration. According to Schwandt and Marquardt, (2000, p. 17) “to obtain and sustain competitive advantage in this new world, companies realize that they have to transform the way they work and, even more importantly, transform the way they learn. They will need to develop a
higher form of learning capability, to be able to learn better and faster from their successes and failures from within and from outside their organizations.”

It should be clear from this research that the Florida House of Representatives exhibits constant structural and participant changes. This study gives examples of the frequency of actor and structural changes and how the impact of these changes can be mitigated by facilitating improved knowledge gathering, storage and distribution processes.

Important to this study is the rate of change of actors in leadership roles. Rosenthal, (1998) places great emphasis on the variables used by leadership in decision making, particularly in how committees are structured and members are assigned. Rosenthal (p.256-260) details the multiple factors used in consideration of member assignments, a process further complicated in Florida due to leadership turnover every two years and term limits that push so many more people and interests through the process in a condensed period of time.

Most scholars view the legislature as a political process, ignoring the administrative aspects of this institution. Consequently, little, if any, research has been done on the administrative side of this complex enterprise. The literature available from two national legislative organizations, the National Conference of State Legislatures and the American Legislative Exchange Council provides abundant materials on the management of the policy consideration and related research processes of elected legislators. Their websites (an integral tool used by each organization for the offering of studies and seminars) have an abundance of materials on policy issues and philosophically oriented materials, but an absence of a focus on the research and learning processes on policy issues.

There is a blend of both politics and administration within the legislative setting. According to Rosenthal (1998, p. 141), even the committee structure and responsibilities are influenced by process needs and political considerations. This study inquires of actors with experience in the House processes if there is potential for improving policy outcomes by making available structures and resources that augment the political and policy decision making processes. This study will seek to identify, through participant interviews, whether there are existing political and institutional constraints which would need to be overcome in creating an enhanced learning environment in the Florida House, with a focus on maximizing the available resources for effective policy consideration, while heeding the need cited in Presence, by Senge, in re-stating the call by Lasswell to see “the past and the future as one context” (1951, p.4) to
look both backwards and forwards in consideration of ideas. “Learning based on the past suffices when the past is a good guide to the future. But it leads us blind to profound shifts when whole new forces shaping change arise” (2004, p. 86). I seek in this study, through participant interviews, to better understand how information for issue consideration is gathered, stored and retrieved over time. This dissertation documents the extent that there exists a pervasive turnover of members, Chairmen and key staff in substantive areas. It explores the implications of this turnover for learning on an organizational level.

Conway, (2005, p.259) describes strategic planning as an integral component of a learning organization process, as “developing a plan to implement strategy. It is about planning strategically”. Critical to this study is acceptance of the notion that effective data collection, program monitoring, issue evaluation and a structured feed back loop are essential to effective strategy implementation. Without the tools of an effective learning organization you cannot plan nor implement strategy with any assurance of effectiveness. Strategic foresight, essential to visioning what might be, as defined by Slaughter (1999, p. 287) as “the ability to create and maintain a high quality, coherent, and functional forward view, and to use the insights arising in organizationally useful ways.” The Florida House, in seeking pathways to implementing an effective learning organization model should be able to craft a lens to view, “adverse conditions, guide policy, shape strategy, and explore” to identify new concepts and policies. (Conway, p. 265). Also critical to the development of policy are several elements described by Conway (2005).

| Tool should be used by entire policy organization |
| Scope of analysis should be expanded beyond fiscal or organizational issues |
| Determine if perspective sought is visionary, focused, global or pragmatic |
| Is the implementation of a foresight strategy generally accepted, understood |
| Both quantitative and qualitative methods, with increased levels of sophistication by researchers and users are required. |

**Figure 5- Conway’s Elements of Policy Process**
**Principle Hypothesis** - The policy consideration processes of the Florida House of Representatives will be found to lack key components of an ideal type learning organization.

Harold Lasswell, in his essay, “The Policy Orientation”, begins with the premise that any critical topic begins with an agreement that all essential actors will work in an objective manner toward reaching a mutually acceptable optimal solution. “The problem of utilizing our intellectual resources with the wisest economy” (p.1), as posed by Lasswell does not appear to anticipate the blended political/policy/administrative functions of a legislature, especially in public policy decision making orientations. According to Rosenthal (2004, p.78), the process includes, “Individual members managing their bills, committee chairs managing their jurisdictions, and legislative leaders managing their chamber or caucus agendas- all engaged in trying to build consensus or keep it from being built.”

In the legislative setting it is not enough to focus on a singular problem and assume that all analysts or policy makers will view either the problem or potential solutions similarly, or that resultant solutions that emanate from the policy review will even have the slightest resemblance. Lasswell contends however, “it is important to consider the entire context of events which may have an impact…” (p.4). Within the context of the Florida House of Representatives, an institution in constant flux, it becomes even more important to consider the effect of the “entire context of events”. Fosler (1992) asserts that “state government needs to conceive of itself as a learning system encouraging a constant flow of useful and useable information.” This paper explores if it is possible for agreed methods of inquiry combined with agreed structural changes can provide some semblance of stability to the information gathering and dissemination aspect of the process. Are there improvements to be made to better collect and pass forward what becomes known? Later chapters will identify tools for building a mechanism for assisting in shaping the future House, “where we learn instead from a future that has not yet happened and from continually discovering our past in bringing that future to pass” (Rosenthal, p. 86).

The central focus of this study leads one to view a very different perspective from the standard application of the concepts embodied within the Learning Organization literature. In most of the literature there is a focus on how best to alter pre-existing institutional behavior within organizations under a prescription that rigid bureaucratic structures, combined with inflexible actors seeking to maintain the status quo, create impediments to change, improvements
or adjustments to the environment that would allow for progressive improvements in the institution. In the modern Florida legislative setting we find a vastly different situation, one where there is a repeated biennial structural reorganization, combined with a constant replacement of key actors and a shuffling of key staff.

The need to implement a more effective learning organization in this setting requires a research focus on the maintenance of gathered data and information as a constant process. This is in contrast to the more traditional organizational needs, as described in the literature, where the collected information is more entrenched and is perceived to be a tool that impedes the implementation of a learning organization, rather than as a tool used to better inform actors about issues under consideration. As described by Argyris and Schon, (1974, 1996), instead of a theory of action- where it is apparent what the House needs to do to accomplish certain results, it exists more in a world of theory-in-use- under the influences of “the marketplace, organizations, and every other domain of human activity” (1974, p. 7). Legislatures are a cauldron of ideas and interests. “Efficiency has never been the strong suit of legislatures.” (Schneier and Gross, 1993, p. 17) They compare politics in legislative settings to “guerilla warfare in which the front is everywhere and citizen-soldiers drift in and out of battle” (p.22).

In an ideal learning organization, as described by Argyris and Schon (1996, p.31): “It is the detection of error, which we define as the mismatch of outcomes to expectations, which triggers awareness of the problematic situation and sets in motion the inquiry aimed at correcting the error.” Here the focus is on accurate information collection and an expectation of rational decision making. Since the available research is replete with acceptance of the position that rationality is influenced tremendously in a legislative setting by so many uncontrolled variables, the quality of information available becomes even more important.

**Subordinate Hypothesis One - Legislative staff conduct limited formal activities designed to detect errors or anticipate problems before external actions create awareness of problem situations.**

In a more traditional organizational setting the focus might be more on how to insure there are existing organizational efforts to evaluate and monitor programs in order to detect errors and then seek to rectify and modify. In the Florida legislative setting, in an environment of consistent modification to both structure and to actors, the focus might need to be more on a) which offices should maintain the responsibility for following an issue long enough through
passage, implementation, evaluation and modification processes and b) how best to store and retrieve information collected so that subsequent actors are aware of this resource.

An application of Peter Senge’s (2004) conceptualization would be that the whole of the legislative body is not an assemblage of replaceable parts. Even while each member, first as an elected member and later as an appointed leader, can be replaced directly and frequently, the body of the House might be as described by Buckminster Fuller as “patterned integrity”, the ability of the body to continue forward as it replaces those who might comprise the body at any given time. “A living system continually recreates itself” (Senge, 2004, p.7). If one views information as the fuel that fires this “re-creation”, then it is imperative that systems and processes be in place to minimize disruption and to insure that once collected, that data and reports are available for future use.

This author sought to determine in part how to better replace components (members, since they are forced to exit due to imposed turnover due to term limits) by placing them in a position of strengthened knowledge as soon as possible after insertion into new roles and responsibilities (Committee Chairmen). A key statement in the Lasswell essay is “the quality of the intelligence function at any given time depends upon the successful anticipation of policy needs before they have been generally recognized” (p. 4). Through interviews with significant past, present and future players in policy making in the House this study explored whether there are structural impediments to changes, which if altered could be implemented to allow for a grasp of the bigger picture, Lasswell’s successful anticipation of policy needs. Through interviews with key actors I sought to identify improvements in the process that would allow for the diversion of the attention of the policy elites from the demands of “this moment in time” issues, thus allowing them to consider the broader effects of incremental changes on the implementation of policy. This would include the detailed consideration of potential unintended consequences of their actions, so they are “seeing from the deepest source and becoming a vehicle for that source” (Senge, 1994, p. 89).

Argyris and Schon (1996, p.20) distinguish three types of productive organizational learning: “1) organizational inquiry, instrumental learning that lends to improvement in the performance of an organizational task; 2) inquiry through which an organization explores and restructures the values and criteria through which it defines what it means by improved performance; and 3) inquiry through which an organization enhances its capability for learning
of types 1) and 2).” Simon (1991, p.125) contends an organization learns in two ways: “(a) by
the learning of its members or (b) by ingesting new members who have knowledge the
organization didn’t previously have.” Simon is presuming that the bulk of the institutional
players remain in an organization and that they can seek and recruit new talent when needed. The
Florida House gets new talent every two years but it is presumed that the talent is varied and not
targeted to the specific needs based on topics to be considered or crisis situations that might arise
during each term of office. Daft and Weick (1984, p. 284) contend, “organizations have limited
time and questions, and they strive for the answer...People are trying to interpret what they have
done, define what they have learned, solve the problem of what they should do next.” Here
again, the Daft and Weick model is directed to corporate settings, but as stated, “organizations
preserve knowledge, behaviors, mental maps, norms and values over time” (p.285) and these
needs exist in the legislative setting as well. Popper and Lipshitz (2000) suggest that learning
organizations are those that embed strong institutionalized learning mechanisms within their
processes.

This paper, in part, focuses on the structural changes needed to institutionalize learning
processes with the intention of improving the information flow needed to provide better
outcomes from legislative tasks. It illustrates how the frequency of turnover of members and key
staff, and changes to the internal structure of the organization, can affect organizational learning
capabilities. This study did not seek to identify improvements in the efficiencies of the tasks
themselves, (for example how to pass a bill more quickly), but instead focused on seeking if
there are mechanisms absent or poorly utilized in the process, which if better utilized would
enable outcomes resulting from legislative tasks that are monitored, evaluated and used to
modify the product outcomes, not the tasks. This study is product/content oriented, how best to
improve the learning capacity of one chamber of the Florida legislature.

When times change quickly and policy elites change frequently we find ourselves in the
situation described by deHaven-Smith (1998, p. 135), where those who seek to put forth a sense
of the policy orientation exist in a universe of ideas and ideals where, “the inherent connections
between public opinion, government, politics, and culture”, constantly serve as points of friction
in the “relationship between knowledge and power.” How can the knowledge acquired by
predecessors be preserved for both current and future decision makers? An attention-response-
action sequence tends to supplant more detailed consideration, replaced by what Brower
describes as to “jump first into a problem solving mode…the failure to analyze thoroughly first, means we are contributing to a garbage can process” (Brower email to Class Conference postings October 25, 2002, Description vs. Prescription).

Impact of Turnover

Subordinate Hypothesis Two- Frequent Transition of actors creates a greater focus on alignments and consolidation to the extent that longer term strategic learning is impaired.

Part of this research focused on the expected high turnover of members, committee chairs and key staff. This will be described later in the chapter on methods, but the intent was to focus on a comparison of terms of office in five substantive committee jurisdictions to determine how pervasive the turnover of experienced personnel is within the Florida House. My intent in using turnover is to show examples of how the topic has been studied and that there has been little analysis of the impact of member and staff turnover in the policy activities of a legislative body. Expecting to find frequent turnover, this paper explored whether staff and members had structures and processes in place designed to maximize detailed information such as historical data, environmental concerns, future scenario building and possible impacts of decision making.

The subject of turnover has been frequently investigated, mostly by business scholars but also by public administration researchers. Most frequently the literature focuses on the impact of turnover in the corporate setting, with little, if any, research on state legislatures, where member turnover has been institutionalized through the application of term limits and staff turnover has also been affected by this same process. The literature review conducted for this study revealed two articles related to state legislative turnover, (Hyneman, 1938; Rosenthal, 1974). Each focused on the frequency and reasons for turnover, not the organizational impact of change in human resources. The database search also revealed numerous articles on congressional turnover, but these too had essentially, non-organizational lenses, concentrating mostly on gender, implications of term limits for frequency of turnover, and proportional representation.

Research going back as far as 1938 and consistently through the decades does show an interest by scholars in the role of turnover in the legislative setting. Hyneman argued persuasively for retention of members with the institutional knowledge to make wise decisions:
It is my assumption that a state legislature will not function effectively unless a substantial number of its members have acquired several sessions of experience...representation will be more effective if some of the old stalwarts who defended the old order in legislative halls are present to abhor and denounce when new legislation is enacted...if we are to have our laws made by men, some of whom face with a feeling of familiarity more than a few of the problems that arise...we shall have to return a nucleus of our legislators for session after session of service. (p.21-22)

Granted, this piece was written in 1938, well before the application of term limits to the legislative body. But the salient point, the retention of experience is absent in a term limited body, remains and the dilemma for policy development that needs addressing in this kind of environment is how best to retain and make available the information that would be known by what Hyneman describes as “men who have acquired substantial lawmaking experience.” Note too that this article was written well before the doors were fully open to women serving as legislators.

Cornog (1957) contends turnover refers to a “fundamental process of organization - maintaining the indispensable services of organization members” (p.255), even while the traditional definition is more procedural and structural. In a setting where the process of turnover is institutionalized there are apparent difficulties that can be predicted with maintaining the functions of ‘indispensable services’ albeit performed continuously (every biennium) by new actors.

Dalton and Todor (1979) brought an entirely new perspective to turnover, focusing on the positive benefits gained from changing actors in a system, arguing that the setting is critical; “How does turnover fit into the individual and societal context in which it is found?” They argue turnover can increase effectiveness as mobility produces new ‘blood’ and new ideas (p.226), avoiding what Thorsten Veblen refers to as “trained incapacity”, described by Dubin as “the inability to conceive of or utilize, new ideas.” Dalton and Todor conclude, “Immobility then, is dysfunctional to innovation and may reduce organizational effectiveness” (p.226). Their view here is assessing the impact of the influx or new actors in an organization. These authors contend that turnover has both positive and negative effects on an organization and both should be considered. However, they did not focus at all on the retention of institutional memory or the effect of the loss of talent; instead they reviewed the benefits of new players in a system. How this would be affected when there is institutionalized turnover is not included.
Staw (1980) provides good insight into the consequences of turnover in an organization. He cites a series of consequences, including the energy and expense of recruitment, the training of same, the disruption to the organization, and the impact on retained membership. In the case of a legislative setting where members either re-enter or are replaced every two years the expense and training mentioned would apply to staff leadership roles, but the other factors would apply as well to the elected members, who, even if returning, will need substantive training if placed in new areas or domains of responsibility. Staw cites several benefits from turnover, but one in particular stands out as applicable in the legislative setting, the ability to increase innovation and adaptation, with turnover as “a very major means by which reorientation of the organization occurs” (p. 263), thus avoiding the natural pressures toward homogeneity. This fits in nicely with the Crossan, Lane, White, (1999) emphasis on the value of strategic renewal to an organization.

Dilworth (1996) emphasizes the negative impact of turnover in the implementation of a learning organization model in an organization, citing the pains of remaining constant and viable due to the absence of nurturing support. This is particularly true when there is a leadership change. Dilworth cautioned that to succeed a learning organization must have many stakeholders, especially those who support the maintenance of the structures needed to maintain a strong organizational learning capacity. He also calls for the need for “transformative leaders” to “foster a climate of trust in which learning and creativity are valued” (p.414).

Herbert Simon commented on the role of organizational turnover in facilitating innovation, assisting organizations seeking alternatives for “getting out of the current rut” (1991, p.127). When an organization is trying to stand apart from the usual and customary behavior and activities, Simon contended turnover “becomes a barrier to innovation, because it increases training (socialization) costs.” Perhaps the legislature can take advantage of high member and employee turnover at the outset to build a model learning organization by utilizing Simon’s contention, “if turnover is sufficiently low, organizational values can be stabilized by the fact that each new inductee finds himself or herself confronted with a social system that is already well established and prepared to mold newcomers to its procedures” (p.127). The corollary to this would be to build the model system with new people by ingraining the processes and structures needed so that from the outset new ‘inductees’ will find the benefits of the new processes and not be burdened with allegiance to older models. Simon further contends, “Since
much of the memory of organizations is stored in human heads, and only a little of it in procedures put down on paper (or held in computer memories), turnover of personnel is a great enemy of long-term organizational memory” (p.128).

It is clear, from these multiple perspectives, that turnover is a variable that needs to be addressed and incorporated into any organizational learning model, either through adaptation of processes that embrace turnover and build in remedies for institutional memory retention or in seeking to insure that there are systemic safeguards to allow for continuation of initiatives and later review and reconsideration of actions previously taken. Simon contended that expertise is based on extensive knowledge, knowledge that is stored and used almost intuitively in providing responses to familiar situations. Somehow an organization must address Simon’s statement that “We also know that no one--literally no one--becomes a world class expert in any professional domain with less than ten years of full-time dedication to learning” (p.129). Florida term limits restrict a member to no more than 8 continuous years in the same elected office.

Policy in a Political Setting

Policy development in a legislative setting has always been blended with politics. The dichotomy pursued in the early years of the formation of the field of public administration to seek to separate administration from policy, does not seem to be practical when one examines that which is already accepted to be a highly charged political environment, such as a legislative body. The purity sought by Wilson, Goodnow and others, serves only to separate public administration from engagement in the development of policy issues, which in a legislative setting is a prohibitive separation. In the early twentieth century W.F. Willoughby, credited as a key actor in the founding of public administration studies, argued that the study of public administration should encompass all three branches of government. In the legislative setting the blended effects of politics and policy seem to offer heightened impediments to pure analysis of the administrative processes.

It is this author’s contention that public administration processes take place as much in the committee offices of the legislature as it does within the bureaucracy; it is just more spiced
with politics and policy. It is not just politics and policy that occur in the legislative branch, but a blending of those with administrative structures and processes, without which a legislature cannot function, but can impede learning and knowledge retention processes. Each has influence on the other, but the main focus of this study is how the process of the acquisition of information affects the quality of the product results.

The actions of political elites in a legislative setting making decisions, the information resources they use and how structure influences the collection of the information resources required for decision making, whether it is used or not, in the agenda setting and choices of elites, should be of critical concern for researchers. An essential component of this research should be to determine how structural and leadership changes have impact during the initial phases of inquiry in the process, the emergence of an issue and the information needed to make rational decisions on the issue. For example, it is clear that on any issue a legislature has three primary options; 1) do nothing, 2) take a course of action, or 3) delegate to others and defer any consideration of decisions. This study identifies impediments to effective learning and potential structural changes that might assist the policy processes in the Florida House.

Senge (2004, p.9) describes the difference between Reactive Learning (thinking using established mental models and then reenacting habitual actions) and Deeper Levels of learning, where we strive to “create increasing awareness of the larger whole-- both as it is and as it is evolving-- that leads to actions that increasingly serve the emerging whole.” These are concepts similar to the Argyris and Schon model that calls for engages the whole organization in the learning process (Argyris and Schon, 1996). The turnover of members, in large part due to term limits, might be perceived as enhancing the transference from a more reactive body to one using deeper learning processes since habitual actions are not as ingrained in replacement actors. As suggested by Senge, fresh eyes may achieve the vision and ‘presence’, that vision of the whole that should lead to expanded consideration of complex issues. “Learning to see begins when we stop projecting our habitual assumptions and start to see reality freshly” (p. 41). He later points out another impediment in the creation of a learning model, “We’re fixated on newness, which often misleads us into evaluating novelty over substance” (p. 185).

How then can an organization avoid fragmentation of effort, divisions that do not serve the whole and disconnected actions that move away from the tight connections that should exist amongst committee realms? Senge concludes, “In short, the fundamental insight of twentieth
century physics has yet to penetrate the social world (and the legislative): relationships are more fundamental than things” (Page 225).

A learning organization model might assist the legislature in identifying mechanisms that focus on the need for analytical and reflective consideration of issues in general public administration.

The Role of Networking in the Legislative Learning Process

It is possible to visualize the array of members and committees as several layers of networks (subject matter specific, social groups, various coalitions, political parties, regional, or county delegations). For efficient learning to occur in a legislature, there needs to be effective information linkages amongst these groups to a) avoid redundant efforts and b) ensure knowledge sharing on complex topics. Goldsmith and Eggers contend governmental entities, “need to develop much stronger competencies in sharing knowledge. Today the difference between success and failure often results on how well parts of the network communicate and share knowledge at multiple points and in various ways.” (1992, p. 185)

Three key activities of legislative process
1. Acquisition of information-
2. Retention of knowledge- Repository
3. Dispersion of Useful Information

This author would overlay the need for sources of quality information, data, and issue history in each step. Data and information collection is the heart of each of these steps and none can be effectively accomplished lacking the information resources to make optimally effective decisions. Goldsmith and Egger identify a major structural impediment in the legislative process for knowledge exchange as: “By dint of the very way legislative committees are organized, many legislators will find it uncomfortable when the network stretches across the authority of more than one committee” (p. 181).

Schneier and Gross (1993, p. 92) identify that in legislative organizations the organization of legislative committees in large part reflects the executive branch and other outside interests as described as components of Heclo’s Issue Networks. External groups can adjust to the re-structuring of issue consideration within the House as in general they seek clarity
of purpose and definition of the task at hand more so than how an issue is considered. Heclo calls those who gather around a particular area of expertise as a “shared knowledge group”, where frequently “the boundaries of knowledge and involvement disappear into a shapeless fringe of part-time players and generalists.” How best then to collect the information provided by these interest groups and preserve these points of view over time so they can be mined for later comparison, consideration and inclusion in similar policy discussions?

A major goal, in the creation of a learning culture within a legislative body, is to use well the knowledge of these ‘part-time players and generalists’. Effective learning requires competent acquisition of intelligence and the filtering of points of view as espoused by biased advocates. It is pre-supposed that external advocates and their allied legislators will already have a collection of both ends and means designed to achieve either the passage or blockage of the legislation at hand. It is important to stress that the ‘judges’ on each issue, the voting members of the legislative group considering each issue, should have the ability to not only filter the data and information presented, but to also obtain sound information to better develop their own points of view. According to Schneier and Gross (1993, p. 86), “The quality of legislative intelligence is a function of its sources and flow.”

In the end Schneier contends, “Power gravitates to the informed” (p.93). By managing the amount and intensity of interest group input what Schneier describes as “changes in the scope and conflict usually come about because someone wanted them to” (p.92). Issues can be altered so that the management of the subject problem is driven as much by factual information as it is ‘because someone wants it to.’ Through better acquisition and retention of knowledge the legislative body might improve its ability to manage and control the scope of conflict in consideration of an issue.

For example, many of the structural changes for consideration of complex issues offered during the Speaker term of Johnnie Byrd (2002-04) might be further developed to overcome these kinds of impediments, which I indirectly was able to explore through the interview process. Byrd frequently used ad hoc groups and Select Committees on complex issues that tended to overlap regular committee jurisdictions. Oddly enough, the frequent use of these groups encountered a structural barrier imposed by the House rules of procedure, creating significant management and time issues since the rules prohibited overlapping committee meetings for members, thus subjecting formal inquiries to the constraints of the calendar and time. Goldsmith
(2004, p. 183) advocates the usage of a “committee with broad based jurisdiction”, which is akin to both the Policy Committee and the use of Select Committees.

All legislative activities concerning issue consideration, by nature or design, heavily rely on exogenous groups for information. In the days before term limits Members often became subject matter specialists, developing expertise in specific policy areas, while at the same time breeding familiarity with players in that subject area. It was expected that this study would hear from interviewees that this kind of Member expertise has diminished and that there is a rise of the ‘Generalist Legislator’, except for those who arrive with specific subject matter expertise. Those with detailed experience in topical areas can use this information to develop currency to use in the Member networking process. Schneier points out in their analysis of Congress that “because there is no alternative to relying on others, a top priority is to find reliable sources of advice and information.” (1993, p.75-76) These authors contend members do not often seek out reliable processors or evaluators, and also point out that even when information is acquired, “only a small portion of the information available is ever recorded by the organization, the processes by which the initial screening takes place have extraordinary importance in determining the final decision” (p. 73). Since reliable information is not always available these authors contend “the best intelligence a legislator can get is a reliable directive to vote yes or no.” (p. 76) This may partially explain why leadership members turn thumbs up or down and voting members acknowledge watching for the red or green lights of key members before voting on many issues. In a learning organization it is presumed that while this ‘follow the thumb’ practice would continue, the root decision of leadership would be based on a more intensive analysis of options for consideration.

This study sought participant opinions as to how focusing more thoroughly on complex issues at each step in the process might affect consideration of relevant variables in each bill. If quickly examining a bill at each committee of reference, assuming that problems will be fully vetted by the time a bill passes through several committee hearings, only results in using different lenses to examine issues without the full sharing of information gained at each stop along the way, then it might be assumed that deficiencies in the bill under consideration may still remain as a bill moves forward.
The Critical Role of Leadership

Bartlett and Ghosal, (1964, p. 41) have put forward a model of a multi-national corporation that, with adjustments, can be laid over the operations of a legislative body; “the integrated network structure.” Described as being neither central or de-central, it “is embraced as a principle but selective decisions about location and authority have to be made.” The role of the Speaker/CEO in this setting would be to prescribe the formal structure, establish priorities for ends to be achieved, and then allow for the active and full consideration of issues with a focus on the ‘integrated network’ participants on the means to achieve the prescribed ends.

“Therefore, a final key task of central management is the need to unify the organization through a shared corporate vision.” “This task requires clarity, continuity, and consistency of purpose” (P. 43), which is similar in concept to Senge’s third discipline (1990, p.8): Mental Models “deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, or even pictures or images that influence how we understand the world and how we take action.”

The Speaker serves as the elected leader of the organization, and by tradition and rules has tremendous influence on the pace and agenda of a legislative session. This was consistently emphasized by interview respondents. While the Speaker can adopt multiple options for bureaucratic control, it is often the mindset that this office creates that gets adopted through the process, regardless of the written rules or formal organizational structure. Antonio Strati, (2000, p. 12), describes this role as the normative function. “In every organization there must be a function which decides objectives and duties, determining how they are to be achieved, and creates the norms.”

Selznik (1957, p. 135) described a distinction between “administrative management” and “the true province of leadership”, which to him entailed action taken by leadership that “involves choices that affect the basic character of the enterprise.” “The art of the creative leader is the art of institution building, the re-working of human and technological materials to fashion an organism that embodies new and enduring values” (p. 153).

For purposes of this study individual members of a legislative body can be assumed to respond to the kind of work environment that either will maximize and mine their individual talents or tend to suppress them and limit their perspectives for the potential for outputs in the
process. Pugh and Hickson, (1997, p. 178), describe this conflict as where “organization members may be told: take initiatives but do not violate rules; think beyond the present but be rewarded and penalized on present performance only; think of the organization as a whole but do not cross into other’s areas of responsibility; cooperate with others but compete with others when required” (p. 178).

These are the components that affect House Member mindsets and serve as impediments to the creation of a learning culture. While the formal rules may allow for cross consultation on issues, the operational rules of the game will be for a Chairman and Members of each committee to self limit by boundaries of domain as perceived by structural and organizational components, such as perceived committee areas of responsibility. Individual Chairmen often take initiatives to break down these perceived boundaries by asking for and holding joint meetings when topics cross over jurisdictional boundaries, such as in 2005 when Chairmen Mealor and Patterson in the Florida House of Representatives, held joint meetings of their committees to discuss options for meeting critical needs in the shortage of qualified nurses in Florida. This study inquired of actors as to how the Speaker as CEO influences this aspect of issue development, with special focus on this topic on outside actor perceptions.

The double-loop learning concept of McGregor and Argyris is central to the Argyris and Schon Model II Theory-In-Use.

Under this model the Speaker, as CEO, would be responsible for:

1) requiring the casting of a broad net on the gathering of relevant knowledge and basing actions on the information obtained;
2) allowing for the broad participation by relevant Members and the free exchange of ideas, and
3) the structuring of the organization to allow for monitoring of implementation and the use of oversight to refine and adjust actions.

Peter Senge has written extensively on how a learning organization can better manage and adjust to a fast paced, constantly changing environment. His Five Disciplines are designed to instill a Learning Organization culture. Each has merit in fostering a learning culture in the political environment of a legislative body, however, as stated earlier, this inquiry will focus on two of Senge’s Disciplines, ‘team learning’ and ‘systems thinking’.

Within the information acquisition, retention and evaluation processes are some necessary steps required for implementing a learning organization culture. A central concept used in this research was to what degree the processes described above link to the classical
processes of planning, organizing and controlling, especially planning. Can effective planning be done effectively within a legislative environment constrained by structural issues like: term limits, single member districts, and the concurrent total changes in legislative leadership every biennium with the attendant restructuring of the organization and reassignment of both members and staff?

The last Matteson and Ivancevich (1999) issue, controlling, in this case relating to the alignment the behavior of members and organizational structures to more effectively manage organizational processes, becomes increasingly problematic due to the large scale turnover of members (see Appendix C). It will be explored, in interviews with external participants, how these external actors view the impact of turnover in the legislative branch where it is expected that institutional memory becomes more heavily ensconced in the external ranks due to turnover of members and staff.

Legislative decision making, just like corporate or personal, is often short term oriented. Members often publicly state they will agree to pass legislation in committee, knowing full well they perceive that they will get “other bites of the apple” as it progresses. But often they do not serve on subsequent committees of jurisdiction so the bills move forward without full understanding of open issues not yet fully resolved. This research also sought how additional inquiries are passed along between committees of jurisdiction and referral. Do the Staff Bill Analyses contain a section on “questions to be resolved later” notations?

The full role of leadership in how best to manage the needs of members while seeking to meet the long term needs of the state, and how the availability of information affects this leadership role is adequate material for another study of the Florida House. Martin (2002) would contend that while each culture is unique (in this case substitute legislative body for culture), the one that exists today does not necessarily reflect the only one which might have been conceived in this same context, it is what it is based on a flow of events over time, but could just as easily have been something else. If an ideal type can be postulated, what other factors impede the re-structuring? In short, what factors force a chamber to “satisfice”?

The Setting-Details
The Florida House of Representatives is comprised of 120 members elected from single member districts based on population estimates. Florida is a highly divergent state with multiple ethnic constituencies, multiple cultures and philosophical orientations, and an unusual demographic when compared to the average populations of most states.

The district structure for member selection was once comprised of three House members for each Senator in overlapping districts with the districts larger in size and more internally varied. House members are now selected from single member areas that might be largely dominated by one large housing development or condominium project. One might expect to see affected behavior by elected officials who have such a large constituency block as opposed to members who serve more divergent constituencies. Not all districts are so constrained and not all members are affected the same way by external group influences. What is not clear is how these demographic variables influence the willingness of Members to spend time learning. Nor is it clear how much reliance there is on others to provide issue direction absent detailed information. This all would require a very different study, but as a possible variable of influence in this process it must be mentioned here.

In addition to the changes in the district structure and to the demographic changes in Florida due to in-migration, is the interjection of term limits forced by constituent action during the early 1990’s in Florida. A group called ‘Eight is Enough’ set about using the citizen initiative process in Florida to place before the voters a constitutional amendment to limit all elected officials to no more than eight consecutive years of service in each office, which passed and took effect for those elected in the 1992 elections. In the Florida House this meant that a newly elected member in 1992 and subsequently, if re-elected consecutively, could only serve four continuous terms. Prior to this change, members were elected at the will of the voters and many members served for decades. This change, in rules of the game altered significantly how members perceived their roles, caused many to leave early to seek other offices since opportunities must be grabbed as they become available, and forced others to seek leadership roles in an expedited manner.

A legislature often behaves in a manner contrary to Senge’s notion that superior learning depends on superior learning. In a legislative setting, political factors have been known to trump accumulated knowledge. For example, knowledge and expertise in a policy area might come
secondary to political consideration or aspirations for higher office. This research explores how best to provide quality options for consideration, even if they are not to be chosen.

Incoming freshmen now have to begin contemplating whether they might seek becoming Speaker and, if so, who their opponents might be almost as soon as they begin to meet. The current heir apparent to the Speaker knew he would be chosen by the majority party as Speaker-designate even before the current Speaker took office. Members of the majority party elected in 2004 have already chosen their selection as Speaker for the 2011-12 term of office. Members elected for the first time in 2006 were immediately charged with beginning an evaluation process of whom they might elect as Speaker in six years, with the selection of the current Speaker, his successor and the subsequent Speaker already being done even before these new members took office for the first time. All of this can potentially take a toll on long term policy development. This process was addressed in the interview process, seeking experienced actors perspectives on how the organization might be better structured to offer a mechanism where selected leaders can reach agreement to provide and maintain a repository of data and information that can be accessed over time and has the requisite respect and influence required for stability?

**Conclusions from the Literature**

In “The Leader’s New Work: Building Learning Organizations”, Peter Senge embraces the notion that since “human beings are designed for learning” and “superior performances depend upon superior learning” (p.74) then the organizations that best learn to blend a culture of learning into the organizational structure will emerge as successful. He advocates the need for a learning culture to foster advancements and innovations leading to innovation and future thinking activities. “Generative learning requires seeing the systems that control events. When we fail to grasp the systemic sources of problems, we are left to push on symptoms rather than eliminating the underlying causes” (p. 75).

One example of this description might be the 2006 Florida debate over the relative value of the citizen passed amendment concerning classroom sizes in Florida public schools. This was a situation where passage of a major policy initiative with limited information resources, analysis of cost impact and potential program effectiveness, drove policy events. For example, student
achievement and the impact of classroom size were not demonstrated as relevant variables for consideration in this election. It was not investigated how this ‘solution’ would address the underlying causes of less than desired classroom performance since the time between approval by the Florida Supreme Court for placement on the ballot (late September) and the election (early November) did not allow much time for this level of detailed consideration. As an active participant in efforts to oppose this amendment, this author can contend that there was limited participation by incoming legislators in this debate with the incoming Speaker, Johnnie Byrd, preferring to let the voters speak on this issue. The passage of this amendment created a legislative scenario where the fiscal and structural demands of the program have potential to eclipse many alternative education policy considerations.

Without the most appropriate information how could policy makers present an alternative where, as stated by Senge, (1990) “the natural energy for changing reality comes from holding a picture of what might be that is more important to people than what is” (p. 77). In this case the external advocates of the amendment presented a vision that was more clearly perceived by the voters. The results of passage left the organization charged with responding, the legislature, faced more with “problem solving” than the application of creative tension to achieve vision. Jack Welch (2001, p. 397) conceived a concept of “wallowing”, “getting people together, often spontaneously, to wrestle through a complex issue”, where the ticket to admission was competency and ‘know-how’. He found this allowed people to gain ownership in decision making, creating a feeling of an honest attempt at finding solutions. Are there pathways for the Speaker/CEO to “wallow”, perhaps seeking to maximize the usage of the existing “back rooms” of the process to maximize Drucker’s (1995) concept that each organization’s back room can be someone else’s front room, that good information and services can be found in unexpected places?

Passage of this classroom size amendment required adjustments to the mental models of policy makers. But there are limitations of the Senge model of reflection and inquiry as in the Florida House setting there are artificially imposed time frames. Senge contends there is, or should be, no “outside the organization” (1990, p. 83); that system thinking forces us to see all relationships. However, that which cannot be easily forecasted can create big problems in the legislative arena. Every variable, no matter how refined a learning organization, cannot be anticipated or factored into expectations. It would seem that ‘control’ may be as important to
success as ‘learning’ when time is limited. In Senge’s “Laws of the Fifth Discipline” (1990) he includes several concepts that are descriptive of portions of the legislative process and attendant policy results, including reference to unintended consequences, delayed positive results, how the easy road usually leads back into problems, and how the cure can be worse than the disease. Critical in the development of effective legislative efforts is what Senge describes as the need that “any long term solution must strengthen the ability of the system to shoulder its own burdens” as opposed to solutions that create new burdens while not solving the immediate burden under consideration (p.62).

This study, through the question designs, documents how the detailed analysis and accompanying policy prioritization occurs. It also explores, through historical points of view obtained in interviews with participants, whether changes can be made to the policy evaluation process to foster this detailed analysis. Also of concern is how best to link the various components of the organization so information collected is readily shared and made available to others. Senge (2004) contends “a team’s effectiveness often depends on how it interacts with the larger organizational context” (p.197). Senge (1994) described two required ‘disciplines’ of an effective learning organization, team learning and systems thinking, that this author included in the evaluation of the House. This study seeks options, in a highly politicized, constantly changing environment, to transform “collective thinking skills, so that groups of people can reliably develop intelligence and ability greater than the sum of the individual members talents”, as well as how to imbue a “way of thinking about, and a language for describing and understanding, the forces and inter-relationships that shape the behavior of systems” (p.7).

Peter Drucker, (1998, p.259), provides a useful contrast to Senge, as Drucker theorizes as a strong advocate of change while Senge advocates improving while preserving and venerating the old. Drucker contends, “Knowledge always makes itself obsolete within a short period of time.” He advocates embracing change. “For managers, the dynamics of knowledge impose one clear imperative: every organization has to build the management of change into its very structure.” Structurally this anticipation of institutional structural change is clearly incorporated in the Florida House of Representatives, as this paper will show. What is not clear is how this constant change affects production and policy consideration. Drucker adds, “…organizations increasingly will have to plan abandonment rather than try to prolong the life of a successful product, policy or practice” (p. 79). He continues, “The need to organize for change also requires
a high degree of decentralization. That is because the organization must be structured to make decisions quickly” (p. 80). How then to incorporate this change into the legislative process, accommodating an expected frequent turnover of both decision makers and researchers, yet maintaining the knowledge resources from past activities while projecting future demands and requirements?

Schon (1983, p.4) points out a significant problem in the creation of a learning organization in a political/legislative setting. “Professionally designed solutions to public problems have had unanticipated consequences, sometime worse than the problems they were designed to solve.” Schon further points out how “we can readily understand, therefore, not only why uncertainty, uniqueness, instability, and value conflict are so troublesome to the Positivist epistemology of practice, but also why practitioners bound by this epistemology find themselves in a dilemma” (p.42). He cites the option of those who choose to research in “the swampy lowlands. They deliberately involve themselves in messy but crucially important problems and, when asked to describe their methods of inquiry, they speak of experience, trial and error, intuition, and muddling through” (p. 43).

This could also be a description of how legislative bodies often reach compromises on major issues in order to gain passage, frequently forced to revisit the same issue within a short period of time, even often before the real results of the initial “solution” are known. Perhaps one favorable aspect of term limits is that with the frequent turnover of members you have new minds addressing old problems, which allows the body to avoid what Albert Schweitzer is credited by Schon as saying “No problem can be solved from the same consciousness that created it, we must learn to see the world anew.” According to this theory it will take either fresh eyes or a revised mind set by knowledgeable members to dig deeper into potential solutions, especially since many issues that come before legislatures are ‘comeback’ or repeat issues that often return for consideration since the previous solutions served as much to create unintended consequences as they did to solve the original issue at hand.

This notion complements Senge’s admonition that often “today’s problems come from yesterday’s solutions” (1990, p. 57). How can information resources be better used at each point of the decision making process, even when the members involved are inexperienced? What also should be avoided is the tendency to view all problems as new and old solutions as dated. Frederickson (2005, p.11) points out, “We tend to imagine that knowledge based on newer facts
is necessarily truer than knowledge based on older facts, or that empirical truth is truer than truth otherwise acquired.” We must also seek to embrace Frederickson’s contention that “both opinions and facts are the tools of policy deliberation, the weapons of policy warriors.” It is the ammunition of quality information that a learning organization provides that will allow the ‘warrior’ to do battle but only if they can be better armed with the requisite intellectual ammunition.

How then to avoid rushing to ‘solutions’, which Schon (1983, p. 10) describes as ineffective, creating new problems and are “derived from theories which had been shown to be fragile and incomplete.” There must be a means of managing complexity, adhering to short time frames, while digging deeper into issues and considering them within the broader contexts required in a complex society. For example, increasing literacy rates is not the same as finding a substance that will kill a virus or a bacterium. Yet legislators must review and act on issues as disparate as these, often within the same morning. A learning organization in a legislative setting could try to categorize and organize a listing of all means and ends on a complex topic. Is it not better to seek an exploration of options, as perhaps this would lead to a better understanding of the root of each problem?

Legislative Members do not often get the reflective time as described by Schon (1983, p. 69), where “in the relative tranquility of a postmortem, they think back on a project they have undertaken, a situation they have lived through and they explore the understanding.” But staff does have interim periods and time for this reflection during the year. Speakers often assign interim projects but in the main they tend to be driven by issues of the previous session or by demands of legislation passed. There does not tend to be a formal review process of legislation passed in prior years to determine effectiveness by legislative staff, instead this function has been off-loaded to a joint agency in Florida, the Office of Program, Policy, Analysis and Government Accountability, (commonly referred to as OPPAGA), created in 1994 to serve as a resource arm to the legislature. In recent times it is frequently assigned interim projects through the passage of new legislation, with the legislature providing specific statutory instructions in passed bills that direct OPPAGA to study specific problems, agencies, or initiatives. Perhaps alterations to the formal committee structure or staff assignments would allow for scheduling, by using legislation passed two or three sessions prior, and regular committee staffs, regular updates of performance
and oversight to determine effectiveness of previous actions and a linkage to the past that is often missing in the process. This too was explored in the interview questions.

But in order to discover improvements that will alter information gathering processes it is helpful to understand what legislative actors think about the processes of managing the information component of the enterprise. This was developed using the interview process described in the chapter on methods. According to Dewey (1997, p.2), “Each phase is a step from something to something - technically speaking, it is a term of thought. Each term leaves a deposit which is utilized in the next term. The streams or flow becomes a train, chain or thread.” “Reflection involves not simply a sequence of ideas, but a consequence- a consecutive ordering in such a way that each determines the next as its proper outcome, while each in turn leans back upon its predecessors.” (p. 3).

How to foster this bi-directional linkage of ideas and their consequences? Who is in place to act in these bi-directional linkages of information with an effective handoff of information from term of office to term of office when it is found that key actors in specific subject matter jurisdictions (committees) are frequently changed? Is not the collective task of a legislative body, such as a committee or a full floor session, similar to the cognitive processes of the individual as described by Dewey? Schon recognizes the limitations of the application of the more science based technical rationality which he contends must require an agreement about ends. As in the legislative environment when “the ends are confused and conflicting, there is as yet no problem to solve…It is through the non-technical process of framing the problematic situation that we may organize and clarify both the ends to be achieved and the possible means of achieving them.” (1993, p. 41)

Conflicting ends and means and differing leadership agendas create conflicts in a legislative environment. Since the legislative process is by nature a cauldron of conflict, one option example would be to create an issue review process that defines a series of ends or solution options, with a charge to staff to identify an array of choices to be made. This identification of choice options should be incorporated into the standard bill analysis procedures conducted by committee staff. This option development would be in direct conflict with the normal agenda setting that is in the main driven by the several thousands of bills filed each year. For example, in the 2005 session there were 2,475 bills filed and 394 passed. We perhaps have an overlap between individual member interests and the more agenda driven committee
structural interests which would fall within Senge’s shared vision and systems thinking disciplines.

To create a learning culture in the Florida House we must seek to avoid Dewey’s (1997, p.12) conceptualization of one limiting component of cultural thought processes, “The problem fixes the end of thought and the end controls the process of thinking.” It is a battle in this process to overcome our pre-dispositions, both individually and collectively. Dewey’s call for reflective thinking (also as advocated by Schon), to find ways of “overcoming the inertia that inclines one to accept suggestions at their face value” and a “willingness to endure a condition of mental unrest and disturbance” (Dewey, p. 13) requires the ability of the legislative body to allow for “judgment suspended during further inquiry.” How this can be fostered in a contentious environment such as a legislative body, when sides are frequently chosen based on issues of control, philosophy, or leadership positions and external parties push hard for issue resolution, even if partial, remains unclear. However, this study will seek to identify paths to improve the information processes available to actors in the process.

Dewey advises us to “maintain the state of doubt and to carry on systematic and protracted inquiry” (p. 13). But to implement a more formal learning organization it must be done in a manner where we know it takes place, as described by Schon, (1983) in an environment where “Problems are interconnected, environments are turbulent, and the future is indeterminate” (p. 16) Schon (1983, p. 16) cites Russell Ackoff by calling for “the active synthetic skill of designing a desirable future and inventing ways of bringing it about.” (p. 16), which brings to mind Senge’s concept of painting a picture that has more value than what exists. It is not enough to just design a desirable future. For it to be done properly the resources must be marshaled to construct the vision and the requisite knowledge made available.

Lindblom, (1959), critiqued the policy making process as “impossible to take everything into consideration unless ‘important’ is so narrowly defined that analysis is in fact quite limited” (p.84). Lindblom continues, “Limits on human intellectual capacities and on available information set definite limits to man’s capacity to be comprehensive.” Lindblom would limit the number of alternatives and focus more on how each would differs from the status quo in a situation where there exists the option of exploring a series of potential alternatives and consequences, since according to Lindblom, “policy analysts in general do largely limit their analyses to incremental or marginal differences in policies that are chosen to differ only
incrementally” (p. 14). This study reveals that often options to policy considerations are derived through special interest advocates or members who submit ideas received from non-professional staff.

**Framing Summary**

This study examines whether positive changes can be made in the legislature’s handling of information. Particular attention is given to how the Florida House of Representatives collects, assimilates, analyzes, evaluates, disburses, and retains information. It also explores whether alternate ways might be fashioned to better use information in developing policy.

Martin’s contention might be that any given circumstance can yield a multitude of results at any time. Would not then the ‘choice’ of the actor play a significant role in their share of the decision-making process and would not the aggregation of these choices result in policy or are these decision points too frequent and too subtle to be captured?

This study, through interviews and written questions sets, identifies how creative structural changes and acts of leadership might be cultivated and encouraged, especially on large scale, contentious issues. Complex, multi-jurisdictional issues, such as medical malpractice liability or education funding and governance, are examples of reoccurring, cyclical issues bound within rigid structural constraints that limit more traditional approaches to seeking solutions. This frequently results in partial solutions which can lead to a need to revisit the same issue for modifications or wholly new solutions. The Speaker as CEO/Leader must always seek ways to blend the long term vision with short term demands on time and resources. In a learning organization he would actively foster the creation of effective learning teams.

Some highly complex and multi-jurisdictional issues, such as medical malpractice insurance, appear to reach a critical crisis level about once every decade, a time frame too large for most problem solvers to remain as players in the system (eight year term limits). It was expected that this study would discover that key, experienced staff are either gone or serving in other roles when these cyclical issue re-emerge. Additionally I expected to find that former members and staff would now serve as lobbyists and that retained House staff would be found to
no longer work in the same substantive subject matter areas and have long ago transferred their interest and attention to other issues. I was correct in each instance.

There can be assumed to be many influences on elected officials as they either pursue issues of personal preference or react to agendas developed and pursued by leadership, other members or external forces. Member behavior, as evidenced by decisions made, can take many forms. In undertaking this project, this researcher sought to begin to develop some understanding of the influences of organizational structure, external stimuli, and non-predictable agendas and behaviors on the process of policy development. I sought to focus on the need for a formal structure to better discover, retain and disburse information to other decision makers. I explored whether one legislative institution can better learn from past activities and then make this learning available when needed for consideration of other issues while inquiring if members prefer to move forward knowing that time is not their friend and that other legislators will follow who can re-address these same issues or variations.

All of these perspectives involve research theories from public administration, philosophy, political science, sociology, economics and other fields as it is the contention of this author, who has worked both internal and external to the policy systems that policy evolves in a constant but not wholly predictable process with a multitude of influences, a sort of aggregation concept of idea generation and nurturing. It would be expected that an analysis of the Garbage Can Theory of Cohen, March and Olsen (1972) might be useful in this analysis, although I may not agree that the “Can” is full of solutions in search of problems, but rather than a “Can”, a “blender” better illustrates the issues that vie for time and attention with the “solutions” being what can be crafted based on the available resources. The primary focus of this research was to explore how best to offer resources for crafting alternative knowledge pathways and then how best to keep information available, fresh and shared in this process.

Using the concepts identified previously as essential elements of a learning organization this study seeks to identify if these concepts can be maximized and institutionalized to produce better information for policy analysis. Simon (1991) emphasizes the need for “careful case studies in research on organizational learning… I mean studies that explore the contents of important organizational memories, the ways in which those contents are accessed (or ignored) in the decision making process, and the ways in which they are acquired by organizations and transmitted from one part of an organization to another” (p. 133). That is the intent of this study.
Since it is apparent that little application of organizational learning models has occurred in the state legislative setting, this project seeks to instigate the inquiry by seeking to identify potential processes, procedures, learning mechanisms and learning tools, which might be institutionally able to enhance the learning organization potential of the Florida House of Representatives as it tackles highly complex issues affecting Florida. It is this complexity that will force change.

According to Durkheim, in his *The Evolution of Educational Thought* (1982)

> What history teaches us is that man does not change arbitrarily; he does not transform himself at will on hearing voices of inspired prophets. The reason is that all change, in colliding with the inherited institutions of the past, is inevitably hard and laborious; consequently it only takes place in response to the demands of necessity. For change to be brought about it is not enough that it should be seen as desirable; it must be the product of changes within the whole network of diverse causal relationships which then determine the situation of man. (p.165)

In this study I sought to determine how the perceptions of the actors interviewed relate to the model criteria presented by the various authors. The writers on organizational learning summarize components of an effective learning organization as including, among other criteria:

- flat, decentralized structures;
- information systems that provide fast feedback on performance;
- mechanisms for surfacing and criticizing issues and ideas, with cultivation of systematic programs of experimental inquiry;
- applied measures of organizational performance;
- incentives to promote organizational learning;
- and acceptance of concepts needed for a learning environment such as continuous learning, inquiry, openness, quality and reduced boundaries.

Crossan, Lane, and White (1999, p. 523) offer the model presented earlier, with four basic premises that capture how a learning organization must blend what is known already with what can be learned, how it must engage all levels of an organization to thrive, how social forces modify behavior, and the role of perception and awareness in the process.

**Premise One:** Organizational Learning involves a tension between assimilating new learning—exploration and using what has been learned—exploitation.

**Premise Two:** Organizational learning is multi-level: individual, group and organization

**Premise Three:** The three levels of organizational learning are linked by social and psychological processes: intuiting, interpreting, integrating, and institutionalizing
Premise Four: Cognition affects action--and vice versa

As shown, each of these authors offers a varied lens with which to examine the structure, processes and behavior of organizations and actors.

As stated earlier there are many lenses used by the various writers in organizational learning theory. Each offers their own view of which component parts and characteristics would be required to exist within an organization to reach a more ideal capacity for learning, especially the self-reflection and feedback learning emphasized by Argyris and Schon. For purposes of this study I have created a template of 10 key elements that seem to be essentially contained within each of the points of view offered in the literature. After conducting my interviews and evaluating the responses I applied what has been said by the participants to the standards set by the experts cited.

Following are the key elements I have found to be frequently used that also well apply to the setting under examination. They are shown here as component elements followed by how they might be used as tools for diagnosis in the examination of an organization. In a subsequent chapter I will apply these elements to what has been observed and what was discussed in the interviews conducted in this research study of the Florida House of Representatives.

Element 1--Leadership-- Organizational success depends upon leadership that continuously seeks to expand and empower the knowledge resources of the organization, a leader who encourages the pursuit of knowledge and empowers others to freely conduct learning activities.

Diagnosis- Does the institutional structure foster creative independent learning? Does leadership facilitate organizational learning, stimulating policy considerations from different angles and perspectives? Do leaders set agendas for action pre-set from pre-conceived solutions and/or goals? As Senge described (1990); are new and expansive patterns of thinking nurtured in the organization? Do observed leadership behaviors impede learning?

Element 2—Learning and Communication-- Organizational success depends upon the ability to limit barriers to effective communication and interaction between and amongst subunits of the organization.

Diagnosis- When organizational learning take place anywhere in the organization, does it use all of the internal, external or vicarious resources available? Does the organization have pervasive acceptance of the components needed for a learning environment such as continuous learning, inquiry, openness, sharing and reduced boundaries.
Element 3--Historicity-- Organizational Behavior is historically based, relying on experience and adaptation of responses to previous decisions based on feedback. Organizational learning depends on memories of actors and the individual’s ability to learn.

Diagnosis-- Does the institution have access to the relevant institutional history on issues under study? Are the actions of the past and the decision making tool used accessible and utilized in current decision processes? Does the institution have information systems that provide feedback on performance using historical experience as a part of the learning routine?

Element 4--Norm of Sharing-- No one decision maker holds all of the information required for decision making. Effective learning should occur at each subunit and should be effectively shared with others. There are limits to cognitive gathering and interpretation of clues.

Diagnosis-- Is the institution structured to maximize the human information resources available? Are there barriers that impede the sharing of organizational learning? Are the people with the greatest relevant knowledge on issues in position to apply that knowledge? Is what is learned shared across the organization?

Element 5--Reflective Creativity-- Organizational success depends on the ability to see things in new ways, gain new understandings, and produce new patterns of behavior- all on a continuing basis and is pervasive throughout the organization, multi-level; individual, group, organization. Learning involves a tension between assimilating new learning (exploration) and using what has been learned (exploitation)

Diagnosis-- Does decision making precede organizational learning activities in this setting? How do the structure of the organization and the role of leadership impact the ability to embrace organizational learning?

Element 6--Conducive Structures and Staffing—Effective learning organizations have structures and processes that facilitate learning. Staffing practices are especially important to assure that organizational members with the most relevant expertise are effectively engaged in problem solving.

Diagnosis--Is the organization structured to maximize obtained knowledge and to make the best use of informed members of the organization? How does the structure of sub-units of the organization and placement of members and staff impact the ability to implement effective organizational learning?
CHAPTER THREE
WHY QUALITATIVE?

This research identifies pathways for exploring how to best examine the organizational learning activities in the Florida House of Representatives. The study relies heavily upon key actor interviews, written questionnaires, and an evaluation of historical documents as tools of inquiry as to how structure and design affect the policy analysis resources used in decision making. The interviews focused on a number of former Members, Chiefs of Staff, Staff Directors and external policy advocates, to seek their perceptions about how term limits, leadership and key staff turnover have affected the organization’s institutional memory and the processes used to learn from the many sources of information available, including past legislative history. The study, using key actor interviews, explores if there exists a common ground of understanding of any limitations of the policy evaluation process. With an ancillary focus on the role leadership might play in the potential creation of an improved learning organization (using the works of Senge, Argyris, Schon and others) I met with former actors and observers, as a primary source, seeking structural and policy changes that might serve as a template for future leadership to use in the restructuring of House policy investigation processes.

In this study I seek to expand the readership of a typical dissertation study, addressing the situation pointed out by Daft and Lewin, where “the body of knowledge published in academic journals has practically no audience in business or government”, and the need “for reorienting research away from incremental, footnote-on-footnote research as the norm…” 1990, p.1), which these authors find inadequate when the subject under study is ‘multi-dimensional and complex’.
They call for research to “be used to improve organizational functioning and performance” (p.3), allowing the researcher to delve into organizational processes, “provided the studies are concerned not just with description but with organizational performance outcomes”. These authors cite the works of Fayol, Taylor and Urwick as predecessors for this type of research. While I do not pretend to be in the class of these pioneers, this analyst seeks to do just as they did: examine a single entity, apply the concepts of organizational learning theory, and seek improved policy information production. Daft and Lewin implore others to undertake what they describe as Heretical Research methods “to find new channels through which to obtain organizational insight… to do whatever it takes to learn about organizations” (p.6).

Daft defines qualitative research as being “concerned with the meaning rather than the measurement of organizational phenomena.” “Those who prefer qualitative research techniques argue that direct human involvement in organizations and the use of human senses to interpret organizational phenomena are necessary for discovering new knowledge.” (1983, p. 539) He cites others to contend that the complexity of organizations is such that the same techniques used for hard sciences do not necessarily work as effectively in social research. He concludes, “Contact, either in the form of visits and observations or perhaps through descriptive case analyses, provides the intellectual raw material for useful theory.” (p.544)

Van Maanen describes qualitative analysis as “an umbrella term covering an array of interpretive techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate, and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world” (1979, p.520). In this type of analysis the raw materials of each study are gathered close to the source of inquiry, but one must accept that for the most part the social phenomena under study are “more particular and ambiguous than replicable and clearly defined.” Critical to this inquiry, Van Mannen offers, “qualitative methods represent a mixture of the rational, serendipitous, and intuitive in which the personal experiences of the organizational researcher are often key events to be understood and analyzed as data” (p. 520). He follows by emphasizing how the first hand experiences of the researcher who holds intimate knowledge of the subject matter under review adds context to the understanding of the topic. However, all of this is dependent upon the effective establishment of an ‘interpretive framework’ as a tool for analysis. In this study the lens of organizational learning is used to examine how the learning processes are used in producing the end products of the organization, by using techniques of
content analysis, conversational analysis, participant interviews and observation, and the construction of partial histories on selected topics chosen as points of emphasis. This process is essentially emic in nature, as described by Morey and Luthans, (1984, p. 29), denoting “a general orientation in research centered on the native, that is, the insider’s view…the informant’s view of reality.” This is why I used key actors with long term participation in the process for the interviews.

Luthans and Davis write of single case research and the value of qualitative analysis in applying an idiographic approach (understanding events in society rather than nomothetic, using scientifically structured approaches to investigation), as better enabling the researcher to understand the subject under review by “obtaining first hand knowledge of the subject under investigation”, or better described as inquiry from the inside (p. 381). These authors cite Campbell, Weick, Dunnette and Lawler (1970) in pointing out the need for an “interactionist” perspective in research, studying the three concurrent variables of person, process and product. This study uses actors who have been active participants in process, whose work was driven by the need to produce the product of legislation designed to solve problems.

Luthans and Davis cite others, calling for care in this type of research as “Case studies should be used to generate hypotheses, not to test them” (1978, p. 69). However, one goal of this study is to seek to identify potential alterations to the House research processes that can benefit the organization by providing better, more accurate and more detailed information while preserving what is gathered for future use. This expands the nature of this study beyond a typical case study analysis.

In part, this study is an Action Research project, as described by Clark (1980), where the research has a dual function of contributing to the social science research while seeking practical solutions to problems. According to Clark, Action Research accomplishes this by “acquiring, testing and using knowledge…” and thus, “avoids the delay between discovery and application”. (p. 152) However missing from this study is any attempt to manipulate the system to test how variable factors impact upon the processes. Instead I identify potential changes that, if implemented, would benefit the learning functions of the subject under study. Respondents’ opinions regarding these potential changes were mined from the early interviews and used in subsequent interviews as examples, to help assess whether the potential changes might effectively address the problems identified as well as be politically feasible to adopt.
Easterby-Smith, et. al. (1999) describe contrasting types of studies that have been done using the concepts of organizational learning theory, with their primary focus on two types of analysis; one focusing on developing normative models and methodologies to use to change in the direction of improved learning and the second focusing on better understanding the learning processes. They detail how the two literatures have developed along divergent tracks. They contend an empirical study “constitutes intervention research if it leads to the production of valid scientific knowledge and is undertaken with the aim of improving the situation under study” (p.159). The literature on organizational learning has concentrated on the detached observation and analysis, by researchers, of the processes involved in collective learning inside organizations; whereas the learning organization literature has a more action orientation, and is geared toward using specific diagnostic and evaluative methodological tools which can help identify, promote and evaluate the quality of the learning processes inside organizations” (p.2). To summarize, organizational learning literature is more academically oriented in that researchers seek to observe and describe behaviors that either facilitate or impede collective learning by members of organizations. The learning organization literature is built upon the findings of organizational learning theorists, and seeks to apply it prescriptively in ways that practitioners might implement. This study combines the contrasting features described in Easterby-Smith, et. al., to allow for the acceptance of political influences in the learning process as opposed to minimizing political behavior as preferred by Argyris (1986) and Senge (1990). Minimizing politics in a legislative setting is unlikely to occur, as politics pervades the process. In a legislative setting, information, knowledge, structure and process are all highly politicized. Following is a revised table using the Easterby-Smith, et. al. analysis (p.12) with some modifications to better fit the setting of this study. The discussions and the findings were in part framed using these criteria. The elements used are underlined to identify the perspectives of this researcher.
Role of Researcher-
Options- 1. Major player within organization
2. Detached from process under review.

Methodological Approach-
Options- 1. Comparisons across multiple organizations
2. In-depth analysis of one organization

Unit of Analysis-
Options 1. Macro study of multiple organizations
2. Detailed analysis of one organization
3. Macro analysis of one organization.

Learning Focus-
Options- 1. Outcomes focus- indicators of organizational learning
2. Process focus- Changes that might affect learning outcomes

Epistemological Stance-
Options- 1. “studies which aim to describe practice and then to conceptualize what takes place in a grounded way.”
2. “studies which attempt to link, or to apply, specific theories to the phenomena observed.”

Figure 6- Critical Perspectives and Tools for Learning Organization Analysis

My underlying presumption was to use an application of two of Senge’s Five Discipline’s ‘laws’ of a learning organization, seeking either the identification of the existence of or the potential development of both systems thinking and team learning. In addition, the perspective provided by the double-loop learning processes as detailed by Argyris, among others, was an important tool. I used much of the literature described in Chapter Two in the framing of my approach to the interviews. I used questionnaires for subjects when face to face interviews were not available and a primary focus on participant actor interviews, following the style of qualitative methods found in Strati’s (2000) “Theory and Method in Organizational Studies.” I applied these theories to a framework that included six specific activity areas as points of reference for those interviewed.
In the legislative setting each substantive issue, (usually exhibited in filed bills that come before legislative committees), offers rich material for examining the varied influences of policy development. It is presumed, a priori, that the investigative techniques identified by the staff directors interviewed will be those that are used in the main, for most issues being reviewed. The legislative process is largely driven by the filing of substantive bills so a portion of each interview focused on the standard operating procedures of staff directors when seeking out the information for each analysis, how the information is disbursed, how it is stored and then later how it might be accessed for future investigations on that same topic. However, one target of this inquiry was to determine if there are potential changes to structure or operations that will enhance the implementation of a more effective learning organization, one that would have improved collection, assimilation, disbursement, review and evaluation of the information gathered.

The interviews were structured to ascertain whether double-loop learning processes are utilized. The interviewer guided discussions to determine whether participants actively review what has happened in the process of passing legislation. Do they reflect upon the process of passing legislation in a way that facilitates questioning about the adequacy of the actual decision making process? As example, the interviews included discussions with staff actors in the process about how aggressive they were in pursuing review of areas of success or failure in previously passed bills, or if the standard procedures used generally addressed problems that emerged with little attention focused on identifying levels of success for expansion and replication. How in depth does staff go when using the prescribed template for bill analysis, in raising questions of impact, effectiveness, and alternative strategies?

According to Harrison, in order to “produce valid and reliable results, investigators often must sort out conflicting opinions and perspectives about the organization to construct an independent assessment.” (1994, p. 23) He suggested using qualitative field techniques “to obtain in-depth data on subtle, hard-to-measure features that may be lost or distorted in close-ended inquiries. Among such features are members’ perceptions, hidden assumptions, behind the scenes interactions, and work styles” (p.24). Harrison suggested an interview technique that is open-ended, uses on-the-spot judgment, covers multiple topics and features, can be modified and adjusted during the interview, provides understanding of respondents viewpoints, and builds trust. Following Harrison’s recommendation, relatively unstructured interviews were conducted
as this was most likely to elicit perceived factors affecting House organizational learning processes.

Easterby-Smith, Burgoyne and Araujo, use Argyris to make the argument that “reasoning processes employed by individuals in organizations inhibit the exchange of relevant information in ways that make double-loop learning difficult - and all but impossible in situations in which much is at stake” (1999, p.160). A legislature is highly complex, fast moving, rapidly changing, with ‘much at stake’. One aspect of this research was to use the components identified as the six elements of my research framework, in examining the common template used by all committee staffs in their bill analysis function. Are the bill analysis templates structured to include the applicable components of these elements? Are they inclusive of the reflective, critical analysis required in organizational learning? Do they include, for example, what has transpired before and do they try to project what might occur, as integral parts of the evaluation processes?

In the legislative setting it is as described by Strati, “Organizational phenomena are in constant flux: just like Heraclitus’ river, which cannot be stepped in twice because the water constantly flows and is never the same, so the same organization can never be ‘known’ twice.” (2000, p. xi) He concludes, “In the interpretive study of organizations, every research study is a free standing entity. It is not commensurate with other similar research and it cannot be verified or reproduced ad infinitum...” (p.185). This study blends the two types of qualitative research as descried by Strati; using analytical research to describe the organizational setting under observation and using grounded theory in attempting to identify an application of theory, based on interviews and observations of the process under review. In each case it is important to acknowledge that intrinsic to the interview process is continuous decision making and interpretation, and that the interpretation process is both a tool and a goal of the researcher.

Lofland and Lofland (1984, p.2) provide guidelines for the qualitative researcher, a few of which are directly applicable to this project. They suggest the researcher start by using either a current situation or past involvement in an organization or issue as a topic. This researcher has intimate familiarity with the House setting, having both worked internal to the processes in several key roles and also having been engaged in the legislative processes in two states for over 30 years. Lofland and Lofland suggest the researcher evaluate the data sites to be used to determine their appropriateness. In this study I chose the interviewees based on their knowledge of process and likely inclination to speak freely. I also selected interviewees from a variety of
committee and leadership roles, focusing on the more traditional, commonly occurring committee titles and jurisdictional subject matter handled by each committee. They suggest the researcher be sure to have access to the site under study. My past association with the institution and working relationships with many of the key actors chosen enabled me to have ready access for the time required for interviews. Finally, Lofland and Lofland recommend that the researcher has the task of guiding the consequences that may come from the research. It is the intent of this researcher to make findings and suggestions known to leadership either by sharing this study or providing a synopsis of the findings.

They further suggest the researcher should structure his study to make adjustments as he moves along, try to avoid letting the subject be influenced by pre-existing knowledge of the researcher and be aware that subjects may not fully understand the intent or terms of the research, especially in the same manner as the researcher. The researcher must take pains to avoid his own bias and interpret based on what is said by each subject, attempting to “obtain narratives or accounts in the person’s own terms” (p. 50-51). Finally, they conclude that the interpretation of responses is not likely to lead to causation. “It is perfectly appropriate to be curious about causes, as long as you recognize that whatever account or explanation you devise is conjecture”, so at the end of the research they advise that you postulate any conjecture in a qualified way using phrases such as “it is possible that”, “it seems to be the case” and “although the data are not systematic, it appears that” (p.102-103).

Brower, Abolafia and Carr, (2000) provide detailed descriptions of the appropriate application of qualitative analysis. The ontology of the legislative setting provides researchers with an environmental reality filled with what they describe as the “presence of multiple realities, constructed by participants as they engage their own local, everyday experiences” (p.365-366). The epistemology allowed this researcher to interact with actors, constructing meaning in a setting that is value laden. It allowed for this researcher to speak in a present, familiar tense. Summary conclusions were drawn from naturally occurring, every day experiences, using a process of interconnected actions, open meaning, and ambiguous phenomena. The intent in this document is to provide a rich explanation of portions of the process, with emphasis on any identified limitations and opportunities for improving learning activities. An additional intent was, (as described by Brower, et. al.), to combine “enhancing our scientific legitimacy and enhancing the fit between theory and practice to create heuristics that
resonate with public managers’ everyday experiences” (p. 390). In the end it is desired that this document be shared with future leaders and organizational managers.

THE FLORIDA SETTING

As stated earlier, organizing within the legislative setting in Florida occurs every two years with new rules of procedure adopted each organizational session in both the House and the Senate. Not only do the primary leadership positions of House Speaker and Senate President traditionally turn over, but also each new leader rewrites the rules to meet their strategic preferences, each creates new substantive committee structures and each frequently appoints new members to serve as chairs of the newly established committees. (Appendix B) Since the onset of term limits (passed in 1992 but effective with the 2000 election) new Speakers of the House more frequently begin to emerge before the end of the second biennium from their first election. It is developing that designates for this role will be known even earlier in the process. The costs of running for Speaker are very high, since both economic resources and time allotted are prohibitive for most members.

One unintended consequence of term limits is the Speaker’s race, the selection by members of who will lead the chamber each two years, and how it has changed since pre-term limit legislatures. It can now be described along the lines of an entering freshman in high school who desires to one day run for School President. The would-be candidate knows that the competition for the office does not lie within the entire body, (the opposition party plays a minimal if any role in this either), but rather purely with the entering class, the common body of freshman of the majority party. During the 2004-06 term of office, Representative Dean Cannon (elected in 2004) announced he had obtained sufficient votes of his caucus to be in line to be the Speaker in the years 2010-12. Rep. Cannon will serve for 5 years after securing the votes before getting the opportunity to serve as Speaker. At the time of his selection his chamber contained a current Speaker (Bense), a Speaker designate (Rubio) and a member of the then sophomore class (Sansom) who had secured sufficient votes to be designated Speaker for 2008-10. Later I will describe the length of service for the pre-term limited Speakers.

In addition, staff, who serve at the pleasure of the Speaker under House Rules, are often reassigned to new roles in different substantive committees. Different staff directors are also
chosen by new leadership and frequently (to be shown later in this study) a new slate of senior staff are hired into the respective leadership suites (Appendix A). This research sought the perceptions of previous and current actors in the process, such as staff directors, committee chairs, chiefs of staff and Members as to how this frequent change affects the organizational learning activities in the House.

Continuity of staff has been historically consistent in the Clerk of the House and the Sergeant at Arms offices. Consistent functional institutional memory has been maintained predominately in these administrative, non-substantive, non-policy offices. A hypothesis of this study was to postulate that senior staff on the policy side are frequently re-assigned to highly variant substantive committees, many of which are re-structured every biennium and assigned new domains of influence (Appendix B). The study validated this hypothesis. This turnover was also explored in the interview processes and by reviewing House archives to determine the experience levels of those in critical roles over time. There is a significant difference in the previous activity experiences of chairman and staff directors in the post term limit era, in part due to the compressed time of term limits and in part due to the biannual restructuring that occurs.

Since the number of actors in this process over several terms is quite large it was important for me to determine who would be best to interview and how best to group the interviewees according to their primary roles. It was important to identify interviewees who could provide an experienced perspective. I limited the interviews to three groups, 1) elected officials or former elected officials, 2) senior staff or former senior staff from either pre or post term limit eras, and 3) external actors who had at least ten years experience in the process in order to cover the era of transition from long term Democratic Party control to Republican Party control, while at the same time capturing the pre and post term limits eras. I relied on the inquiry process put forth by Eisenhardt, (1989) building theory from case study in selecting numbers of participant interviews, with four in each category being too small a sample and greater than ten too large, where “it quickly becomes difficult to cope with complexity and volume of the data”(p. 545). Key emphasis was on several of Eisenhardt’s factors:

1) shaping the hypotheses in searching for the “why”,
2) selecting specific cases to study, (using terms of office, committee and staff assignments, and selected bills and bill analyses)
3) using the literature as a foundation,
4) overlapping the inputs with the analysis and then
5) reaching closure with theoretical saturation.

I selected two previous efforts by the Florida House to implement and institutionalize components of a learning organization (summarized in the introductory chapter of this essay) when interviewing staff and members in order to narrow the discussion and offer focus to the interview participants. This gave more focus to the interviews so the availability and quality of information would be made more specific, rather than allowing interviewees to offer, random, hypothetical musings about the process. As mentioned, when applicable, I focused on large issue bills and processes used in consideration of these larger issues, since large issues tend to be known by all, even if the did not serve on the specific committees of jurisdiction. The intent here was to try to identify common patterns of investigation by staff and members on the more complex issues.

As an additional step, I used the published Bill Analysis format, used by each committee for committee presentation on issues, to determine the common research activities on filed bills, the role of staff members, who conduct most research on filed bills, and how the bills might have been linked to past or future actions or expectations. This was conducted using the elements for an effective learning organization presented earlier. I investigated how much of the gathered materials remain available for subsequent inquiries and if available, for how long.

Points of emphasis and the weighting of variables can change over time in a legislative setting so by limiting discussion to previous efforts with those who played a role in the general processes I expected to generate more specific examples of information availability as well as the breadth and depth of process in evaluation. Of course, the validity of any findings is fully dependent upon the candor of the participants, which in part is why I choose to mainly use those not still in the employ of the organization. Potential conflicts are notable and the study attempted to use members and staff who no longer serve in positions that might have constrained their willingness to talk freely about the process. I worked with a finite group of actors, with a predominant focus on those who played a prominent role in the decision making structure of the House on these issues.

In my search for materials on how legislatures learn and how the policy processes can be better modeled according to organizational learning principles, I located what I thought to be a
possible resource, *The Comparative Legislative Research Center at the University of Iowa*. Their website lists all of the articles, with abstracts, from their published journal. I examined the four years before the general national onset of term limits, 2000, and four years after, perusing every article in their publication to see if any had even a remote linkage to organizational learning theories or even to the functions of research within legislative organizations. Following is a summary of Titles and Abstracts referring to Organizational Learning, Learning Organizations, or related topics:

**Four Years Before and After Impact of Term Limits**

- 1996 24 articles, 3 related topics
- 1997 26 articles, 0 related topics
- 1998 26 articles, 1 related topic
- 1999 22 articles, 0 related topics
- 2000 28 articles, 0 related topics
- 2001 27 articles, 0 related topics
- 2002 26 articles, 1 related topic
- 2003 20 articles, 0 related topics

**Figure 7- The Comparative Legislative Research Center**

What I initially thought would be a good source to investigate as part of my methods process, seeking research that had already studied the impact of turnover in legislatures, turned out to not be very lucrative. The five articles shown above that related to turnover all referred to subjects other than how to cope with high turnover in the legislative process and were generally focused on who is turning over, such as increased minority or female elected officials or related studies. I have either chosen a dissertation topic of little previous scholarly interest or no one seems to have thought of applying organizational learning theories to an elected legislative setting. It is apparent that even this Center, titled as it is, has not published exploration of how legislatures go about the policy investigation process.

**Methods Summary**
It has been the intent of this researcher in this study to provide, through interviews and the utilization of the literature concerning learning organization theory, an interpretive view of the Florida House. The end results that follow provide a context-specific understanding of how organization learning criteria might be better utilized and how suggested changes might improve the knowledge and information tools used for issue consideration. The ultimate intent of this study is to provide ideas and concepts that can assist the House to move to becoming more institutionally capable of sustaining learning behaviors. I sought in this study to identify whether or where there may be impediments to effective learning. In the end it is clear to this writer that however detailed a study and no matter how obvious the suggested improvements might be, the potential value of this study to the organization of the Florida House of Representatives will be limited by the factors described by Martin:

I believe that only a small part of an organizational culture consists of issues and perceptions that people see clearly and agree on. The rest is characterized by incompletely understood conflicts between groups; inconsistencies between, for example, what people say they value and what they do; ambiguities about what frequently used phrases and goal statements actually mean; and irreconcilable paradoxes and contradictions. (2002, p.9)

According to Martin “the best method for gaining an in-depth understanding of a culture is to enter a discussion, (with therapeutic undertones), with cultural members…to tap unconscious and pre-conscious assumptions” (p. 46). Through this process the researcher sought to ascertain if there are shared perceptions by those who are or have been participants in the process under study. By interviewing and using questionnaires with experienced participants this researcher was able to identify informal and formal structurally imposed or perceived roadblocks to the enhancement of a learning culture.
CHAPTER FOUR

APPLYING THE CONCEPTS TO THE INSTITUTION

As previously discussed in this study, it is the intent of this research to apply various components of organizational learning theories as a diagnostic framework to study a single legislative entity, the Florida House of Representatives. I conducted a qualitative inquiry, selecting thirty key actors who have been involved in the House policy consideration processes by using detailed question sets and face to face interviews; I explored perceptions regarding the quantity, quality and persistence of information used in addressing policy issues over time. I developed a template of questions to construct similarity and continuity amongst the various interviews conducted over a two month time. I developed a question set to be used for those who either preferred to participate in writing rather than in person, or for whom time and distance made interviewing impossible.

Seidman (2006) suggests using a series of 3 interviews of the same subjects, each a duration of approximately 90 minutes. Most of the subjects of my interviews would not have been available for three meeting so I had to make the best use of the time allocated to me by each participant. The time spent in conversation with each subject generally lasted between 60-90 minutes. Seidman stresses the need for each interview to have a clear, “chronological beginning, middle and end”, which allows interviewers to “learn to hone their skills if they work within a set amount of time” (p.20). During the interviews I found a high degree of energy and interest in the topic, but also found I had to concentrate on keeping the subjects on task to questions asked, as there was a tendency to go off on tangents-- (frequently useful tangents) -- as often key points were derived from these diversions as parties were able to stimulate their own memories through discussion. McCracken contends, “within each of the questions, the opportunity for exploratory, unstructured responses remains” (p.25). Lofland and Lofland advocate the use of intensive
interviewing, also called ‘unstructured interviewing’, as “a guided conversation whose goal is to elicit from the interviewee rich, detailed materials” (1984, p.112). So in the process I found our going off the intended track from time to time did help in getting subject participants to open up more and to go deeper into their own experiences.

**Number of Participants**

Seidman’s proposed three interview structure recommended fewer participants and more focused, in-depth exploration, which was not how this research project was designed due to the time constraints of most of the actors chosen. However, even Seidman allows, “as long as a structure is maintained that allows participants to reconstruct and reflect upon their experiences” that alterations to his suggested formats are acceptable and are frequently used in qualitative research. I intentionally grouped my participants into three main experience areas, making sure that each had sufficient experiences to provide value to the study. This is, in part, in disagreement with grounded theorists (for example see Glaser, 1978) who would regard the “focus and analysis as especially relevant, while the data can be gathered from almost anywhere in almost any fashion”, when using qualitative techniques (Lofland, 1984, p.151). There are, at any point in time, 120 House members, hundreds of staff and thousands of external actors, all of whom could have been asked to participate in this study. However, the selection of participants was purpose driven and categorical by design. Perhaps the grounded theorists are correct in asserting that the same information could have been gathered from anywhere in any fashion and if I had chosen a random sample using other actors, the comments might have been the same, but their experiences would have been different. This qualitative study is only applicable to the subjects presented and only valid, by design, based on the freely made responses by each interviewee. McCracken adds, “It is the categories and assumptions, not those who hold them that matter. In other words, qualitative research does not survey the terrain, it mines it” (1988, p.17).

To stimulate their thought processes prior to the face to face meetings I presented a sample question set (Appendix D) along with a broadly stated topic summary to familiarize them loosely with some concepts of organizational learning. This proved very useful as many
participants filled out the written questions prior to sitting with me for interviews. Seidman concludes, “The governing principle in designing interviewing projects might well be to strive for a rational process that is both repeatable and documentable” (p. 22), which is what these question sets assisted in doing in this process as I moved from one interview to another.

Table 1- Participants:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elected Officials</th>
<th>Leg. Staff</th>
<th>External Actors</th>
<th>Executive Agency Role</th>
<th>&gt;10 yrs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Individual Interviewees or respondents 30

Note: Many participants have served in multiple categories listed. None served in every category but 15 participants served in more than one category, each of whom acted for more than 10 years in these capacities. A total of 25 of the 30 have been involved in one role or another in the House processes for more than 10 years.

Interview Groups and Individuals

As mentioned earlier, I grouped my subjects according to the primary roles they played in the process. Following are the grouping categories for purposes of interviews and interpretation of input:

Leadership-Elected

I interviewed or received written question set responses from selected former Speakers, major chairmen, Minority Leaders and statewide elected officials who have all been engaged on the inside of the Florida legislative process. Most have had more than 10 years experience in working with the Florida House of Representatives, either inside or external to the House as elected members. I chose this group since as leaders it is assumed that they have the respect of their peers and the skills required to rise to the top in the organization and as high level
participants they likely had more detailed experiences on critical and complex issues. Sample participants include a Governor, two Lt. Governor’s, four Speakers, six Chamber leaders (including Senate Presidents), a former House Rules Chairman, multiple committee chairmen, and a Minority Leader.

**Staff Leadership-Appointed**

I interviewed or received written question set responses from selected House staff who have served in roles at the Staff Director level or higher in the Florida House, including multiple people who have served as Chiefs of Staff or Chief Administrators in the House. In addition, I received responses from individuals who served as senior staff to the Governor (classified as External for purposes of this study), which enabled me to cross-balance the perspectives of senior staff in each branch. Other sample participants include former staff directors of Commerce, Education, Insurance, Leadership offices (Majority Leader or Pro Tempore), the House Clerk, and other supervisory personnel.

**Advocates-External**

I interviewed or received written response sets from external lobbyists, press, not for profit association heads and policy advocates, including those who represent single issue or association clients, governmental agencies and multiple client individuals, all of whom have had at least 10 years experience as lobbyists. Sample participants include advocates for trade groups, think tanks, multiple client groups, agriculture and land use, executive branch, education and large employer groups.

**Searching for Meaning**

Seidman addressed the problem of the possibly conflicting role of the interviewer. In my case, as a historically active participant in the process (See biography), there were occasional problems in interviewing that arose that forced me to continue to attempt to pursue greater
distance between my roles prior to the interviews. Some of the actors had direct engagement with me on either specific or with multiple issues; others had tangential relationships, while some had no formal relationships. However, all knew me prior to the interview process. Since I have played many varied roles, several of the interviewees referred to large projects where I had been a participant, using these projects as examples of methods used for legislative investigations on major, complex issues. It is this familiarity that meets the standard set by McCracken, “in the qualitative case, however, the issue is not one of generalizability. It is that of access” (1988, p.17). Examples of this familiarity are references in interviews to the 2003 efforts in medical liability and workers compensation policy issues, where I played a lead staff role in the House for each topic. As the researcher, this created the dilemma of how best to model how these processes were structured without reflecting upon my role in those projects. McCracken contends it is incumbent upon the practitioner to “manufacture distance” (p.23) to avoid familiarity becoming an obstacle to understanding. In all cases, these were given by those interviewed as examples of ‘best practices’ on elected member and staff engagement on a complex issue that yielded positive results in the policy process. This conundrum does not seem to be addressed in the literature. Here is a sample comment of this situation that this researcher needed to filter in examining best practices for a learning organization in this kind of setting:

One of the most effective methods to develop a legislative solution was during the 2003 Session. A number of complicated issues faced the legislature. The Rules Chairman, Dudley Goodlette and his staff headed several Select Committees. Information was collected, shared, maintained, and passed to the substantive committees. I was most involved in the workers compensation issue, but there were several other issues that year. That process worked well, but it worked because of the skills of the people involved.

Perhaps this is a situational risk the researcher pays when following the first aspect of qualitative social research used by Lofland and Lofland. “Qualitative social research encourages you to start where you are-to use your current situation or past involvement as a topic of research” (1984, p. 2). McCracken contends that while familiarity might dull the investigators observation it also gives an advantage of “extraordinary intimate acquaintance with the object of study” (1988, p.32). I needed to be careful to acknowledge my role in a manner that would “encourage the participant to continue restructuring his or her own role in a more inner voice than before” (Seidman, p. 89), when my engagement in an issue was brought up during interviews. Further, it was useful on occasion to follow Seidman’s advice “for the sake of
establishing rapport, for example, interviewers sometimes share their own experience when they think it is relevant to the participants” (p. 97). In my case, since I had worked directly or tangentially with many of the participants over time, the avoidance of my various roles was not fully possible.

While a general question set was used to make sure that the relevant topics were addressed, it is important to note that I used the interview process to inquire about perceptions regarding issues of interest to the interviewee as related to this study. Seidman suggests that in-depth interviewing is not truly to be used to test hypotheses, to gather answers to questions or to corroborate opinions. He contends it is designed to get participants to reconstruct their experiences and explore their perceptions of the meaning of these experiences. (Seidman, p.91). When using a question set for written input, the general intent was to explore their personal experiences in House processes and to elicit their own points of view. It is important to emphasize the wide disparity of roles among the interviewees, from Governor and Speakers to agency heads, to staff directors to external lobbyists. All had distinct and sometimes multiple points of view of the policy process and similar responses were given in both the written and fact to face interviews.

As in any study of this nature, the universe of potential participants is large, in this case including thousands of former office holders, staff and external participants. I tried to select a representative sample based on their experiences both before and after term limits (passed in 92 but really took effect in 2000 with the first batch of termed out legislators), as well as before and after the switch from Democratic to Republican control of the House chamber. (1996) I sought external participants (external meaning they were not employed currently by the House or serving in the House as elected officials) who had more than 10 years experience in the process., remembering Simon’s statement that “We also know that no one-literally no one- becomes a world class expert in any professional domain with less than ten years of full-time dedication to learning.” (p.129). I made sure to include external actors who represented multiple clients, single agencies or associations, small clients and large industries. Each person chosen was selected in part on their relevance to the study and the degree of access by me and their willingness to participate. Confidence in me, as the researcher, and my ability to maintain strict confidentiality concerning frank and open discussion about issues, people and situations were essential to the integrity of this process and to the openness of participants.
In all cases, prior to participation, each subject was given assurances of confidentiality and asked to sign the Human Subjects Consent Form (Appendix G). They were advised of my intent to not directly credit anyone by quotation but that direct language might be taken from the transcripts absent who made the remarks. I further advised that if I sought to use a direct quote with citation I would first seek specific permission.

**Analysis and Interpretation**

Again it is important to note that the sample questions presented in this document only served as a general template to assure that each interview session gathered information on similar topics and segments of the House policy process. I was influenced by Seidman’s description of the integration of interviewing and analysis in describing the techniques used by others. “They would have interviewers conduct a number of interviews, study and analyze them, frame new questions as a result of what they had found, and then conduct further interviews” (p.113). I revised question sets as I progressed, discarding some questions, developing more useful, relevant questions, and revising some to gain better clarity of understanding by respondents. I was further influenced by Seidman’s admonition to “avoid ‘any in-depth analysis of the interview data until I have completed all the interviews’” (p.113). This helped to avoid ‘imposing meaning’ derived from one interview to another, yielding better independent points of view when filtered by the interviewer.

All interviews were taped and transcribed, with hard to understand words and phrasing left blank by the transcriber, but placed in context, and both verbal and non-verbal material was noted for the record (background noises, interruptions, coughs, etc). Idioms or grammatical errors in speech were transcribed as spoken and noted with (sic), since I did not want to edit any of the comments made. This process generated a large amount of text and material pages, all of which needed subsequent review, coding and interpretation. The interview contents are covered in the next chapter.

This researcher made the effort to step away from personal knowledge of the process and to avoid personal bias, in order to review the materials resulting from this inquiry inductively. I sought to identify from each session that which was of most significance and interest to my
topic. (McCracken, 1988) Seidman suggests the interviewer “must come to the transcript prepared to let the interview breathe and speak for itself” (p. 117).

I followed Seidman’s suggested structure as to how the abundant material was grouped for presentation in this document. He advised using two methods for presenting data from long interviews. First, he suggests developing profiles of participants and creating categorical groupings and secondly, the marking of passages, grouping them into categories and then looking for thematic connections (p.119) I present in Chapter Five how this process resulted, based on both oral sessions with participants and written submissions. Chapter Five uses the elements presented in Chapter Two as my diagnostic framework, as derived from a combination of ideal organizational learning components presented in the literature by Crossan, Lane and White (1999), Argyris and Shon, (1996) and Carley (1992). I sought to extract interview segments as examples that met or contradicted each component element in the framework for analysis.

I sought passages that could be categorized under each element as variables, as identified as essential components of organizational learning as examples within the Florida House process in reviewing the transcriptions of the interviews and the written responses. I used my main hypothesis and the two subordinate hypotheses in formal broad categorical groupings, using the McCracken model to seek validation between what the literature said regarding the points raised and then linking the same to example comments made by respondents. I used selective coding to build linkages and relevance amongst the varied participants, confirming the various points of view until a conceptual saturation, or as much as could be done in a theoretical application, could be accomplished. However, while I sought to discover confirmation of points of view among participants it is important to note that often interviewees offered keen insight into subject matter areas based on their singular points of view.

A significant dilemma in this project was to determine which information was more relevant and which should be left behind on the cutting floor. Conducting so many face to face interviews and getting lengthy written responses from so many experienced actors provided rich context for the researcher. However, seeking relevance from the comments to the organizational learning criteria provided an abundance of issues and ideas to consider. An essential problem for me was deciding what comments to include and which to delete. Lofland and Lofland describe
this as the ‘agony of omitting’. “You must face the hard truth that no general design is likely to encompass all of the material you have on hand” (1984, p.139).

I was able to sample House records and publications to further correlate common procedures and activities in the policy investigation processes as additions to interviews and written submissions. The Office of the Clerk was helpful in producing historical records since the House website (www.myfloridahouse.org) is incomplete of much of the historical record on policy issues. This will be described in more detail in the next chapter.

**Historical State Efforts**

In Chapters One and Two I described multiple perspectives for analyzing how effective the Florida House of Representatives might be in forming an improved learning organization based on the standards set by Argyris and others. Argyris offers a simple conceptual model of how his theoretical double loop or single loop processes would differ.

**Argyris’ Conceptualization**

![Figure 8- Single-Loop and Double-Loop Learning](image)

Argyris emphasizes that often it is a choice process, deciding which product to produce for market or which solution to apply to a problem, and how and why these choices are made, that really inhibits the enhanced utilization of optimal organizational learning in organizations.
“The underlying theory, supported by years of empirical research, is that the reasoning processes employed by individuals in organizations inhibit the exchange of relevant information in ways that make double-loop learning difficult – and all but impossible in situations in which much is at stake” (Easterby-Smith, et. al 1999, p. 160). This point was also confirmed through the interview processes used by this researcher. Here are two sample comments from interviewees on this topic of choice.

1) the problem that must be guarded against is that people of good will, trying to decide how to allocate scarce resources as Florida policy makers amongst different areas, often get dramatically influenced by their background. For example, a fiscally conservative legislator on most matters that came out of Florida’s public schools or universities may suddenly turn into a profligate spender when it comes to education matters.

2) and some members didn’t want that and they thought it was a source of information that would be viewed more as objective, which I think it rightly should be, but they wanted to characterize a different set of facts as objective.

Element 5 states: -- Organizational success depends on the ability to see things in new ways, gain new understandings, and produce new patterns of behavior- all on a continuing basis. It needs to be pervasive throughout the organization, multi-level; individual, group, and full organization. Learning involves a tension between assimilating new learning (exploration) and using what has been learned (exploitation). As seen from the above interview quotes, often what is missing in an organization can be the tension found from challenging what is thought to be known and the new information that might challenge these assumptions. In a legislative body new challenges arise every session and new vehicles for conceptual challenges (filed bills) emerge by the thousands. What is not clear is the depth of the substantive knowledge on each issue as well as the degree of understanding of how the statutes in place, (decisions made in prior years), were made as well as what information was used in establishing these policies in the original instance.

In this study the Florida House of Representatives, an organization of constant change and high turnover, is examined to see how the elements of an ideal type learning organization might be, or could better be, utilized. The Florida House does not exist independent of its past. It is bound by actions of previous legislatures through the previous creation of laws, rules and informal but deeply institutionalized procedures. For example, the practice of electing new leaders every two years with the Speaker not repeating for second term, which would be quite
legal, has normally been discouraged. In the modern era only one Speaker has succeeded himself in consecutive terms of office. Even though technically new organizational rules of structure and procedure are created every two years, the actions of the past are determinants of what is possible today and what might happen tomorrow. Dr. Earle Klay, Professor of Public Administration and Policy at Florida State University exchanged in writing with this author the following relevant facts about this extraordinarily institutionalized custom. “I have personally reviewed the historical records on House Speaker and Senate President succession back to the advent of statehood in 1845. The practice of selecting new presiding officers every biennium dates to that time and it was a practice no more violated in the previous century as in modern times.” “This reflects the extraordinary staying power of this deeply institutionalized leadership selection practice.” He continued, “the existence of a practice in custom, not law, that extends more than a century and a half is extraordinary evidence of a deeply institutionalized custom.” (May 18, 2007 correspondence)

Significant here is how the components of Element 3- that organizations are historically based- are determinants of the actions of the present. Are the rules, structures, and norms of the organization the only limiting factors in how the processes function, or does the information about past activities and the intellectual resources captured during past activities play a role in current learning processes?

Senge’s five disciplines offer two components, Systems Thinking and Team Learning (1990, pp 7-9), that could be used to broaden how an organization might develop processes to assist efforts at data acquisition and organizational learning. Senge defines these disciplines as follows:

Systems Thinking- “a conceptual framework, a body of knowledge and tools that has been developed over the past fifty years, to make full patterns clearer, and to help us see how to change them effectively.”

Team Learning- “the capacity of a team to suspend assumptions and enter into a genuine 'thinking together’…”team learning is vital because teams, not individuals, are the fundamental learning unit in modern organizations.”

Critical to this study would be how the House would then use these expanded resources for learning in moving forward and engaging in both similar and newly framed policy issues.
How has the legislature captured past activities? Does the institution have access to the relevant institutional history on issues under study? Are the actions of the past and the decision making tools used accessible and utilized in current decision processes? Does the institution have information systems that provide feedback on performance using historical experience as a part of the learning routine?

Florida, through legislative action, has over the years created a number of agencies considered as components of the legislative branch under the management of Joint Legislative Committees, which are designed to assist in the various learning processes of the legislature. These legislative agencies, such as the Office of Economic and Demographic Research (EDR) and The Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA), are a part of the processes available to legislators to search for, acquire, retain and disseminate information. These include, among others, organizations designed to prepare, adopt and later modify planning programs, survey and update demographic data, prepare economic forecasts, create links among other governmental agencies, develop land use programs and even develop scenarios for long term planning. It is not the intent of this study to describe in detail the efforts and products of these agencies, but rather in part to determine how well the issue analysis products produced by these groups are used by the House actors. Clearly these components, especially those charged with undertaking portions of the learning tasks, should be considered as essential components of the process. Since several of the agencies mentioned in this study are not under the direct control of the House Speaker, but are shared, either by joint control with the Senate through a joint committee structure, it is important to explore how this affects the perceptions of changing leaders who do not have a historical relationship with the reasons these agencies were created and the quality of the information produced. Through the question sets, I explored whether these legislative agencies are perceived to be integral parts of the process or whether they are perceived to be agencies that are somewhat external to the legislature’s core learning processes. Are they perceived as “outsiders”, offering information in much the same manner as external groups, such as executive branch agencies and external think tanks? Are the research products of these agencies utilized by members and staff and if so how? Or are these agencies being somewhat ignored, and if so why and by whom? Are they truly a part of patterned Systems Thinking, used for Team Learning, or are they more just parts of governmental processes not fully utilized in the development of policy? I used one question in my oral and written
investigations to try to determine perceptions on how widely used are the efforts of these previously created entities:

_How do you think the legislature uses established research arms of government such as OPPAGA, EDR and other planning or estimating groups? Should these kinds of efforts be done through independent arms of government, using collaboration with the Senate, House and Executive Branch, or should the House have their own research arms? How should Consensus Forecasting tasks be used by legislative staff?_

**Fully in House, Shared, or External?**

One would surmise that an effective marshalling of the reports, data and other information generated by these statutory groups would provide a vital link to how effective the House would be measured according to the standards of a learning organization. Accessing and synthesizing information garnered from these resources has not been fully considered in the previous analysis and description of what a learning organization might be in this kind of multivariate, changing setting. Certainly Firm Theory envisions using every resource in decision making to the advantage of the firm (Williamson, 2002), but as identified earlier, the literature does not offer applications of organizational learning theory to a legislative setting and therefore has not considered how a legislative chamber might best utilize specially created learning entities that are not placed under it’s exclusive direct supervision and full control. Also not previously considered is the role these entities might play in stabilizing institutional memory when there is high turnover in a parent agency, such as the Florida House.

It can be argued that agencies such as EDR, OPPAGA and formerly CEPRI, in Florida are essential component creations of the legislature and not to be considered ‘external’ to the organization of the House since these agencies are managed by a joint committee process. Likewise the consensus estimating groups used by both the legislature and executive branches, with each branch offering both personnel and resources to the processes, and each using these processes in the development of forecast models and in the building of budget components, can also be shown on paper to be critical organizational learning tools in the process. What is not clear, and will be demonstrated later by the comments made by actors in the process, is how these actors perceive these agencies or groups and if there are informal walls of separation that
would need to be addressed in order for these long serving and vital groups to be fully integrated into the decision making processes. This kind of structural issue can be linked to **Element 4**-- No one decision maker holds all of the information required for decision making-- in the six presented as tools for diagnosis. Effective learning should occur at each subunit and should be effectively shared with others to assist in overcoming limits to cognitive gathering and interpretation of clues.

This study uses the reflections made by interviewees to show there are varied perceptions and degrees of reliance on these groups by different actors. It was surprising to see the wide variance of perceptions; from full recognition of their vital research role to a clear discounting of the value added. Historically we have seen changes in the sizes and competencies of committee staffs (described in this study as ‘internal’ since they are under the sole and direct control of the Speaker) to do long term or in-depth research. For purposes of this study I place these created agencies somewhere between internal and external due to the shared nature of their governance with the Florida Senate. The complexity of this relationship warrants further study, but for purposes of this, I focused on the perceptions of the interviewees as to how these agencies are utilized in the learning processes. I will later offer some comments later on how these roles might be altered to improve the utilization or perceived utilization of these tools in the learning process.

According to Cyert, Dill and March “theories of organizational decision making have ordinarily made rather sharp distinctions between business and public organizations”, with the distinctions being largely in “the treatment of goals and the treatment of expected returns and costs”(1958, p. 308). While, as in organizational learning theory, this theory is more easily applied to profit seeking organizations, the behavioral aspects of decision making do transfer to the legislative setting. The treatment of expectations applies here, but not in terms of dollar value costs to the agency. The House can assess the relative values of using internal resources to conduct much of the tasks assigned by statute to agencies such as The Office or Program, Policy Analysis and Governmental accountability (OPPAGA) or to the Office of Economic and Demographic Research (EDR). But once established, absent political interference, these agencies become ingrained into the processes for which they are designed and an analysis of cost efficiency of changing to internally driven systems and programs is unlikely to occur. Cyert, Dill and March cite several reasons for this. The normal theory of expected returns assumes that a
study is done among all alternatives for the use of existing resources. This does not usually occur in public settings since, “public administration models seem to emphasize local adaptation to specific problems; they stress problem solving much more than planning” (1958, p.310).

An evaluation of the relative value of the research conducted completely by staff of the House, such as committee staff, vs. using created agencies would also require “a substantial computational activity” by the organization. The research conducted is but one of many resources available to the organization and the normal use of expectation theory would assume that the ‘expectations’ (in this setting, quality research to be used for later purposes) are not directly linked to the expectations of the organization. These authors conclude that resource allocation in an organization “reflects only gross comparison of marginal advantages of alternatives” (1958, p.336). One might conclude, confirmed by the comments of some of the interviewees, that in a legislative setting, the utility of these created resource groups might be likely to be affected by the volatility of the issue under study and the concurrence of the findings with the stated preferences of the institutional leadership. This could be a subject of another study of this legislative setting. Cyert, Dill and March conclude: “Search activity is not viewed as simply another use of internal resources.” Clearly past legislatures created these agencies for a purpose; to expand the knowledge base for decision making and to increase the accuracy of forecasting.

Williamson, stated, “Transaction costs are appropriately made the centerpiece of the analysis but these are not operationalized in a fashion which permits one to assess the efficacy of completing transactions as between firms and markets in a systemic way” (1975, p.3). In the legislative setting the decision regarding transaction costs has already been made with the establishment of the research agency. What needs to be determined is how, over time, they are used as integral parts of research and program evaluation and how are their efforts utilized by key policy makers. This author can attest that in my former role of Staff Director for Policy, several of these agencies were very pleased when I took interest in their work products and when they were sent to me, I read, copied and passed them on to other staff personnel in the appropriate subject matter area. However, several new factors emerge in the legislative/political setting. One is whether the information gathered is in line with the desires of empowered elected officials. A second is whether the reports generated are readily utilized or ignored. And a third raised by several interviewees is whether the actions of the created agencies are sometimes
driven by their own agendas or via assignments from previous legislative leaders; leaders who may not be in the same positions when the reports are completed, thereby raising concerns about the validity of the information with regards to the priority rankings of those now in charge of the policy agendas (1975, p.3). These are examples of how Element 2--Organizational success depends upon the ability to limit barriers to effective communication and interaction between and amongst subunits of the organization- can impact the effective utilization of the critical components of an ideal learning organization.

These varied points of view are reflected in the following two comments made in interviews, with each respondent referring to this type of created research agency:

1) But the problem I have is that the legislature often will call upon an outside group when it feels it cannot coalesce around a certain proposition there is an admission of a problem. I mean everybody agrees on the problem but what they don’t agree on is what to do about it. So then they will sort of lob that over to some kind of a third party; (Staff)
2) … clearly we’re not always using those external groups as effectively as we could but we couldn’t do without the auditor general’s office and OPPAGA. That research is extremely important to us…. It helps us focus in on those things that we need to learn and need to know when we don’t have time to go out and look for it ourselves. (elected)

Note that in each case the point of view refers to these created agencies, which should be perceived as integral parts of the legislature’s own learning processes, as “outside” or “external” groups, even when speaking in praise and affirmation of the value to the process. Clearly there needs to be an evaluation of how to better and consistently integrate the efforts of each group into the learning processes so the perception of these agencies as “external” can be altered. Note also, that in the question set used in the interviews and for written submissions these agencies were referred to as “established research arms of government”. I sought to project a fully neutral position to see how the actors responded.

Epstein and O’Halloran (1999) provide a related perspective in their work, Delegating Powers. In this study they analyze the use of delegation of responsibilities to other parties by the U.S. Congress, exploring the political and policy implications of deferral of authority and responsibility to external agencies. Their focus is on the passing of research and other activities to other governmental groups, why it is done, how it is done, and what are the implications of
this deferral of responsibilities. While there are many differences between Congress and state legislative bodies, there does not appear in the literature to be a comparative study at the state level. Their findings can be used to illustrate how portions of the legislature’s learning process can be delegated to specialized research units. Their research yielded three important findings that relate to my research (1999, p. 237).

1) Congress does not delegate duties and activities wholesale to the executive,
2) When Congress does delegate it constrains executive discretion with restrictive procedures,
3) Delegation is more than a convenience, it is a counterbalance imposed upon itself to the concentration of powers in committees.

While this does not apply perfectly to a state setting that has consistent turnover of key players, compared to Congress where immense power is in the hands of Chairmen and key staff, there has been consistency with points 1 and 2 in the Florida setting. As an example, here is the statutory language on the State of Florida OPPAGA entity.

11.51 Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability.—

(1) There is hereby created the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability as a unit of the Office of the Auditor General appointed pursuant to s. 11.42. The office shall perform independent examinations, program reviews, and other projects as provided by general law, as provided by concurrent resolution, or as directed by the Legislative Auditing Committee, and shall provide recommendations, training, or other services to assist the Legislature.

It is my view that OPPAGA offers a model website that could be used to replicate some of the items I will discuss later, in offering some prescriptions that result from the interviews and research. For example, all of the studies done by OPPAGA for the past four years are available on-line, clearly identified and broken out by subject headings, as is their operational business plan for the current year, as well as an annotated list of legislative recommendations. This agency was cited by the National Conference of State Legislatures (LEGISBRIEF, April/May 2002) as making “recommendations with a potential fiscal impact of $2.5 billion since its start in 1994. Of this, $302 million has been realized to date, including $270 million in 2001.” NCSL explains that the value of agencies like OPPAGA is “to provide accurate, independent, objective and timely evaluations…often resulting in the potential to save millions of tax dollars.”

It is important to note that OPPAGA was not created without some conflict. When it was created it was opposed by the sitting Auditor General, who lost this battle to the desires of the
legislature to have an agency that would be more responsive to the legislature. During the term of Jeb Bush as Governor, he attempted to abolish OPPAGA and place the statutory responsibilities back under the Auditor General. During one of these efforts another legislatively created agency, just created in 2000, called the Council for Policy Research and Improvement (CEPRI) was abolished, about which I will comment later. The history of this single agency, OPPAGA provides evidence of conflict in this political process. It was created in the Auditor General’s Office initially, but not with full acceptance of this location by the legislative and executive leadership in office at that time. Later it was removed from the Auditor General’s Office, made an independent agency, again not with full support for this action by all leadership in place, and now stands as a statutorily created agency under the direction of a joint House-Senate Legislative Auditing Committee. Similar to this has been the history in Florida of the revenue and demographic research activities and how and where they have been handled. These research activities have moved from largely executive branch control, created in the 1970’s as a consensus forecasting process largely under the control of the executive in Florida, to a shared process where the House, Senate and Executive branch play equal roles in staffing and chairing the various committees assigned responsibility for estimating factors that will influence how each year’s budget is crafted, especially when the line items are affected by FTE counts or in estimating how much revenue is expected from each category.

It is not the intent or purpose of this study to evaluate the purposes and functions of these various arms of the process, but it is important to acknowledge the vital roles these agencies can serve in building the knowledge base from which legislators can make decisions. These agencies were created to fill perceived voids in the information gathering process so that decision making would be served by the gathering of more detailed and accurate information. The changes in status between either executive or legislative control of the processes or shared participation in consensus forecasting might be discovered to be in part political and in part efficiency, but critical to these research processes using the lens of organizational learning is how the activities of these organizations is perceived and used within the policy consideration processes. Their existence points to previous efforts to improve the learning and research capacities of the policy processes in Florida. This dissertation, while not exploring the structural history of these agencies, instead inquires as to how these vast resources are perceived and used by the selected actors in the process. This is a critical point, the exploration of whether there are
political or organizational barriers to the efficient utilization of the output of these agencies. If these barriers are identified, even if they are perceptions of barriers, then it is incumbent upon legislative leadership to correct or eliminate these barriers since these agencies continue to exist, costing millions of dollars. For example, the 2007-08 budget as passed by the legislature and sent to the Governor funds OPPAGA at $10,108,004 for the fiscal year, a substantial investment in an agency designed to assist in the research and evaluation processes. The Auditor General’s Office is funded at $44,746,389, again a substantial investment in research activities that should be maximized in the learning processes. Integral to this study is how the changing actors in the process view these created agencies and if there can be identified obstacles to their full utilization as essential resources in the learning processes.

Following are some specific comments obtained through the interview process that show how informal perceptions and constraints might impede the overall effectiveness of statutorily created bodies such as OPPAGA.

1. The fact is most legislators in my experience use research done by executive groups, government groups, or legislatively established estimating groups, mostly to establish and defend arguments they are already in favor of. There are times when an OPPAGA, EDR, or other planning or estimating group is used to suggest policy, but for major political issues this is a rarity. (Elected)

2. You know OPPAGA wasn’t all that popular with some members because it was of a rather independent minded and designed so group of people who were looking at policy as objectively as they could. (Staff)

3. OPPAGA is weak and ineffective. It is not accountable to the legislature and therefore does little of great effect. (External)

4. OPPAGA always seems to be self-censoring. But the Legislature either ignores what ‘is’ there in the reports or at least fails to turn it into any kind of “lessons learned” session. (Staff)

These are samples of similar comments made. Clearly there is not a shared positive perception of these agencies. This is an area that needs to be addressed in order to enhance the effectiveness of a large research arm of the legislature and improve organizational learning. These agency work products should be an integral component of program evaluations when changing leaders, such as committee chairs assume office, perhaps by integrating a historical reference asset to each subject matter jurisdiction that can be accessed by newly selected chairs
and made a part of their knowledge training sessions. As stated previously, the negative perceptions are not universally shared. I did hear some highly positive comments where the information produced by these agencies seemed to be more appreciated:

1. *OPPAGA is constantly pointing towards issues that are in the forefront that we’ve got to pay attention to…* (Staff)

2. *I’m glad OPPAGA was created. I think it’s a great plus because they actually look at the effectiveness of policy rather than just the fiscal side.* (Staff)

3. *…the staff depends on OPPAGA very greatly. OPPAGA will tell you last year they received 80 requests for information over and above what they were legislatively mandated to perform.* (Elected)

4. *They do a very effective job on providing research that our staff doesn’t have time to put together.* (Elected)

Clearly the perceived values of these ‘external’ organizations are in the eyes of the beholders. What raises a concern here from the lens of organizational learning, is the inconsistency of the responses and the wide divergence and strength of opinions. These variables are clearly noted in Elements two, three and four selected as the framework for this analysis.

It is also important to note that often the political actions of an organization such as the Florida House of Representatives have a direct impact on agencies observing that same process. When the legislature reorganized higher education in 2000, attempting to create a K-20 system of governance, it also created a research arm for education called The Council for Education Policy Research and Improvement (CEPRI) (Chapter 2001-170 Laws of Florida), with a charge from the Governor, who made some of the appointments to this board, with the Speaker and the Senate President making others), to really push the envelope on ideas affecting education. (Note: this writer was appointed to this board and had personal conversations with Governor Bush on the role expected for this agency) According to the website, CEPRI was created as “a citizen board for independent policy research and analysis…required by the legislature to conduct and review education research, provide independent analysis on education progress and provide evaluation of education issues of statewide concern.” The full statute actually reads similarly to OPPAGA’s statute in the direct charges and assignments made for research in evaluation functions as an arm of the legislative process. The CEPRI Board had a relatively short tenure, in
part since it took the mission for independent research to heart, and developed a couple of critical pieces, especially one related to Pre-K programs that did not set well with the leadership in place at that time. Communications with several of the parties engaged then, (trying to triangulate perspectives) have confirmed the multiple reasons for the demise of this agency. “The new DOE did not want outside interference in their programs” and “several of our reports were on topics that hammered on things that leadership was not impressed with, that ran against what they wanted to accomplish”, are example of quotes from conversations with key players. In a subsequent 2003 re-organization, CEPRI was not re-funded, but still continued to function on projects already underway until as noted on their website, “As of January 1, 2006, the Council completed its interim projects and has no plans to meet again. The Council staff members have all relocated to other positions.”

This conflict between agencies and the legislature, or agencies and executive branch actors, also occurs within the consensus forecasting activities of groups formed for the purposes of developing economic and demographic forecasts used in policy developments and budget forecasting. Klay and Vonasek (2007, forthcoming), address the issues surrounding these conflicts and describe effective methods for conflict avoidance. One example cited, “Some legislatures have rejected forecasts put forth by chief executives due to the political implications of the forecast, rather than on technical merits” (p.3). They advocate consensus forecasting, which involves “the development of forecasts of revenues, and sometimes expenditures, through the input of information from multiple persons and sources.” In Florida, this is largely done in cooperation between House, Senate and Executive agents, working with specifically assigned units or offices, such as the Department of Education’s Office of Student Financial Assistance. This author has participated in this process, which succeeds by offering that, as described by Klay and Vonasek, “the greatest value of the consensus forecasting process appears to be that it promotes both dialogue and the forging of a basis of agreement among its participants” (p.9).

This is confirmed in the Klay and Vonasek study where they validate how greater accuracy in the research processes is gained from consensus forecasting activities. “In addition to its potential to reduce political strife over budgetary forecasts, consensus forecasting also seems to enhance accuracy.” (p.4) While they suggest that a true picture of the accuracy of consensus forecasting will require comprehensive “quality-oriented longitudinal studies of groups engaged in consensus forecasting” (p. 5), they conclude that the two most recent studies of this process,
Bretschneider, Gorr, Grizzle and Klay, (1989) and Vorhees (1999), strengthen the association between forecasting and accuracy, which one can assume provides a more effective tool for legislative decision makers in the policy and budgeting processes. Barriers to more effective learning in this context are apparently not technical or structural, as the requisite tools appear to be available to both expand the learning efforts and better utilize acquired information.

One possible impact of high turnover in legislative roles, staff and member, is a reduction in the House of key actors with experience in the development and evolution of forecasting processes or in the reasons for the creation of groups outside of the normal legislative committee staffing patterns. An understanding by key policy makers as to how the legislature created, for example, the EDR after another consensus process was already in place, but one that was more dominated by the executive branch would allow for greater insight by current actors as they undertake these research tasks. Knowledge of the origins and evolution of these agencies should be of value to newly elected legislators as they begin to search for useful sources of information.

In order for these agencies to be viewed as full participants in the organizational learning processes they must be fully embraced by leadership, made to be components of each bill analysis based on studies, and incorporated to the maximum extent possible into the policy decision making processes, regardless of the point of view offered. Under the House rules and structure it will require that Element 1 be embraced. Element 1—Organizational success depends upon leadership that continuously seeks to expand and empower the knowledge resources of the organization. This requires leadership which encourages the pursuit of knowledge and empowers others to freely conduct learning activities. House leadership would need to direct staff to evaluate how each of these created agencies function and the degree of utilization of the work product across the organization.

Based on the comments made in the interviews it is apparent that there needs to be an improved linkage of the products of these agencies to the policy process. As pointed out by Klay and Vonasek (2007 forthcoming unpublished manuscript), there is an improved performance of agents when increased engagement occurs. Here is a key passage from their study that highlights these benefits and also exemplifies the benefits of double-loop engagement in the processes.

Where survey respondents (state forecasting officials) said that elected officials were more likely to question the forecasters regarding the assumptions made about the national economy, the respondents indicated that the forecasters
themselves had learned more about the workings of the state’s economy. Similarly, the forecasters themselves seemed to be learning more when elected officials questioned the forecasters about their level of confidence for the overall forecasts. Respondents also indicated that they thought elected officials learned more about the workings of their state’s economy when they actively questioned the forecasters.”
CHAPTER FIVE

THE INTERVIEWS: DIAGNOSING THE ORGANIZATION

A major tool of this research has been to use interviews with key role players in a partial diagnosis of the House policy investigations procedures, based on the experiences of actors engaged in the process. Through these conversations I sought common perceptions, frustrations and concepts that might be useful items to explore for potential changes in processes. Harrison (1994, p. 11) asserts that “diagnosis differs substantially from non-applied, academic research on organizations in its emphasis on obtaining results that will be immediately useful to members of a client organization.” While the Florida House of Representatives is not a ‘client’ of mine, my intent has still been to identify through actor interviews whether the criteria listed at the end of Chapter 2, as components of an ideal type learning organization exist, can they be improved, or are they absent from the Florida House policy processes. Some variables, processes and procedures may be changeable and some may be not changeable. One not likely to be changed is the constant turnover of leadership and how this comports with the need in organizations for continuity of leadership. Term limits would directly impede altering leadership continuity for example. Harrison lists several variables in diagnosing organizations:

1) Focus on finding changeable factors, even when these factors may not explain all of the variances;
2) Use less complex research designs and methods
3) Use organizational participants in the research;
4) Rely on experience and intuition in addition to scientific method in the process in reaching recommendations and conclusions. (p.11)

Harrison also contends that in producing reliable results, it is useful to sort out the varied opinions one might get from different actors within the process. In a legislative setting it is
critical to remember his point that, researchers should treat "the plurality of interests and perspectives within a focal organization as a significant organizational feature in its own right." (p.23) The diversity of perspective and opinion is what fuels the regular legislative process.

Following are categorical breakouts of my research results, based on criteria established by Argyris and Schon, Carley and Crossan, Lane and White. My goals in using these criteria are best summarized by Harrison (p.124).

1. Provide specific information to be used by the primary review subject, the Florida House.
2. Solve specific problems- example here, seeking ways to cope with organizational turnover and the impact on policy investigation processes.
3. Assessment of effectiveness and seeking ways to improve effectiveness.
4. Add to organizational learning capacity.
5. Contribute to the organizations transformation by pointing out potential changes to system processes, structure, technology and culture.

“Writing Up” Open Topic Research

McCracken (1984, p.57) acknowledges that in a research project of this nature the author must in large part, “fashion his or her own terms of reference” (p.56). While earlier Chapters of this project focused largely on what the literature has to say about organizational learning, it becomes my role to interpret what the participants had to say and how these thoughts fit within the patterns of organizational learning theories. In the end I found it more workable to use my original hypotheses as a template and insert within each the relevant learning organization key elements as cited as my diagnostic framework. These are the six essential elements of an effective learning organization, as compiled from the literature. McCracken advises that projects like this should emphasize a) what the literature says, b) what respondents say, and c) close with a focus on what changes might be needed to bring symmetry between each. And so, in this chapter I briefly re-state what some of the literature says on each topic, summarize what respondents had to say on these same topics and close by offering how these thoughts might apply to the organization under study, the Florida House of Representatives. By using the
broader template of the six elements identified as a tool for diagnosis to use in interpretation of
the interviews I can partially ascertain how the Florida House fits within these elements in its
policy research processes.

Wolcott advises the “canning”, (getting rid of), of much of the accumulated information,
when writing about your qualitative research, “The trick is to discover essences and then to
reveal those essences with sufficient context...” (1990, p. 35). So the following is an attempt at
winnowing the thousands of words and hundreds of pages of transcribed and written submissions
from respondents and participants. This text follows Wolcott’s advice to “use your extensive
field notes and fieldwork experience to provide concrete illustrations and examples” using the
“power of specific instances to support your generalization” (p. 47).

Geertz offers that it is “not necessary to know everything in order to understand
something” (Geertz, 1973, p.20). This short statement applies well to this research project, but it
applies just as well to the legislative process, where thousands of issues are presented each year
and a commensurate number of votes must be taken by members. It is shown in the literature that
an ideal learning organization would perhaps have organizational sub-units assigned
responsibility for component areas and be expected to develop expertise in those areas, while
other divisions would not have to consider much of non-assigned responsibilities. This detail
would be contained within Element 4, since no one decision maker holds all of the information
required and in Element 2 where success depends upon the ability to limit barriers to knowledge
exchange. It would further be contained within Element 6 where the organization would have
structures conducive for organizational learning processes.

When mistakes are discovered in the legislative process a bill might be introduced, either
by a member or developed within the committee as a proposed committee bill, (PCB). It is the
independent sub-units (the committees) which are likely to address the errors, make corrections,
alter strategies and perhaps re-think how the perceived error was made and then change protocols
when needed. In a legislative setting, individual committees or select committees are assigned
responsibility for deeper investigation on issues, albeit each may be limited due to time
constraints. When errors occur, it is the full body that eventually takes up correcting legislation
and every member of the organizations is required by rule to take part in the decision making
process. Rule 9.1 of the House Rules, 2006 requires that every Member be within the House in
Chamber when in session and that they vote on every issue before the House. Members can not
excuse themselves due to a lack of information or understanding on an issue. This rule places responsibility on every member to be as informed as possible, but as one respondent stated:

There are…Members that know the issues better than any other members in particular areas and the reason being is that they are dealing with on any even given year 800 to 1000 issues. And it creates a situation where not every member can know a piece of legislation that they have to vote on as well as they ought to know it. They have to become dependent on their colleagues to know the issues, some of the issues, better than they do. (Staff)

These thoughts reflect some informal aspects of information sharing and to a degree, some of the specialization that must occur, which by itself demands Element 2, the limitation to barriers to learning and exchange of information. Since the sub-units (committees or subcommittees) must be relied upon to not only go into detail on issues but to also share the knowledge gained with other sub-units, there is a need for proper structures and staffing (Element 6), so that the research and exploration on issues can be effectively conducted and once done, shared with other units and retained for future use. Turnover has had an effect on the storage of issue knowledge in Members who have, due to time served, less experience with issues, and also with staff who have less time in key positions. This reliance on fellow Members comports also with Element 4 in the diagnostic framework. No one decision maker holds all the information required and there are limits to the cognitive gathering of information.

Organizational behavior is historically based, relying on experience and adaptation of responses to previous decisions based on feedback (Element 3) and organizational learning depends on the memories of actors. The individual Member’s ability to learn the relationships among members affects not only who they rely on in floor sessions but also how the general processes of handling bills and issues can be affected. The system is reliant on relationships; working relationships and cooperative reliance on others. (Element 4) The impact of relationships on organizations and how information is shared is well documented in the literature.

**Actor Responses and Research Hypotheses**
The underlying premises of this research paper are summarized with the main hypothesis and two subordinate hypotheses presented earlier.

**Hypothesis** - The policy consideration processes of the Florida House of Representatives will be found to lack key components of an ideal type learning organization.

**Subordinate Hypothesis One** - Legislative staff have limited formal activities designed to detect errors or anticipate problems before external actions create awareness of problem situations.

**Subordinate Hypothesis Two** - Frequent Transition of actors creates a greater focus on alignments and consolidation to the extent that longer term strategic learning is impaired.

Through the interview processes I was able to get consistent responses on these topical segments of the policy investigation and review processes. Following is a breakdown of each hypothesis followed by a series of selected comments from respondents. I have selected these for sake of clarity and summation, and as suggested by Wolcott (1990) and others, have been forced to leave much rich material on the cutting room floor. In linking the formal hypotheses to the interview process I follow the McCracken model and apply what the theorists have to say about organizational learning concepts to specific comments made by participants regarding the Florida House of Representatives.

**Diagnosis of Primary Hypothesis**

**Hypothesis One** - The policy consideration processes of the Florida House of Representatives will be found to lack key components of an ideal type learning organization.

**From The Literature**

While Chapter Two offers much detail as to the specific organizational learning literature and how it links to this study, there is additional value in examining at this point some specific references as to what the literature offers specific to each hypothesis. This is then related to what
the respondents had to say concerning the specific hypotheses and to the six essential elements for an effective learning organization. This segment, “From the Literature”, serves to further highlight the importance of the points raised by this study and how the actual institution of the Florida House comports to the organizational learning criteria.

At this point it might be useful to re-state the Elements selected as the essential components for an effective learning organization. Not all apply to each hypothesis nor do they all apply to each categorical division of the actions and resources of the House, but together they all suggest potential maps for behavior and structure that the House could use to create a more patterned process based on organizational learning theory.

**Element 1--Leadership--** Organizational success depends upon leadership that continuously seeks to expand and empower the knowledge resources of the organization, a leader who encourages the pursuit of knowledge and empowers others to freely conduct learning activities.

**Diagnosis**- Does the institutional structure foster creative independent learning? Does leadership facilitate organizational learning, stimulating policy considerations from different angles and perspectives? Do leaders set agendas for action pre-set from pre-conceived solutions and/or goals? As Senge described (1990); are new and expansive patterns of thinking nurtured in the organization? Do observed leadership behaviors impede learning?

**Element 2—Learning and Communication--** Organizational success depends upon the ability to limit barriers to effective communication and interaction between and amongst subunits of the organization.

**Diagnosis**- When organizational learning take place anywhere in the organization, does it use all of the internal, external or vicarious resources available? Does the organization have pervasive acceptance of the components needed for a learning environment such as continuous learning, inquiry, openness, sharing and reduced boundaries.

**Element 3--Historicity--** Organizational Behavior is historically based, relying on experience and adaptation of responses to previous decisions based on feedback. Organizational learning depends on memories of actors and the individual’s ability to learn.

**Diagnosis**- Does the institution have access to the relevant institutional history on issues under study? Are the actions of the past and the decision making tool used accessible and utilized in current decision processes? Does the institution have information systems that provide feedback on performance using historical experience as a part of the learning routine?
**Element 4--Norm of Sharing**-- No one decision maker holds all of the information required for decision making. Effective learning should occur at each subunit and should be effectively shared with others. There are limits to cognitive gathering and interpretation of clues.

**Diagnosis**-- Is the institution structured to maximize the human information resources available? Are there barriers that impede the sharing of organizational learning? Are the people with the greatest relevant knowledge on issues in position to apply that knowledge? Is what is learned shared across the organization?

**Element 5--Reflective Creativity**-- Organizational success depends on the ability to see things in new ways, gain new understandings, and produce new patterns of behavior - all on a continuing basis and is pervasive throughout the organization, multi-level; individual, group, organization. Learning involves a tension between assimilating new learning (exploration) and using what has been learned (exploitation)

**Diagnosis**-- Does decision making precede organizational learning activities in this setting? How do the structure of the organization and the role of leadership impact the ability to embrace organizational learning?

**Element 6--Conducive Structures and Staffing**—Effective learning organizations have structures and processes that facilitate learning. Staffing practices are especially important to assure that organizational members with the most relevant expertise are effectively engaged in problem solving.

**Diagnosis**--Is the organization structured to maximize obtained knowledge and to make the best use of informed members of the organization? How does the structure of sub-units of the organization and placement of members and staff impact the ability to implement effective organizational learning?

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**Figure 9 - Critical Elements of Effective Organizational Learning**

Argyris defines closed loop reasoning as existing where we have “systems that are self sealing and anti-corrective”. He contrasts this with a more productive reasoning mind set where “Productive reasoning (1) produces valid and validatable knowledge; (2) creates informed choices, and (3) makes personal reasoning transparent in order for claims to be tested robustly.” His conjecture is that engaged parties strive “to avoid unknowingly deceiving themselves” (2004, p.2-3). This reinforces the need for Element 5; that organizations need to see things in new ways, gain new understandings, and produce new patterns of behavior. Argyris also points
out how organizations must work through tension between what is known and what is learned while avoiding defensive reasoning that impedes new learning.

Easterby-Smith, et. al., expands this by stating that, “reasoning processes employed by individuals in organizations inhibit the exchange of relevant information in ways that make double-loop learning [the counter process to closed loop or single loop learning] difficult- and all but impossible in situations in which much is at stake” (1999, p. 160). Certainly, in a legislative environment, much is at stake. Some issues are minor and some issues have large consequences with much stakeholder interest and concomitant resistance. Those stakeholders who have been successful, for example, in passing certain legislation would defend against unfavorable studies or perhaps even the study occurring at all. In the policy process information is the currency of exchange, thus the need to break down barriers to effective communication and interaction, (Element 2).

Senge expands the need for open systems thinking in more detail, but he also reinforces how systems thinking can be prone to defensive reasoning and actions. He offers, “a team may resist seeing important problems more systemically. To do so would imply that the problems arise from our own policies and strategies –that is ‘from us’—rather than from forces outside our control” (1990, p. 237). This concept touches upon Elements 1, 2, and 5.

Sarbaugh-Thompson, et. al., (2006) studied the influence of term limits on building relationships and how this might affect policy development by altering the amount of time available to build trust. They address a central question, which has impact on this study, “with less time to get to know each other and to develop expertise and influence, how do legislators know who to consult and whose advice to rely on?” (p.384). Since no one actor holds all the information required for decision making it is critical to understand the processes of determining who can be relied upon and on which issues, (Element 4- A Norm of Sharing). Their study found that “after term limits, fewer representatives were seen as influential, and the remaining influence was more centralized in caucus leaders” (p. 385). They cite Kingdon (1989) and Porter (1974) in stating, “Because legislators cannot be experts on everything, they rely on others in their environment for information and guidance about legislation” (p.397) (Element 2- Communication). They conclude, “Under term limits, legislators have less time to become policy experts…But coincidentally, term limits also mean they have less time and fewer opportunities to learn who is knowledgeable and trustworthy about specific issues” (p.397). From my
experience working in these processes, I would counter that legislators are, on the whole, quick studies, especially those who rise to leadership roles. I would add that they quickly develop the ability to take fast reads of character and ability and do spend much time evaluating their peers for judgment and experience.

Klay (1993), in focusing on the dilemmas of personnel administration due to variables of political influence, compares the conflicting roles of political and non-political actors in an organization. In an executive agency there are fewer political appointees. In the legislative organization a majority of the actors are political, either by election or by appointment into at-will staff positions, even with a declared professional staff. Klay contends that there exists in government organizations a temporal dilemma, with “incompatible perspectives—the political executive is concerned mostly with programmatic responsiveness within a relatively short time frame, but many of the core functions of public personnel administration must be carefully and consistently managed from a long range point of view if human resources are to be developed to their fullest.” (Element 6- Conducive Structures and Staffing) Klay contends that “much research underscores the need for managerial continuity and cohesiveness in the creation of a productive workforce” (p. 945) (Element 3- Historicity). How was the workforce of the House affected when turnover was institutionalized? How then does this affect Elements 3 and 4 where there needs to be a reliance on history, memory and experience and there might be an insufficient amount available due to high levels of turnover?

**From the Respondents**

After each quote is a notation if the comment was made by either staff, external, or elected official, the three groups used in this study to divide respondents. In many cases the people who participated in this study have served in multiple roles in the process, so for purposes of this paper they are classified according to the capacity in which they served the longest period of time. All quotations are set in *Italics*. They are offered as examples of the perspectives of the actors interviewed and how each comment relates to the general hypothesis that precedes this section, as well as how they link to the Six Essential Elements of a learning organization. The comments were separated by using two lenses. They were first selected from the volumes of materials gathered through the interviews based on their applicability to the main hypothesis, that
the policy processes will lack key components of an ideal type learning organization. They were then additionally separated according to the six specific essential elements of an ideal learning organization. This is also done in later sections as well to better highlight how these elements apply directly to the specific organizational segments and processes of the Florida House. While many comments can be linked to many of the elements, this paper will focus on the ones to which each primarily relates. It should be made clear to the reader that many of the comments made by interview participants could be interpreted many ways and fit within many of the elements, especially when extracted from long conversations. Each is used in the context of the general conversation at the time it was made and how it relates to the broader contexts of the Six Elements.

The primary purpose of the following sections are to show how the perceptions of the participants, as voiced in the interviews, either confirm or disprove the primary and subordinate hypotheses, but in each case they are linked to how they comply with or divert from at least one of the primary Six Elements. Note that these comments were extracted from hours of commentary. In most cases the thoughts expressed were replicated by others in the interview processes. The selected comments are common perceptions of the processes by all respondents.

**Hypothesis One- The policy consideration processes of the Florida House of Representatives will be found to lack key components of an ideal type learning organization.**

**Interview Perspectives:**

**Element 1- Leadership**

*Interim projects continue but with one eye looking at the political changes that are coming. Ultimately this won’t change when serious political change is possible in an election cycle. When majorities as large as in the House are available, a commitment from current and the next leadership teams toward interim efforts is possible and appropriate. It should be measured as incoming new legislatures should be able to start over as appropriate. (External)*

*The down time while the Florida’s legislature is not meeting is very long and can be very important. This down time becomes underused, primarily because there is very little member oversight, because every other year there is a total change of leadership of the Florida Speaker, Florida Speaker’s leadership team, and committee chairmen. In other words staff, even if they are inclined to work*
extraordinarily hard, often have little or no guidance and are not certain about which master they will serve in the aftermath of an election year. (Elected)

**Elements 1 & 2- Leadership and Communication**  
We assume a member comes in you know ready to address any problem and they’re not really familiar with a lot of the problems. Certainly don’t understand basic concepts, but you know, you don’t tell the emperor about the lack of new clothes and that’s the way it sets over at the House and Senate. So generally you get a lot of non-communication on issues that people really need to be educated on from the very basic elements and they avoid that. (Staff)

**Element 2-Communication- Limiting barriers**  
I’ve seen the legislature many time not fully understand the detail of my bills, pass them and felt that mired down in the details of full information the bills would not have had time to pass. …Time is the major reason why this happens. (External)

Time constraint is a big issue. I have to wonder how much longer the state of Florida… eighteen million approaching an eighty billion dollar budget, how much longer we can reasonably expect to do that kind of work in 60 days. Now of course we have committee weeks in addition to the session but I think the time has passed when we should be thinking smartly about being using more time.  
(Elected)

**Element 3- Historicity-relying on past experiences**  
Many of the same issues are revisited without the knowledge of new members. Part of the staff analysis should include a history of any prior efforts to pass the legislation to be considered. (Elected)

I’m not sure I would have wanted during this crisis to have a lot of people say to me in this process “Oh, here we go all over again. We heard the same testimonies in 1986 when we had the last crisis.” We heard some of that but it was from external it wasn’t from some of the members pretending to know more that the other members. (Elected)

**Element 4- Norm of Sharing- No one actor holds all of the information**  
Because Florida has a part time legislature, and because the session is so short, members are always going to be challenged to understand every piece of legislation before them. (Staff)

A lobbyist has a distinct advantage over staff and staff has a significant advantage over 8-year term limited policy makers in the area of institutional memory. Online storage of research could be very helpful, but the use is limited since it will be rarely used by members of the House themselves who are pressured by enormous time constraints in a 60-day session and the committee weeks leading up to it, and political pressures to focus on needs of their constituents and interest groups. (Elected)
Element 5- Reflective Creativity-Seeing things in new ways and blending what is known with the new
Policy and politics intersect in a very cumbersome way and at the end of the day when you have that many stakeholders, that many competing interests and they submit a process that is asymmetrical by design and necessity you can’t really solve the problem in one swoop and at the end of the day with that much compromising going on you ended up with something that really probably did nothing for everybody. (Elected)

Element 6- Conducive Structures and Staffing
Well, if you look at the number of times that LBC for instances is now meeting to consider budget issues in the off session period. I mean clearly there’s a direct correlation to the number of issues LBC is having to take on because the legislature is not in session during that time frame. It’s just been recently that we’ve actually gotten the LBC into the constitution so that it had constitutional grant of authority. There was a while there where we were concerned that the LBC might be challenged because it was making budget decisions to shift money from trust funds for instance things like that and it really was not in the constitution so we didn’t know if we had clear authority.

While these are just a few comments extracted from the hours of interviews, it is clear from these samples that there are components of a prescribed ideal learning organization suggested in the literature that are either not present in the House operations, are limited in application, or are just not perceived to exist by participants, which in itself would clearly violate the prescribed diagnosis for Element 2:

Diagnosis- Does organizational learning take place throughout the organization? Does it use all of the internal, external or vicarious resources available? Are there artificial formal or informal constructs that impede organizational learning? Does the organization have pervasive acceptance of the components needed for a learning environment such as continuous learning, inquiry, openness, quality and reduced boundaries.

As you can see from the above, two consistent variables mentioned in the comments are time constraints and information resources. Assumptions on issues are made absent the historical information required in Element 3, and the limited time of committee meetings and regular session inhibit detailed investigation on all of the issues that come before the legislature, which by virtue of an unforgiving calendar violates the precept that all barriers to effective organizational learning can be removed. Not every impediment can be fixed in an organization and it will be shown in the interview comments where some items are perceived as immovable
and unchangeable. In the end the task will be to adjust and improve where changes can be made while making accommodations for intransigent areas likely to never be altered.

Occasionally there are issues that demand so much attention that specific, temporary committees are created to do a full analysis of the issue, including developing complex data sets, historical information troves, and even models based on various actions that might be taken by the legislature in addressing the issues. But, as seen above, the general impression by those who participate in the process is that there is a lack of historical information considered, little time to fully address issues, avoidance of some issues due to political and social reasons, and a serious interplay of politics in the policy processes. While these are only a few comments out of the many made, the comments presented are reflective of the general sentiments expressed in the hours of interviews by external actors, staff and elected officials alike.

What is not clear is if the process is designed with the intent of limiting action, which was suggested by many respondents, and whether altering some of these constraints would serve as positive or negative changes over time. Surely the production of more detailed information and the presentation of historical actions would serve as additional ingredients in policy consideration. What is not clear is if producing additional information and historical background would truly alter the action patterns of the House on a multitude of issues. In a later section I will outline one effort that seems to have met many of the criteria, the House efforts in 2003 to address the Medical Liability issues.

**First Subordinate Hypothesis- Legislative staff have few formal activities designed to detect errors or anticipate problems before external actions create awareness of problem situations.**
Element 1 requires that leadership act to expand and empower knowledge resources. Element 4 requires effective learning at all levels of an organization and effective sharing of new information. Element 5 requires an organization to produce new patterns of behavior, looking at things in new ways to pursue new learning initiatives. Element 6 requires staffing patterns conducive to utilization of earned expertise. How then does the Florida House meet these standards when examining the activities of staff in pursuing new learning, assimilating the learning and then disbursing it throughout the organization?

**From The Literature**

Again it is important to emphasize the linkage between key passages in the literature and this subordinate hypothesis. Argyris and Schon describe single-loop learning as occurring when an episode occurs and an organization, “mediated by organizational inquiry, connects detected error- that is, an outcome of action mismatched to expectations and, therefore, surprising- to organizational strategies of action and their underlying assumptions” (1996, p.21).

Argyris contends, “it is not surprising to find that individuals create organizational conditions that highly limit double-loop learning and protect the individuals from becoming aware of these conditions and from accepting responsibility for creating and maintaining them” (1993, p.243). Senge points out that, “defensive routines are “self-sealing”- they obscure their own existence” (1990, p.254). “The ‘fundamental solution’ is inquiry that results eventually in new understanding and new behavior- that is, learning.” (p. 253).

Easterby-Smith, et. al., offer a list of components that exist in an organization when true learning occurs. (1999, p. 94) Several of these directly apply to staff research activities.

- There are opportunities to reflect on experience
- Risks can be taken without fear of punishment
- There are opportunities to share knowledge, skills and creative abilities which create new understandings and meanings
- There is widespread generation of, access to, and use of information
- Learning is applied to solve problems and resolve issues
- Determining what worked and what did not work is rewarded
These components relate to several of the Elements used in this study. Since staff serve as essential tools in the policy investigation processes, since in the Florida House, as in any legislative body, it is the elected memberships who make all policy decisions, it is critical to understand how the staff role might be affected by the process and the politics of the process. Is this valuable tool limited, impeded or constrained, and if so, how is it limited in both producing the information resources required for effective decision making and maintaining the historical records needed to add understanding to the context of each decision?

**From The Respondents**

**Element 1- The role of leadership- Is active learning stimulated?**

*My sense is that the committee chairs are not often given clear measurable issues and goals. With longer-range planning, that problem could be lessened.*

(External)

*There is a serious lack of long term research and planning, and that it’s built into the system. Two-year terms for leaders, term limits and the constitutional prohibition on one legislature locking in the next all contribute to the lack of long term planning.*

(External)

…what’s happened is the number of committees have gotten larger and part of that is because more chairmanships are need and more vice chairmanships are need and so the committees get larger, the jurisdictions get smaller but then the staff get smaller. That’s made it more difficult to get the job done internally.

(Staff)

*If it is staff driven, I doubt it will happen. If the elected leadership considers it important, then it will… If the leadership in the Senate and House wanted it, it would have happened.*

(Elected)

**Element 2- Is there effective interaction among organizational units?**

*but it seems to me that the staff analyses are always done at the last minute and that most members don’t read them until they sit down in committee…probably not the best way to do it.*

(External)

**Element 2- Use of all resources available**

*Most of the long term research that occurs in my experience happens outside of the legislative body. Think-tanks, legislatively created commissions, summer projects within the legislature when the legislature is not meeting, are all examples of longer term thinking.*

(Elected)
…even staff seems to at times have to wait for the political planets to align before they can really engage. Certainly I fully expect that staff does a lot of stuff, a lot of reading and taking advantage of research for their own personal professional background, but how much they are able to apply that to the 60-day hectic session is questionable. (Elected)

**Element 4- Does effective learning occur at each sub-unit and is it shared?**

Now, staff analyses are passed through multiple committees with little supplementation at each step, and analyses seem less rigorous and comprehensive. (External)

**Element 5- Is learning pervasive, shared, producing new patterns of behavior?**

Lots of long term research occurs, but I don’t have the sense that lawmakers always pay attention to it…staff frequently anticipates future needs and a few legislators do, but it seldom carries the day. This process is much more concerned with the “here and now” (External)

**Element 6- Conducive Structures and Staffing**

I don’t think we do enough prior to the bill being filed to get it done right… We’ve got to get people being honest with members but also people understand that they are public servants and the servant part of that is to do what you are told after the member has collected as much information as the member wants to collect and a lot of the times that’s not all the information. (Staff)

A significant point from these quotes is the underlying premise that there is a strong link between who is selected as leaders and when these leaders take office and begin the tasks associated with policy investigation. It was consistently mentioned by respondents that interim periods, especially the one between the second session of each biennium and the general election is not fully utilized in policy investigations. One respondent summed this up by stating, “maybe they should be given a bit more freedom on the interim study front. Most interim studies are meaningless.” Many respondents, including elected officials, staff and external participants were cynical in relating the relative roles of good information vs. political decision making. One highly cynical respondent stated, “it is also true that legislators have significant research and basically ignore it whenever it leads to politically painful results or when figuring out what to do simply takes too much time and effort amid competing matters with more favorable dynamics.”

These issues will be addressed in the suggestions for change section later in this paper.
Subordinate Hypothesis Two- Frequent Transition of actors creates a greater focus on alignments and consolidation to the extent that longer term strategic learning is impaired.

Element 3 requires the usage of historically based information and the reliance on experience in organizational decision making. Element 5 requires an openness to new ideas and the blending of new information with that which has already been discovered. As voiced in the Diagnostic tool for Element 3 presented earlier; are the actions of the past and the decision making tool used, accessible and utilized in current decision making processes?

From the Literature

Argyris explores the concepts of action maps within organizations, patterning interactions within organizations where, “their designed behaviors, together with the consequences of those behaviors, create complex organizational systems that display pattern causality” (1993, p.103). His action maps are designed to “reveal the pattern-level causes that limit learning and lead to the inability to detect and correct actions that lead to the very organizational defenses that individuals may deny” (p.105).

Argyris, in Reasons and Rationalizations, gives definition to his Model I Theory in Use, which compose the governing variables or values of an organization, which also applies to this hypothesis. These values include: “(1) be in unilateral control over others, (2) strive to win and minimize losing, (3) suppress negative feelings, and (4) act rationally, which, as we see, means using defensive reasoning” (2004, p.8).

Senge offers several system archetypes for describing various organizational models of activity. His “Shifting the Burden” model describes where, “a short-term ‘solution’ is used to correct a problem, with seemingly positive immediate results. As this correction is used more and more, more fundamental long-term corrective measures are used less and less. Over time, the capabilities for fundamental solution may atrophy or become disabled, leading to even greater reliance on the symptomatic solution” (1990, p. 381).

Schwandt and Marquardt write on the Action/Reflection subsystems of organizational learning, which “describes the organization’s actions and examines those actions that enable it to assign meaning to new information...” allowing the organization the ability to reflect on new
information acquired (2000, p. 188). They identify this process as “the nucleus of the organizational learning system” (p. 188).

From The Respondents

Element 1- The role of leadership- Is the focus on structure or learning?
In each transition, the incoming administration puts a lot of time and effort into changing the committee names, and restructuring committees, subcommittees, and counsels. A significant portion of the interim before the first session of the 2-year term is used for administrative purposes. These structural changes are transient and usually do not survive the next transition. (Staff)

The result of this constant juggling (biennial reorganizations and restructuring the committees) is that the staff and members spend the first year getting used to the new system. By the time everything is working as intended, the Speaker is in his or her last year of the Speakership and is much less likely to be able to affect changes to public policy. It seems to me it would be much more useful for the incoming administration to focus on the public policy they wish to develop for the citizens of Florida. Most citizens do not have a high degree of concern with regard to how many committees there are, and what they are named. Focus on good public policy; not on administrative matters that could be handled by a good manager. (Staff)

I think most of this issue of focusing on the bigger and long term things requires leadership to be committed to it. The legislature has unbelievable resources at its disposal. Its budget is unchecked and it can do as it pleases. If a leader suggests that longer term things should be the focus, it will be that way. (Elected)

Elements 2, 4 & 6- Are there barriers to sharing of knowledge?
I think it’s sort of obvious in a sense that with terms limits you need two things, number one, you have legislators who are in seats that are guaranteed for the most part and they know they are only there for 8 years so there is less of an incentive to master issues because really there is no upside, you don’t really benefit by being sort of a master of an issue like you might in another legislative body without term limits. Secondly, you don’t develop the expertise for having to go through the briefing and the exercising of the issue and you know these are complex issues and when you have to sort of explain to everybody over and over again the same thing and then at the end of the day you know half of the membership doesn’t even understand what they are voting on because they weren’t on one of the committees of reference, you know you sort of end up with a body that will pass perhaps or not pass or might perhaps pass for the wrong reasons or not pass for the wrong reasons of an idea or a bill because they just don’t know any better. I think you lose the professional expertise and I don’t think even the staff you can rely on to brief everybody, because no legislature
should have that relationship where staff drive members to vote. So members are left sort of without any institutional knowledge, without any actual knowledge, and therefore sort of out there in the wilderness. (Elected)

Element 3 – Does the knowledge base go deep enough and long enough?
And it used to be that you spent the first couple of years just learning the legislative process, getting to understand where information comes from, learning who you can trust and who you can’t trust, and they just don’t have that luxury now and they’ve had to become very, very dependent on the senior class and the junior class to teach them on where is a reliable way to find information and where is an unreliable way to find information. (Staff)

Elements 3 and 5- Does the House blend what has occurred before with current actions?
If it (a subject matter through a filed bill) had already gotten a staff analysis, that was its (that filed bill and no other) staff analysis and it therefore should go away because you have the new legislature, a new set of facts, a new set of political realities and so it needed to be reinvented just like the legislature itself needed to be reinvented. (Staff)

Element 5- Does learning occur on a continuous basis?
We’re fixing to have a special session (on insurance) beginning next week (January 16, 2007) and we are frantically trying to draft language on concepts today. We should have had some of these concepts better developed weeks ago in anticipation of a legislative session. (Elected)

Element 5- Are efforts made to see things in new ways?
Up until now, very little indigenous work has been done to look over the horizon. (Elected)

Impact of Turnover

A critical component in providing stability to an organization is employee and knowledge retention. This is an essential component of Elements, 3, 4, and 6. As mentioned in earlier chapters, high turnover rates of employees or organizational actors have not really been addressed in the literature on organizational learning. Certainly Dewey’s definition of learning as a constant reconstruction and reorganization of experience is impacted when the actors engaged change frequently (1994). The experiences of ‘old hands’ may not blend easily with the purposes, intent and desires of the ‘new’ ones. Easterby-Smith, et. al., use Dewey to argue that while learning is a continuous process and although it occurs in social situations, “it is the individual learner who learns, and learns through reorganizing and reconstructing her/his
experience” (1999, p. 85). For an organization to maximize effective learning it must present an organizational pattern where, as described in Element 6, it is assured that organizational members with the most relevant expertise are effectively engaged in problem solving.

However there are pitfalls to reliance on experiences as cited by March (1988), Fiol and Lyles (1985), Cyert and March (1963) and others, where learning is viewed as fragmented, situational, subject to gamesmanship, and subject to the influence of routine. It is this author’s view that the same factors identified in the quotations by active participants used previously in this chapter that limit effective organizational learning in the Florida House setting, also serve as variables that screen or sift through the value of historical participation by actors. Elected Members serve as judges of the value to be added to input in making decisions. Effective argumentation based on historical activity has value, but is subject to what Argyris and Schon describe where “organizational learning depends on the interpretation of events, which depends, in turn, on frames, the major story lines through which organizational inquirers set problems and make sense of experience. Framing is essential to interpretive judgments, but because frames themselves are unfalsifiable, organizational inquirers may be trapped within self-referential frames” (1996, p. 197).

We already know how turnover in the Florida House due to forced departures resulting from term limits has altered the actors in the Florida House in terms of who they are and where they serve. Whether there is positive value or detrimental value to the institution is unclear from the interviews and written submissions for this research. Various actors in each categorical grouping took positions on both sides of this issue. Here are a few responses which are typical from the respondents showing a high polarity of opinion about term limits. Keep in mind that these are respondents who have been involved in the process both before and after term limits, selected because they have this dual perspective about how term limits has affected the ability of the institution to function. Note too, that turnover of Members due to term limits and a selected turnover of staff personnel are two distinct issues. The following comments are responses to questions placed in the context of the impact of these issues on the ability of the House to implement organizational learning qualities. Each of these comments should be viewed from the perspective as how they relate to the Six Elements for an effective learning organization.
Perspectives on Impact of Term Limits

_Institutional memory is extraordinarily difficult now that term limits have been enacted._ (Elected)

_Potential leaders should be forced to work up through the committee process, taking on more complicated committee assignments as their term grows. Before term limits this was more manageable._ (External)

_With the constant inflow of new legislators and new staff and new lobbyists and new administrations, rehashing old ideas seems inevitable. One way to minimize that phenomenon would be to have a mechanism in place to qualitatively review programs to see if the programs had the desired impact. When old ideas are brought up, if staff knew the history of why that idea was accepted or rejected would be helpful to the current decision-makers._ (External)

_Staff turnover is a fact of life. Leadership should create a culture where an “expected” reassignment of staff to committees within a reasonable comfort level for staff becomes the norm, rather than a “perceived” punishment of staff. This would, I believe, better prepare staff for changes in committee assignments and expansion of subject matter awareness and experience._ (Staff)

The reality is that term limits are a structural impediment that exists and will continue to exist unless a constitutional change passes. A critical action for the institution to move forward in organizational learning is to improve upon processes while seeking options that might mitigate the more negative impacts of term limits. Those that counter the critical elements identified, such as the need for historical perspective, reliance on the experiences of others and the ability to blend what has been discovered before with what is newly identified on issues are steps that can be taken. This was brought up in all of the interviews. Issues such as not focusing so much on radical restructuring every two years, allowing members to build expertise over time in subject matter areas and not shuffling the leadership deck and committee memberships so frequently, and seeking ways to maximize staff expertise in subject matter areas while taking care not to allow staff to dominate these same topical areas were frequently suggested. One point was made clear by each category of respondent; members are the elected ones who must make decisions and the institution must insure that no staff member gets too dominant in any area. The tasks then are to build the knowledge base of staff while limiting perceived staff power, create avenues for the exchange of this information, and build pathways for the elected officials, those charged with
the decision making responsibility, to have full access to multiple sources of on-going inquiry and knowledge collection.

Consistently, respondents pointed to effective leadership (Element 1), the need to make sure that roles were well defined, and that the agendas set were clear and known to all. Here is a sample response on the problems that can arise when staff assumes too large a position of influence: “Staff Director experience with subject matter should be considered with the experience level of the Chair to the subject matter. Staff Director experience can complement that of the Chair or where the Chair has little or no subject matter experience there is the dangerous risk that the Staff Director can assume a superior role in the development and direction of legislation. That has happened in the past and is NOT A GOOD THING!” (Respondent had over twenty years experience in both staff and external roles) Following are a couple of charts that detail even further the incidence of member changes. The dilemma is how to keep quality staff in place in order to develop the knowledge base required while maintaining a limit of how influential this knowledge source is in policy decision making. Here again comes the role of strong leadership.

It is worth spotlighting the elected House Class of 2000, which had 62 new freshmen members and two members elected late in the previous term, one of which, Marco Rubio, was selected from this class to be Speaker in 2006-08.

Table 2- **House Class of 2000** (senior Class of 2006)

62 new Members elected in 2000 (35 R, 27 D)

48 Members remained to serve in 05-06, with 15 leaving after 3 terms

33 Members actually remaining after reorganization 2006 (21R, 12D) (1Member switched parties after election)

A 47% reduction in force prior to the impact of term limits
Clearly there has been a change in length of service and development of expertise due to the influence of term limits. However, what is not clear is why there are so many members who seek to leave office prior to the end of their acceptable four terms if re-elected by the voters. Lazarus, (2006) explores the impact of term limits on career decisions of legislators, using variables, such as length of service and options for other elected office. He does not explore, however, why they leave. This too would be a good subject for future study in Florida. Is it opportunistic behavior, do members grab the first ring that comes along for another office? Has the historical progression from local office to state office been altered due to term limits and do more state elected officials now seek local offices and why? Lazarus concludes this is happening and the impact is that in the past “very few politicians sought offices that were less valuable” in perception among career track politicians. “But under term limits, this occurs more often” (p.379). What is clear, without additional research, is that if experience is of benefit to an organization, contained in Elements 3, 4, and 5 and generally accepted in the organizational learning literature as a must, then finding ways to keep experienced members in the House for four full terms should be of benefit in building the House as a more effective learning organization. As stated in the Elements for effective organizational learning, organizational behavior is historically based, relies on experiences, is dependent upon the memories of key actors placed in proper positions for effectiveness, and relies on a tension between new learning and what is already known. Obviously, acknowledging that term limits is not going to be changed, keeping members in office and in positions to develop expertise in subject matter areas longer is an important aspect of altering how the House approaches learning. Large numbers of Members leaving even sooner than 8 years impede many of the Elements from being implemented and actually add to the problem of institutional barriers to effective learning addressed in Elements 2 and 6.

Turnover does not just impact elected House members. One variable identified in the interviews is that members are more reliant on the Executive Branch as a knowledge resource. A typical identification resource used by actors in this process is one of several “Know Your Legislators” handbooks, a pocket summary of who serves which district, staff and executive agency heads. The 2003 version of one booklet published by Associated Industries of Florida, lists the four members of the Florida cabinet and then 25 executive agency heads, including cabinet and executive agencies. Four years later, the 2007 version shows that of four cabinet
officers, only one remains in office and one switched roles, and of the 25 executive agency heads, only 4 remain in the same position. Increased reliance on external public agents with less than or similar tenure to term limited legislators is not conducive to effective organizational learning.

The effect of turnover of House Members can be easily shown in a comparison of two terms of office, 02-04, after term limits and 92-94, before term limits. In 1992 the Speaker had served for 14 years prior to being Speaker. In 2002 the Speaker had served for 6 years. The current Speaker, Marco Rubio, is Dean of the House, having been elected mid-term due to a vacancy and thus being allowed to serve for more than four full terms so he will serve for nine regular sessions during his service. A few sample, immediately pre-term limit, Speakers include, T.K. Wetherell, 1990-92, 10 years of service prior to being Speaker, Bolley L. Johnson, 1992-94, 12 years of service prior to being Speaker, and Peter Rudy Wallace 1994-96, 12 years of service. Daniel Webster was the first elected Republican Speaker in modern times, serving in this office from 1996-98, with 16 years of service in the House prior to being Speaker. Since the on-set of term limits, with the real impact first felt in the 2000 election, Speakers have served for 6, 6, 6, and now 7 years prior to being Speaker. This is critical to the potential for implementing effective organizational learning when one considers the important role served by the Speaker, as described in multiple interviews and when one considers the critical role of leadership expressed in Element 1.

There may be some reluctance by “some” staff to engage in sensitive policy reviews without a knowledge of the incoming officer’s direction. (Staff)

The Speaker is key to the process since all decisions flow from him or her. He is aided by a leadership team committed to his vision. (External)

It tended to be in the past that a new speaker came in, the entire staff up here was replaced and you started out with brand new staff and everybody had to relearn or learn the stuff anew. (Staff)

I’m sure that on some of those issues the Speaker said exactly what’s going to happen and he’s made a decision after hearing from some people, you know the same way all decide, the only difference is I get to vote my vote and he gets to vote, you know 80 people. (Elected)
Committee Comparisons 92 to 02

In addition to the substantial impact of the experience levels of the top leadership are comparisons of chairmen of substantive committees, another leadership role of considerable influence outside of the Speaker. One respondent brought this up in response to a question about the impact of member experience.

...would be interested to see a comparison of facts of years experience in the process of new committee chairs, 10 years before term limits and ten years after... I would guess slightly less experience. (External)

Table 3 below, comparing the Chairs of five important committees between 02-04 and 92-94 shows a significant difference in experience. This same pattern is evidenced when choosing any term of office prior to term limits and the reduced level of experience post-term limits can only be altered by the retention of chairmen for only a term or two, at most, in the same position. In 02-04 there were 16 full committees and in 92-94 there were 22. Comparisons do get difficult between various terms due to the re-shuffling and reorganizing complained about earlier by several respondents. New titles and structures create hazards when attempting to link staff travels among committees since names sometimes do not clearly define jurisdictions. The mean years experience for the selected committee chairs in 02-04 was 3.67 years while the mean years of experience in 92-94 was 9 years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Committee</th>
<th>02-04</th>
<th>92-94</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Insurance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Appropriations</td>
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<td>Rules</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commerce</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
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Here is a sample response on what interviewees think about constant role changing by members:

*I find it difficult to envision switching somebody every two years to an entirely different area of policy. I just find it difficult to imagine how that’s going to help. I understand that if someone is talented, if someone is bright and has a good skill set at solving problems, if for instance if a student has good study habits, it will serve them well in a whole different setting, whether it be in social studies or whatever, but in a short 8-year potentially 8-year legislative cycle take the most talented people and the people with the skill sets and you diminish what they are able to contribute I believe by switching them around all over the place. It certainly gets you a little bit by way of getting the benefit of their talent in various areas but I don’t think the end result is that it serves the state very well. I think we need to spend more time developing chairman. (Elected)*

Frequently mentioned in the respondent comments was the important role of senior staff in the process. From the perspectives of the respondents, it is a rare case where the incoming Speaker does not do a wholesale turnover of the entire executive staff in the Speaker’s office, each one bringing in his own team to occupy the suite for two years. Here is a sample comment on this situation, “I think that the institutional memory and the professional staff having more of a long term in the speaker’s office is probably a smarter way to go.” Incoming Speaker Allan Bense was quoted in the Tallahassee Democrat (July 10, 2005) as stating his staff bonuses were in part shaped by knowing, “they’ll all be gone” at the same time next year. “They all know that when a new guy comes in, they’re literally out on the street. They probably take the greatest risk in this whole process.” Current Speaker Rubio altered this historical trend by keeping some staff in the Speaker’s office, including keeping Bob Ward as a Deputy Chief of Staff, and then subsequently appointed as Chief of Staff in March, 2007, who had been his predecessor’s Chief of Staff. This is not a common occurrence.

With each new Speaker there has also been a large turnover of the committee structures and attendant changes in Committee Staff Directors. This has been a tradition in the House, even before turnover. The tradition of changing Speakers every term goes back to statehood in 1845. Following is a sample between 92-94 and 94-96 of significant staff leadership roles, which is pre-term limits and under Democrat control, used here to show this is not a new activity and is not the habit of either party alone.

**Chief of Staff: Changed from Theresa Frederick to George Meier**
**Appropriations: Staff Directors Changed, Pete Mitchell to David Coburn**
**Education: Changed from Ann Levy to Cynthia Burt**
Health: Stayed the same with Mike Hansen
Judiciary: Changed from Richard Hixson to Carol Gregg
Commerce: Changed from Tim Watson to Stephen Hogge

These same committee jurisdictions between 02-04 and 04-06, post term limits and after Republicans gained control show a very similar pattern.

Chief of Staff: Changed from PK Jameson to Bob Ward
Appropriations: Changed from Mike Hansen to Cynthia Kelly
Education: Changed from Bo Bohannon to Lynn Cobb
Health: Changed from Lucretia Collins to Mary Pat Moore
Judiciary: Changed from Randy Havlicak to David De La Paz
Commerce: Changed from Pat Whitfield to Bo Bohannon

These are not unrepresentative samples of changes, as term to term show similar patterns. However it is important to note that many of the names shown above had been previously engaged in the House processes, either as Staff Directors of other committees or in other policy related roles, prior to placement in the positions listed. This brings to the forefront the issues of what has more importance to the institution, content or process knowledge. One could surmise from looking at the role changes that, for example, Bo Bohannon either had expertise in both Commerce issues and Education issues, or had expertise in how the process worked, how to manage a committee and how to get analysts under the direction of the Staff Director to produce the needed knowledge to perform the required policy tasks. In point of fact, his experience prior to legislative service was in the state Department of Business and Professional Regulation. His first legislative services were in the House Majority Office and Speaker’s offices for 10 years. Clearly he is an example of someone who has mastered process responsibilities, and has learned content materials during his tenure, so this question, process vs. content, is not as clear as one might surmise when looking at staff roles.

During the interviews I received mixed responses on process versus content knowledge value for staff and the impact of staff turnover. From the standpoint of how this impacts effective organizational learning one must include critical Elements 2; do these changes impede organizational learning, 3; do the changes impact access to historical activity, 4; do the changes limit cognitive gathering of information and interpretation of clues, 5; how do all these changes in roles impact the ability of the organization to embrace organizational learning and 6; are the
organizational members with the most relevant expertise effectively engaged in problem solving? Following are some interviewee comments on the impact of senior staff turnover:

Staff turnover is a fact of life. Leadership should create a culture where an “expected” reassignment of staff to committees within a reasonable comfort level for staff becomes the norm, rather than a “perceived” punishment of staff. This would, I believe, better prepare staff for changes in committee assignments and expansion of subject matter awareness and experience. (Staff)

With respect to which is more valuable for the staff, process knowledge or subject matter, at the staff level I strongly believe subject matter is far more important than process knowledge (although process knowledge is always important) because the process knowledge can always be handled at the rules committee, Speaker, or member level. Subject matter knowledge is key for staff. (Elected)

To me, content is all that matters with staff. The members should know the rules perfectly (External)

…seen both the process knowledge and subject matter staffers succeed and fail. Probably would give slight advantage to process staffers as subject matter staffers usually have a preconceived agenda and become frustrated easier. (External)

If I had to choose, I’d emphasize process knowledge over content knowledge. If a particular staffer has developed expertise in an area, that factor should be considered, but not determinative. (External)

…experienced and knowledgeable staff must be in place. New staff spends a lot of time learning the basics and rarely are able to effectively contribute positive input into complex issues in the first few years. Revolving-door-staff and juggling of subject matter between staff reduces the knowledge base available to members and makes the lobbyists and special interest groups more powerful. (Staff)

A professional staff with expertise in the issues needs to be developed and retained without a requirement that they have a political tie to particular members or leaders. They should take more advantage of the unlimited ability to store information on web sites from year to year… (External)

Clearly there is a wide variance of opinion here on the relative value of process or content knowledge. If one accepts that process is more important than it must also then be assumed that the content knowledge gained in one role must somehow be saved, shared with others and disbursed prior to serving in a newly assigned role. It is important to mention that committee staff is not limited to Staff Directors only, but in many of the large committee there are analysts assigned or often, due to division between Councils and Committees under each Council there
are Council Directors and Staff Directors instead of Staff Directors and Analysts. These roles have been limited over time due to the proliferation of committees and councils compared to prior periods. For example, in 1992 there were 28 standing committees and in 2002 there were 41 Councils or Committees. The current Speaker, Marco Rubio has stated to me that this should result in each committee being able to go deeper into issues and to spend more time on issues. Fewer committees do not necessarily mean that more time is spent on fewer issues, but the current intent of leadership is that a better division of labor will result in greater thoroughness of discussion and research.

This proliferation of committee units resulted in the following comment, where a key staff person mentions how each substantive committee staff has shrunk in relative size.

the staff’s of the legislature have actually gotten smaller. Now maybe numerically they haven’t gotten smaller but the individual committees used to have a secretary, a backup secretary, two legislative analysts and a staff director and in some cases on bigger issues like transportation or insurance particularly in a year like we’re in on insurance, it would have a deputy staff director. Now we pretty much depend on a staff of 3, one analyst, one staff director and one AA.

When I first worked for a House committee, Health and Rehabilitative Services, in 1974, the staff was comprised of a Staff Director, a Deputy Director, two analysts, two staff assistants, an intern and two administrative assistants. The jurisdiction of the committee comprised areas covered now in two councils and five committees. Staffs are far more compact now and each committee has a more narrow focus. But it is the working relationship between the Staff Directors and appointed Chairs, (Element 1- the role of leadership) usually changing every two years, that was most mentioned by those interviewed as critical elements in the policy processes. Rarely was a comment made about analysts since the common perception is that they are controlled by the agenda set by leadership and passed on through the Staff Directors. However, analysts perform a vital research role and if the elements listed were to be fully embraced in this process, they would be doing much of the historical and future oriented research. So for purpose of illustration I will compare key positions in the same substantive committees illustrated above for changes in Staff Directors using the most current years, from the 04-06 cycle to the 06-08 term of office. This is not an exact science, since, as mentioned previously, the structure of the House changes every two years, with the re-naming of councils and committees. In addition the
current term of office is seeing a new twist in organization. The current Speaker and his leadership team have blended policy and budget staffs so that each substantive Council of jurisdiction also has budget staff who previously, in the 04-06 session and before, would have been placed under the direct control of what was commonly referred to as the Appropriations Committee chairman and staff directors. In order to track the actors I needed to actually track them by name, and not by position, to see if they ended up in a role similar in jurisdiction to where they had served, or to see if they continued to work at all for the House in a similar capacity of jurisdiction.

**Education:** Of the Council Director and four jurisdictional Staff Directors, three changed and two remained

**Health:** Of the Council Director and four jurisdictional staff directors, three changed and two remained.

**Judiciary:** Of the Council Director and four jurisdictional Staff Directors, two changed and three remained.

**Commerce:** Of the Council Director and four jurisdictional Staff Directors, four changed and one remained.

From this small sample of one change from one Speaker’s term of office to another one can see how turnover is pervasive in the institution at the staff level as well as at the member level. The changes shown above are common practice. If organizational learning depends upon the memories of actors (Element 3) and the individual’s ability to learn (Elements 2 & 5), at least half of this equation is affected by this level of turnover. One must consider that if, as listed as Element 5, organizational learning involves a tension between assimilating new learning (exploration) and using what has been learned (exploitation), it must be evaluated how this level of turnover of key staff over time, in addition to Chairmen turnover, impacts the ability to exploit what has been learned since so much of the activity can be presumed to be related to exploration of new learning. In this case it is not needed to compare a before and after term limits frequency of turnover of staff since what is most important here to the institution, is current practices. There are remedies to frequent staff turnover that might mitigate the impact of this frequency of change. A further study of staff roles and frequency of turnover is warranted. For purposes of
this study it is clear that organizational learning can be presumed to be affected when key actors consistently change in an organization.

**Impact of Time Constraints**

Following is an example of a typical day when not in session when committees meet to consider legislation, hear from agencies or take testimony as component parts of the policy investigation process. These calendars are set well in advance concerning the time frames for each group to meet. Obviously, the more committees in quantity and the tighter the House rules are regarding when meetings can start and end, added to rules limitations that committee times can not conflict so that members assigned do not have to choose which meeting to attend, the less time can be allocated to each committee. With over 3,000 bills filed each year, including member and proposed committee bills (PCB’s), the allotted time is quickly absorbed by consideration of bills, member testimony and the testimony of supporting and opposing sides.

Below is a portion of the daily calendar for the first real committee week after the November election. It is also the first real committee week since the close of session last May, 2006, a time gap of 8 months. Since so many of the members are new after each election, plus new to the assigned committees, this meeting week is usually filled with introductory materials, presentations by staff, Chairman summaries and state agency presentations. The full schedule for this day is included in Appendix F as an example of a typical committee meeting schedule. This is presented here to demonstrate how time is limited based on availability on the calendar for each committee for each week they meet. The times indicated for each committee are all that has been allocated for that week for this committee, during which time it is charged with learning about the issues and agencies within their jurisdiction, hearing presentations from related parties, develop potential bills from the committee, and hear presentations on bills referred to each committee. All of this is expected to occur from the time the committee is formed, which is sometime after the November election and once or twice a month between then and session.

Committees meet more frequently during the 60 day session due to the pressing need to hear all referred bills. After session there is usually a hiatus until fall for most committees, until they begin again to meet once or twice a month until the second session in a biennium. Most
substantive committees do not meet at all between the end of the second session and the election, a period in Florida from early May until the November elections.

08:30 AM Events

(H) - Healthcare Council, Morris Hall (8:30AM-9:15AM) I. Welcome II. Member Introductions III. Staff Introductions IV. Comments of Chair V. Comments of Democratic Ranking Member VI. Adjournment

08:45 AM Events

(H) - Schools & Learning Council, 212 K (8:45AM-9:15AM) Introductory Meeting

09:30 AM Events

(H) - 21st Century Competitiveness, 404 H (9:30AM-12:00PM) Discussion of Issues Relating to Teacher Compensation and other Education Issues (H) - Education Innovation & Career Preparation, 306 H (9:30AM-12:00PM) Discussion of Issues Related to Gifted Student Acceleration (H) - K-12, 212 K (9:30AM-12:00PM) Curriculum Reform (H) - Postsecondary Education, Reed Hall (9:30AM-12:00PM) Discussion of Issues Relating to Teacher Preparation (H) - Healthy Families, 12 H (9:30AM-12:00PM) Introduction of General Butterworth, Secretary, Department of Children and Families

Figure 10- House Calendar, January 9, 2007

The impact of this factor of time was mentioned frequently by participants in my interviews and surveys. Here are a few sample comments on this issue as well as comments on the usage of the period of time between end of session and elections in the second year of each term. This problem can be addressed through Element 1, changing how the calendar is used by leadership facilitating these changes. However, keeping in mind that in Florida’s elected legislators are part-time, (Element 2- a barrier to full implementation of learning processes which would not be as problematic with a full-time legislature) adjusting the calendar might be limited. However processes can be adjusted and changes can be made to force deeper consideration of issues.

Time Constraints

Time limits everything. 60 days is not much time to do any deep thinking and in election years there is not much meaningful committee work. (External)
Time constraint is a big issue. I have to wonder how much longer the state of Florida... eighteen million approaching an eighty billion dollar budget, how much longer we can reasonably expect to do that kind of work in 60 days. Now of course we have committee weeks in addition to the session but I think the time has passed when we should be thinking smartly about being using more time. (Elected)

Because Florida has a part time legislature, and because the session is so short, members are always going to be challenged to understand every piece of legislation before them. (Staff)

A series of committee meetings where all aspects of a problem are broken down and analyzed would be far better than the current system of devoting 20-30 minutes in one committee meeting to address an issue. (Elected)

Interim Periods
Maybe they should be given a bit more freedom on the interim study front. Most interim studies are meaningless. (External)

There tends to be interim projects done in the middle year of a 2-year cycle. In election year cycles, I don’t believe that we’ve ever had the continuity that we should have, simply because of the politics of it. So in an election year cycles, I think we really dropped the ball on bridging the gap between the end of session and coming back. And it has everything to do with changes of organizational structure and areas of responsibility. There being doubt about who’s going to be responsible for that body of policy and therefore it just sort of waits until the new personality arrives. (Elected)

The problem of time utilization is included in this study since the use of the calendar by part-time elected officials is a critical variable in whether the elements of an effective learning organization can be made an integral part of the policy processes. Element 4 includes limits to the cognitive gathering of information and interpretation of clues. The constraints of time are a tremendous inhibitor to this process, offering perhaps, a structural impediment to the House fully overcoming the requirement of Element 2- limiting barriers. The current efforts, during the term of office 07-08, giving Council Chairs more independence and authority over policy and budget should be watched closely for results and will be an interesting area to pursue further study. Will these changes allow for a deeper understanding of issues and will there be more time spent on complex issues by all committees, not just those assigned limited jurisdictions, such as Select Committees who responsibility is to tackle limited issues of great complexity?

One example, mentioned earlier, of this kind of effort was the House Select Committee on Medical Liability Insurance formed in 2003 and chaired by Rep. J. Dudley Goodlette. I served
as Staff Director for this effort and it was staffed in a non-typical manner for the time. The jurisdiction of this committee involved areas affecting health care, judiciary, and insurance.

To properly serve the issues at hand the House created a staff that included a legislative analyst from a health related committee, a staff attorney from judiciary and a staff attorney from insurance, with my role as Staff Director to serve as the issue manager. Also assisting was the Staff Director from Insurance and other staff as required from each of the substantive committees affected. The issues associated with this complex task demanded most of the time of these individuals so they all worked extra time and other staffs were required to pick up some of the areas of regular responsibility. The staff pattern of this committee was different than normal patterns, where committees of jurisdiction are fixed and staff members have assignments based on these areas of responsibility. The record of this select committee described the charge as follows:

The Select Committee was charged with seeking potential solutions to the rapidly escalating crisis….Few issues come before the legislature involving as many critical constituencies, with each stakeholder playing an integral role in the economic well being of Florida….The Select Committee endeavored to examine every aspect of this problem with the underlying resolve that the primary goal is to find ways to preserve and protect access to quality health care services in all specialties throughout Florida.

A highly ambitious undertaking but one that, in retrospect, seems to meet the Elements identified as crucial to a learning organization. The study had the full support of House leadership and was allowed to conduct hearing across the state and also bring in experts in patient care and safety. (Element 1) This committee held detailed meeting throughout Florida, meeting directly with affected parties, working, (Element 5), to gain new understandings involving multiple levels of the organization. The committee solicited input from every constituency, not waiting to hear or see what might be submitted but by reaching out directly to all parties, asking for studies, comments, and the requisite details required to craft potential solutions. (Seeking to overcome the limits to cognitive gathering of information presented in Element 4) It worked cooperatively with the Governor’s office as Jeb Bush had also appointed a Task Force on this issue, using the abundant materials this group generated as a part of the analysis. (Seeking to remove the barriers described in Element 2) The House Select Committee developed hundreds of pages of staff analysis and in the end produced a book of over 400 pages of detail on the issues under study. (Creating the historical record required under Element 3) This
material was also placed on the website for others to use. It sought the records of previous attempts by the legislature to tackle this contentious issue but many of the records were not available. The most readily available materials were in the records of lawsuits filed over time that were inclusive of the subject matters under discussion. The issues were complex and the time allowed for consideration for solutions was set with the creation of this committee at the beginning of the term, November, 2002 and the approaching session in spring of 2003. The time allocated was not enough and the issue was the central driver of five special sessions that spring and summer.

I reluctantly offer this as a model due to the modesty of being an integral actor in the process, but in reviewing the Elements it is apparent than we met or recognized each of them in this effort, not out of an awareness of their existence, but due to the leadership of the Chair, the support of the Speaker, the cooperation of the committee members and the high energy levels of the assembled staff. A participant described this effort in comparison to others:

I would say, with no derogation to other select committees, this was a Select Committee that spent quite a bit of time and effort to develop a product. Sometimes Select Committees are formed just to generate some testimony, giving people an opportunity to be heard that may or may not result in legislation. This was a case where clearly the legislation was going to be based on information that was gathered in the meetings as well as the use of staff to develop that product. I mean, this was a Select Committee that actually... had staff that spent a great deal of time working with this (developing background materials and reports) rather than maybe just having staff to kind of sit in and you know handle some matters. So, from that standpoint too, I think it was different than other committees that met in the House. The level of staff involvement and you know the number of meetings and the attention that was given to this. (Elected)

Filed Bill Analysis

Historically every bill filed in the Florida House is assigned to one or more committees. On occasion a bill is held by the Speaker for disposition, even rarely sent directly to calendar for consideration by the entire Chamber for passage. When a bill is received by the first committee of reference it is usually assigned to an analyst or the Staff Director takes control in smaller staff situations, and a formal bill analysis is done. Upon completion the analysis is posted on the House website in a record that holds the history and substance of each of the filed bills. All bills and staff analyses are available through the Florida House website going back to 1998. However,
none of the component materials that might have been used in the analysis are available. In Chapter Six I will describe an exchange with a long term staff person on retention of records. While this format has changed over time, it has remained essentially the same for the past several sessions. This same bill analysis format is used when bills are considered in each committee. When a bill is sent to more than one committee, the analysis of each travels with the bill packet, but each subsequent committee provides additional analysis. Any raw materials used in the analysis remain with the committee who collected these materials. Outside agents are allowed to present new materials at each committee stop along the way.

Missing from the standard bill analysis format is any statement on the history of the issue, previous bills filed, and frequently, any materials used in the creation of the analytical product by staff that could be used by members for additional research. At the hearings there frequently are additional materials provided, often submitted by lobbyists and other interested parties, but nothing remains in the formal record kept by the House as to resource materials used in this process. Staff interviewed, as well as former staff who confirmed this practice, all stated that they personally often keep materials of interest to them, for purposes of future endeavors or on issues they intuitively know they will need later, and sometimes for related issues. One long term staff person, with over 30 years experience in this process in various roles, suggested that all materials used, whether a part of the committee record or not and including materials ordered by staff such as subscriptions and materials from NCSL or ALEC, should all be received by the House more formally, date stamped and managed much like a library manages its resources. This way subsequent staff would have the benefit of these materials. Here are some comments from the respondents concerning materials and procedures used at the committee review level:

From The Respondents

Well usually the committee documents that are kept during the committee meetings are available on line. They are not necessarily kept there after the meeting is over with so you almost have to catch it when it comes out and it’s available. (Staff) (Element 3- historical record)

The Speaker can also direct committee staff to include a more detailed historical analysis in each bill analysis that is prepared. (Elected) (Element 1- role of leadership)
Well, it’s probably something we need to identify; what material is important and necessary. Not necessarily to the researchers, but for institutional history and begin to start doing it now. So in 10 years, in 2016, someone could... go all the way back to 2006 to figure. (Staff) (Element 3)

Using the Elements of Effective Organization Learning as a template for evaluation of the bill analysis process, it is easy to see how crucial this portion of the House process is to an implementation of organizational learning techniques in the policy processes of the House. In an ideal organization behavior would be historically based, rely on previous decisions, have access to institutional memories, be able to adjust to the changing circumstances using the lens of past activity for guidance since no two issues are exactly alike, even if the same subject matter, and finally allow for a better assimilation of newer learning while exploiting the known materials, as well as how they were learned. Consideration of the sources of knowledge can be as crucial to understanding as the knowledge itself.

Summary

Elinor Ostrom (2005) delineates between first generation rational choice models (based on the theoretical assumption that those making choices have complete information, consistent preferences and a desire to maximize benefits) and second generation rational choice (an expansion of the theory to encompass group decision making as collective benefit decisions). One can make the a priori presumption that in a legislative body with complex decision making agendas spread out over a wide body of knowledge, that they are seeking real solutions to issues that confront the body and that they are also seeking to avoid the “return” of the issues under consideration for subsequent legislatures, except for those perhaps on the losing side of an issue who might prefer a second bite at the apple.

What is clear from the passages from the literature and the application of statements made by both written and oral respondents in this research, is that the House processes are highly complex, rely largely on trust, are too complex for any single member or staff person to grasp all of the detail and nuances on the wide array of issues, and are compressed into a tight time frame, managed by changing actors in virtually every role assignment. It is also clear that the abundant literature available on the subjects of organizational learning and the learning organization have
not addressed the application of these theories to institutions which have turnover as an ingrained aspect of the organizational structure.

In Chapter Two I outlined several authors who have developed criteria for ideal learning organizations. In sections that will follow I will use a summary these and other author’s criteria, combined into Six Elements for Effective Organizational Learning, which assist this study as a diagnostic tool for evaluating the respondent’s comments. I will further expand what I have covered thus far in this chapter, seeking how these elements might be either reflected or instituted within the House structure. Each of the Elements has components that can be applied to comments received by respondents and each offers criteria that can be used to model changes to the Florida House.

In this Chapter I have applied these combined Elements to the many comments offered by those participants, showing how the commonly shared perceptions of the actors involved in the process can be linked to the organization learning literature. However, it also seems clear from the research that the opinions about process are almost as many as the subjects interviewed. While there are commonly shared perceptions, there were also widely divergent opinions, with some offering that the system is designed with an intent to be inefficient and disorderly, similar to the models described by Cohen March and Olsen (1972). Two centuries earlier, the authors of the *Federalist* Papers made it clear that the prevailing model of government in America was not designed to optimize efficiency, but to thwart the abuses of power. I re-state these models here to stress, in part, how relevant these models are for developing organizational learning structures, and in part to show how interchangeable the usage of each of the author’s theories can be in evaluating whether an organization can be improved to meet these standards.

For example, if you applied Carley (1992, p.23), who developed a model of organizational behavior to examine the influences of turnover, to my Primary Hypothesis you would find five observations from previous studies that apply in the setting which is the focus of this study:

1) *Organizational Behavior is historically based, relying on experience and adaptation of responses to previous decisions based on feedback*
2) *Organizational learning depends on memories of actors and the individuals ability to learn*
3) *Organizations are disorderly*
4) *Organizations face similar, but varied problems. No issue is exactly alike when it returns for consideration*
5) **No one decision maker holds all of the information required for decision making**

Note how many of the participant quotes used previously are captured by Carley’s model criteria. When “*Many of the same issues are revisited without the knowledge of new members*”, there arises the difficulty of relying on the experience of previous decisions based on feedback as well as reliance on the memories of actors. When you get a lot of non-communication on issues you then impede the ability to overcome the disorderly aspects of the institution while having time to understand the nuances of how issues change over time and also how there can be value taken from previous efforts at reaching solutions. Finally, there are severe constraints from having leadership change in so many roles, exacerbating the impact of point 5 above and my Element 4, when no one person holds all of the information on any given decision, it increases the need for communication, reliability of information, and trust among decision makers.

In using Argyris and Schon (1996, p. 187) to reflect upon the comments mentioned above and as applied to the Primary Hypotheses, it would seem from the comments made that the perceptions of actors within the system run counter to the model criteria of these authors. These authors summarize components of an effective learning organization as including, among other criteria, (with sample quotes received from interviewees shown [in italics] that match these criteria):

- flat, decentralized structures; *(If the elected leadership considers it important, then it will… If the leadership in the Senate and House wanted it, it would have happened),*

- information systems that provide fast feedback on performance; *(even staff seems to at times have to wait for the political planets to align before they can really engage,)*

- mechanisms for surfacing and criticizing issues and ideas, with cultivation of systematic programs of experimental inquiry; *(A series of committee meetings where all aspects of a problem are broken down and analyzed would be far better than the current system of devoting 20-30 minutes in one committee meeting to address an issue)*

- applied measures of organizational performance; *(There is a serious lack of long term research and planning, and… it’s built into the system.)*

- incentives to promote organizational learning; and acceptance of concepts needed for a learning environment such as continuous learning, inquiry, openness, quality
and reduced boundaries. *(My sense is that the committee chairs are not often given clear measurable issues and goals)*

It is clear to this author that Wolcott’s (1990) advice to be wary of drawing conclusions from qualitative studies and to at best offer summaries of what was seen, heard and how it might be interpreted is good advice. What has been offered here is a series of ‘snapshots’ taken based on the input of 30 highly qualified and experienced participants in the House processes.

So from this, what does this researcher surmise? This will be covered in Chapter Six, where I will offer some conclusions and suggestions for improvements drawn from the interviews and then put forth a laundry list of suggestions made by those who have participated. I will then follow this with some prognostication about what the future might hold and how it potentially might impact the normal procedures, structure and processes of the Florida House of Representatives.
CHAPTER SIX
POTENTIAL IMPACT OF STUDY

This study opened with a focus on seeking to evaluate how the processes of the Florida House can better match the selected ingredients for effective organizational learning as presented in the literature. Through interviews and correspondence with engaged actors, the majority of whom have served in multiple roles in the Florida House of Representatives for more than two decades, and through examination of documents and activities that are part of the policy investigation processes it would seem that many of the elements of organizational learning can be improved and expanded in the policy analysis and research processes. However, the full implementation of all effective organizational learning components can not completely occur due to some entrenched institutionalized traditions and processes, as well as some constitutional restrictions.

Interviewees stated there are too many changes to structure, done too frequently; some forced by law and some developed through time, that have become normal behavior. They also pointed out the impact of too much environmental uncertainty, which serves to impede the Florida House of Representatives from fully become a model learning organization based on the descriptions found in the literature. However, there are many components offered by the various theorists, including those I offer as my template for evaluation, the Six Elements for Effective Organizational Learning, which can be incorporated into the processes. Integration of these elements into the House learning activities would improve the gathering, storage and retention of information and the accessibility of information for disbursement to the decision makers who follow those who collect and evaluate the data collected in the first instance. In this chapter I comment briefly on what some of the writers of organizational learning have to say, offer some description of modeling that can be used in the House processes and then offer some suggested
changes, as mined from the interviews, that if implemented would add greatly to the policy processes of the House.

Blair and Henry (1981) note, “Beginning with Hyneman’s seminal study in 1938, and for all the decades since, high turnover in state legislatures has been ... deplored as a serious obstacle to legislative effectiveness and accountability” (p.55). In the Florida House we have shown there to be not only high individual member turnover, but also significant turnover in those in leadership roles as well as senior staff positions. How then can you accommodate this historical turnover, a variable that seems to have existed both before and after imposed term limits, even while it has been exacerbated by imposed term limits? Schwandt and Marquardt expand upon how best to develop necessary information for effective organizational performance, using the analogy that organizational ‘brains’ are segmented. Beyond computers and standard office files, these authors posit that there are six storage bins for data and information in any organization:

- **Individuals** – Based on experience and observation (Element 3)
- **Culture** - Stored in shared assumptions, symbols, and values (Elements 3, 4, 5)
- **Transformations** – Routines that use inputs to produce outputs (Elements 2 & 5)
- **Structures** – Individual roles as stored memory (Elements 3, 4, 6)
- **Ecology** – How the physical plant reflects history and tradition (Element 3)
- **External Archives** – Former employees, competitors, government agencies, external actors (Elements 2, 3, 4, and 5)

Of these storage bins two opportune targets for improvement, based on the comments presented previously and from my observations and experiences with the process, are within the Transformations—the routines that are a part of the research and learning processes and in the Structures, how the memory of the institution can be improved and how past actions can be made available for current and future actors in the process.

There are several applications of this ‘storage bins’ concept available to an institution like the House. One response, as example, to expediting the knowledge curve and expanding the knowledge depth held within these storage bins is to limit Member participation to a smaller, select number of committees, as is currently being implemented under Speaker Marco Rubio. During many terms of office it has not been uncommon for members to be appointed to in excess of ten regular and special committees. Since the House Rules usually have specific limitations that prohibit conflicting meeting times for Members, it becomes difficult for these over assignments to be scheduled properly. Beyond this is the increased difficulty in having fully informed members in a part time legislature when they are assigned to too many committees of
jurisdiction. It could be calculated that if each committee met for three hours per week, a Member assigned to 10 committees would have to spend thirty hours per committee week in committee meetings as a part time legislator. Often leadership offers rules that disallow meetings after certain times each day, not after 6 PM for example. (Element 1) When this occurs it also shrinks the amount of time available for committees to meet for bill and issue consideration. However this kind of time restraint offers additional time for other activities and benefits, as described by one respondent. “One good one was the rule to end work at 6pm. It generated at least two good results. First, it required a great deal of planning because there were no late nights to catch up on the schedule. Second, there were not as many mistakes made by tired staff and members grinding it out late at night.” (Element 1)

A reform of the committee structure might include “reducing the number of subcommittees on which a member can serve, eliminating organizational redundancies and jurisdictional overlaps” as suggested by Schneier and Gross (1993, p. 240), or greater usage of Goldsmiths’ committee of broad jurisdiction. Another option is more frequent joint meetings of committees, an intentional scheduling of committees for hearings on issues of dual concern. For example, when a major bill has jurisdictional overlap, such as a medical liability bill, and has been referred to multiple committees for consideration, it would be useful to have evidentiary hearings and citizen testimony in joint meetings and then each could consider amendments to the bill separately. This was the case with the medical liability issue during the Byrd Speakership. The use of Select Committees also serves to compact the information gathering process if the staffing is organized properly as described in Chapter Four.

Schneier and Gross acknowledge how highly complex issues require overlapping jurisdictions as, “no reorganization can escape or overcome the enormous complexity of substantive interrelationships that inhere in modern society” (p. 240). The legislative body and the issues addressed are no less complex; reflecting the complex society served. Herein lays the need to examine the overlaps in the Florida House and to better utilize the available resources in addressing complex issues. Perhaps there is a need for members to get beyond the perception in issue consideration that they frequently refer to as “having another bite at the apple”. In legislative parlance this means the ability to continue correction and amendment processes at later committee stops when complex bills have multiple references for committee review. Perhaps it would be better to go deeper and longer on an issue over multiple meetings to truly
flesh out all the details that can be known and then pass on all the collected information with the bill packet.

Governors traditionally perform a mid-term assessment of actions taken to meet the goals of each incoming administration. Legislatures could do the same after the first session in the term. The stated goals of each Speaker at the onset of their term of office could be used as a template to measure the success or failure of the agenda and then later measured to establish whether the policies adopted were what were truly needed. Current (07-8) Speaker Rubio has developed a book titled “100 Ideas for Florida’s Future” that is being used as a measurement template for action during his term as Speaker. As bills are passed or considered, based on the 100 ideas in the book, announcements are made and emails are sent out detailing how the bills considered and passed link to this pre-set agenda. The same could have been done with the stated objectives of prior Speakers. Of course, this would not be practical for every piece of legislation passed, but by using the full committee staffs there could be a large scale accountability of degrees of relative success. There could be created a historical journal, capturing the details of policy consideration, as well as why issues passed or failed, along with all of the information gathered for the consideration processes. This process, coupled with strengthened information and data collection processes, would improve the learning culture conditions in a legislature.

Schon (1983) calls for a need for ‘reflective action’, where “the dilemma of rigor or relevance may be dissolved if we can develop an epistemology of practice which places technical problem solving within a broader context of reflective inquiry” (p. 69). (Element 5) If this can be accomplished perhaps then “a successful reframing of a problematic situation leads to a continuation of the reflective conversation” (p. 136), leading then to the constant chain of thought and inquiry as envisioned by Dewey in “How We Think” discussed earlier.

While a cultural study of a legislative body would require an entirely separate dissertation, it is important to note here how the cultural structure of the House can serve to inhibit or constrict the amount of change that can either be imposed or suggested for adoption during one single term of office by a prospective or sitting Speaker. Martin, (2002, p.3), captures these limitations in her introduction when she describes the difference between cultural observation and other kinds of research. To her a cultural researcher “seeks an in-depth understanding of the patterns of meaning that link these manifestations together, sometimes in harmony, sometimes in bitter conflicts between groups, and sometimes in webs of ambiguity,
paradox and contradiction” (p.3). It is in this context that this researcher interviewed participants, seeking potential adjustments to structure and process, which if adopted, would promote an improved learning organization.

The institutional culture affects each Chamber. For example, the House and Senate select leaders independent of one another and yet the total process is greatly affected by how well these selected leaders get along. No matter how detailed the information resources provided or how thorough the review process, the personalities of two leadership actors in the process can determine which and whether means or ends are selected even after full consideration of issues by both Chambers. In the end, even with heightened Learning Organization elements in place, in either Chamber the quality of the research and potential output from each Chamber can be limited by the style and cultural differences of leadership, thus constraining the final quality of the output of the body. Some factors can not be predicted or controlled. This study has focused on changes that can be controlled.

According to Matteson and Ivancevich (1999, p. 67) there are three classical management practices; planning, organizing and controlling. They contend “truly outstanding managers focus on tomorrow’s problems. Focusing on tomorrow’s problems-and opportunities- clearly requires planning.” Planning requires “the application of thought, analysis, imagination and judgment to future activities.” (Element 5) This author would contend, based on an application of the elements derived from the literature as presented, that there are four stages as goals in the development of a learning culture in a legislative setting;

1) Development of the improved information resource capacities, complemented by proper staffing, direction and areas of specialization
2) The training and education of Members and staff, needing a formalized process for training in policy as well as procedural tasks,
3) The implementation of a continuous learning process, including a detailed evaluation of prior actions integrated with forecasted needs.
4) Linking multiple subject matter expertise and staff interaction on complex issues.

Within these processes are some necessary steps required for implementing a learning organization culture that this author has identified based on over thirty year’s of personal experiences and observations of legislatures. I have reinforced and expanded these steps based on the insight gained from this study, which I have shortened to the acronym CADRE.
Collection and storage of data and information
Assimilation process of information collected, linking staff resources
Disbursement of collected information to Members and staff
Re-assessment and oversight of previous actions and the application of newly collected information to old situations
Evaluation and exportation of refined information to Members and staff.

Each of these steps in CADRE is a critical element in organizational learning applied to the House legislative processes. The current process of policy development would be best described by this author as a concept, “Aggregation”, where policies are made due to complex behaviors, societal interactions, and multiple layers of evaluation and analysis, all of which are influenced by multitudes of both controllable and non-controllable variables. The evolution of policy is multi-faceted. There is no concise explanation or source of the genesis of policy, nor is there a single theory capable of accommodating all the nuances, variables, situations and opportunities of either the legislative process or individual member behavior. Policy formation is highly situational, affected by normative values, organizational structure, economic costs and opportunities, political competition and the influence of both endogenous and exogenous factors; oftentimes well outside the boundaries of control or predictability.

So I acknowledge the unpredictability of the process and defer to Carley’s criteria (1992), which, besides providing an effective template of ingredients for the evaluation of the comments from respondents, also offer an excellent, broader lens from which to view this study of the Florida House of Representatives. The House, at least from that which can be surmised from the interviews and question submissions, offers a picture of an institution whose a) organizational behavior is historically based, relying on experience and adaptation of responses to previous decisions (but not necessarily based on feedback as is an essential component of this criteria), (Element 3); b) is reliant on organizational learning (that) depends on memories of actors and the individual’s ability to learn (but is limited in its ability to rely on actor and institutional memory due to turnover of members, leadership and staff), (Element 4); c) is disorderly (Cohen, March and Olsen 1972) (consistently mentioned in interviews that this process is disorderly by design), d) faces similar, but varied problems with no issue exactly alike when it returns for consideration (consistently mentioned in interviews was how issues return for repeat consideration, either for first passage due to the persistence of advocates of issues or for ‘glitch’ fixing for issues not completely satisfactory but passed previously) (Elements 2,3,4,5) and e) no
one decision maker holds all of the information required for decision making. (respondents frequently spoke of the complexity of the process and the need for members and staff to develop expertise in segments of the process since no one person can absorb it all). (Elements 1, 4 and 6)

At this point it is useful to mention that the Florida governmental structure is similar in form to that designed for the national government by the Founders, with a distinct separation of powers that in part are designed to slow down the process and to also add complexity. These points can be emphasized by a reading of the Federalist Papers, where Madison, Hamilton and Jay, often writing as Publius, state well the rationale for how a division of powers among branches of government and a separation of responsibilities between the federal and state levels can serve to limit the power of governments, as well as keeping it from moving too quickly into uncharted territories. No one decision maker should control policy and power and no entity of government should either. Perhaps the perceived slowness of the process, when viewed through this historical lens, is of benefit to the process.

So, in this chapter I will keep in mind these criteria, supplement suggested remedies with comments made by respondents, point out potential remedies suggested by participants, and point out areas that perhaps can not be “fixed”. After all, many participants mentioned the need for the process to be messy and the value of roadblocks in the process that help slow down actions that might prove to be incorrect or insufficient for the issue at hand and also to not tie their hands due to prior actions.

Adding to the notion of messiness, cultural machismo, and complexity are issues raised in an exchange between this author and Professor deHaven-Smith at Florida State University in January of 2001, concerning the need to ascertain whether in-depth policy research needs to be used in all circumstances. He raises the questions; “(1) how do you know that utilization is a good thing? Are you assuming that policy makers are reasonable and well intentioned?...(2) how do you know that addressing the current questions of policy will lead to utilization...,what is the relationship between truth, power and action in the political process?” All of these are valid questions and ones not likely to be answered in a study of this nature. But what can be addressed in the issues raised is mentioning that in the political realm of policy discussion, participants who are armed with facts, data, in-depth perspective and insight into historical, related actions, will have distinct advantage over those who do not share this same ammunition in debate. This is not to say that facts trump politics or power, but rather that the absence of information leaves the
door open for tyranny, injustice, and incompetence, not just errors in action. During my interview sessions, one particular exchange, raised by an experienced actor with over thirty years of engagement in the Florida legislative processes, addressed this issue effectively in referring to what he had been told by another long time, seasoned veteran of the process:

*He said he had always seen solid information and the facts prevail over opinion. Just pure opinion. Over time? Over time, yeah... I think that was a great insight for me because it gave me the sense, the positive perspective, that the legislature would be able to deal with these things if it had the right information at its disposal. And I think that’s why, Ed, that’s what’s so critical in our system about the role of the minority in my opinion, okay? What makes our system unique is the minority is given a genuine voice and it goes way back, the House of Commons, of course, it goes back to Magna Carta, but it the whole idea is we will sit here and listen to you criticize our proposal, whatever it may be as a majority, and give you voice, give you the opportunity to say what you need to say about it. I may not want to hear it and I may disagree, but at least you are given a public forum in which to make your case. And that that in effect puts in place the principal of the Enlightenment, that debate and reason should lead to the best policy. And that was the whole premise of our system in the beginning. And we knew there would be conflict, we knew there would be different values and different views, but in the final analysis the best policy comes out of that kind of caldron of debate. (Staff)*

In the exchange between this author and Professor deHaven-Smith, he questioned my contentions by stating, “You seem to assume that when power receives truth, assuming it is pertinent, power acts on this truth. How do you know that truth is more powerful than power and that power transcends the inertia of actions?” Well I do not know this, but there is hope that a well informed policy maker and a well informed body will find the way to better actions. Certainly in a political environment power is a huge motivator, as can be a passion for ideas and ideals that serve as a powerful force multiplier. I prefer to subscribe to the notion attributed to Victor Hugo that “there is nothing so powerful as an idea whose time has come”, with the caveat that the better idea is one that has time to evolve, has committed advocates, and a includes a broad foundation of investigation, knowledge, and an awareness of historical inquiry.

**But To Remember, We Must Maintain a Record**

**A Question of Historical Record**

*I thought it was a huge waste of talent and knowledge for us to simply dispose of those bill analyses that were done on all that legislation and the legislation as filed in its*
various forms over the years… the leadership felt that might tie their hands in some important ways because they might not have the same perspective on the issue that the bill analysis written two years ago or whatever might have had on the question. And they wanted to have the opportunity to approach the question as a fresh proposition (Staff)

In an exchange with a respondent who had served as a long term staff director I received an interesting confirmation of what I had already perceived to be true from other interviews and personal experiences, concerning the retention of information gained through policy actions and investigations. As already mentioned, the House website is limited when it comes to being a tool for information sharing on the content behind the bills filed for consideration. Concerning policy research, the main source of information from the website is a six year historical record of bills filed, actions taken on these same bills and amendments, as well as staff analyses for each bill. The site does not contain any of the detailed information that staff used in the research processes. It does not contain any records of substance; of materials submitted by others, of books, pamphlets or papers submitted in any of the several multi-day policy sessions held or even the records of the committees when ideas are considered.

In 2000, at the beginning of the Speakership of Tom Feeney, I took part in creating a multi-week training session for policy makers, which was mentioned earlier. That year the House had 63 new members out of 120. Weeks of presentations, involving scores of experts, organized along the essential topical structure of the House Committee structure, with an abundance of handout materials, were used in these sessions. No formal record of these proceedings was retained and none of the materials collected were cataloged or made available for subsequent legislators. (in violation of Elements 3, 4, and 5)

So, in the exchange with the long time staff director, who had taken part in a series of seminars organized to better inform members, this is what transpired after I asked if there were records of these events:

**Can you send or give me an agenda for one of them?** You can retrieve that information by going to the House web site, click onto DOCUMENTS, SELECT SESSION ..., ENTER, then find Interim, then click onto Calendars.

**Are any of the materials saved and kept available for future staff research? If so where are these items maintained?** I have a copy of the notebooks and materials that were provided to members and tapes of the hearings.
Is there a formal saving process of these kinds of records or do they just fall custody
to whoever is the relevant staff director at the time? Not to my knowledge. I’m still
holding onto it because of the many hours that went into planning the events...

If you left the house to work elsewhere would what you have in your possession still
be known and available to your successors? Probably not!!

As a former Staff Director for several major areas I can confirm that much of the material
gathered for major projects gets lost in the shuffle of change in actors and structure. Other longer
term participants made these comments concerning what would be needed for better retention of
information and why:

Electronic storage of information with indices that is available to all. (Staff)

Special interests and lobbyists (doing their jobs) will bring failed measures to new
members who will often file them with little or no knowledge of the history of the
measure. New members often have new aids who do not know how to research the
history of an issue. (Staff)

According to Carley, “When people leave, without mechanisms for transferring personal
experience among decision makers, the lessons of history are lost, knowledge disappears, the
institution’s memory is reduced” (p.20). (Limiting Elements 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6) Consistently in the
interviews it was found that those who had held responsibility for research areas left the House
without leaving much of what they had gathered. In large part this was due to a lack of
systematic collection, registration and storage of information as it was collected. In the instance
where this author was Staff Director for the Medical Liability Insurance Select Committee, the
abundant information collected was not institutionally stored in any systematic manner. The
Final Report of the Committee, written just four years ago, is not readily available and the
volumes of materials collected by both this committee and the Governor’s Task Force that had
been used by the committee are also not readily available. This is a common occurrence and is a
systemic failure that can be easily corrected.

Suggestion for change:

1) Currently the House assigns a barcode number to each bill and each
amendment and uses this process to track same. This same process should be
used to assign a barcode number to each document used in the policy
processes. It should be gathered at the administrative assistant level in each
committee with a copy of the document used, scanned if necessary or made
available through on-line mechanisms.
2) An office of the House, or perhaps the Curator of the Capital where other legislative history documents are gathered, should be assigned responsibility for cataloging all materials. This catalog of materials should be made available to the public as an on-line resource and be designed similar to systems used by university libraries where by using tools such as J-Store or ABI online a researcher can simply type in a phrase, a subject, a title or an author and be offered a series of choices that correspond to your key used.

(Elements Involved- 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6)

Topic Considerations- Quality of Research & Debate

Consistent references were made in the interviews concerning the role of members and staff in the issue investigation processes. To improve processes, using the organizational learning lens, it is important to investigate issues deeply, retain what is known, disseminate to affected parties, and then re-visit issues as a regular pattern to evaluate both effectiveness and potential for improvement while also re-thinking the underlying premises of each action. This last element is not likely to occur as an institutionalized process, especially when limited by the degree of actor turnover in these processes, but it is clear from both the literature and the comments made, that the process itself forces a constant reflection upon ideas, challenges and competition, even if forced by the reintroduction of bills on similar topics over time. This is in part some manner of a double-loop process, albeit incomplete. What would need to be strengthened is more reflection as to why issues return and a greater focus on why the initial ‘solutions’, and the assumptions made at the time, were faulty.

The influences of all of the variables and actors force at least a partial consideration of effectiveness in the process. It seems however, that missing throughout is the effective retention of information once gathered, as well as a real absence of historical references used in the issue evaluation processes. Here are what some of the actors, (and I re-state, that this is a consistent theme in the conversations), had to say about how the processes work in the House as well as some of the roadblocks, obstacles and limitations as perceived by these actors in the process. (Element 2) I will offer more than the usual number of examples here to better capture the richness of thought in this area.
I think that there probably isn’t enough information in reality. However, I think it is because the members are not disciplined enough to learn it and would rather have short meetings, short discussions (External) (Elements 1, 2, 4, 5)

Perhaps the Speaker could assign a higher standard of learning to his leadership team and require detailed briefings from the top members on issues on a regular basis. (External) (Element 1)

I think the committee process works, but unless the details are worked on, the bill hits the floor needing to be fixed quite a bit. Again, the old subcommittee process addresses that problem. One hearing on the substantive issues and then some quickies for show isn’t the way to go. Subs (Subcommittees should have) – at least two meetings on every bill (External) (Elements 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6)

Well when you are going through it, you think your oversight stuff works and you think you’re doing a good job and you’re doing the best you can. Probably, if everybody had the ability to serve about four years and then get out and put in six or eight years in business and go back and serve again, I haven’t talked to many people, including myself, that would do it the same way they did it before. You have a whole different perspective once you get out. When you’re in that process, you are so overwhelmed by it and so enamored with and everything that you just think you know everything. And you probably do know more than most people from the information you get. But when you have a chance to get out and reflect on it, maybe it’s age, maybe it’s maturity, maybe it’s I don’t know whatever it is, you sit back and look and say God Almighty I can’t believe it. I mean, why? I’m smarter than that! (Elected) (Elements 2, 4, 5)

It seems to me that part of the issue is, well what are you going to do, how are you going to do it, what’s the issue? But then what’s the oversight, what’s the evaluation process? If you look at legislators as policy makers and you look at staff as people who implement that policy and review and make recommendations, if they would have to look at on a periodic basis a more periodic basis, you know, some kind of an oversight process, take a law and phase it out in 10 years. (Elected) (Elements 3 and 5)

We used to take an issue and debate it for 2 days with the amendatory process and all that. And by the time you were done with it, when you walked off that floor even if you have never said a word or never heard about it, you were pretty well informed on that issue (Elected) (Elements 4 and 5)

So the advantage of the political process in my judgment is it moves slowly and that’s a pain in the butt sometimes. But it is slow to make a bad mistake and it’s also slow to get something done quickly. And the downside of not getting overdoing it vs. not getting it done quite on time is probably better to me. I’d rather be a little bit slower, a little bit more cautious to use public money, a little bit more conservative. (Elected) (Element 5)

One of the reasons why Speaker Rubio has set aside some time to focus on one committee handling an issue as opposed to five committees handling one issue, you know we’ve
gotten away from multiple referrals. … going to refer it to one council and that council is going to deal with the issue. The reason why he wrote the rules that way is it’s truly his desire to have 9 members meeting on one issue for 5 hours instead of 5 committees with 45 members meeting on an issue for an hour. It is to try to get into more of the grit of the issue and to get into the details and to spend more time on it and to chew it and to say… Well what if we did it this way? What if we did it that way? (Staff) (Elements 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6)

If the Speaker wants the staff to conduct independent research and seek the best methods to address complex issues, then he or she can make this the priority. In order to do so, however, experienced and knowledgeable staff must be in place. (Staff) (Element 1)

As can be seen from the above comments, the variety of opinions on just this one topical area would provide enough materials for one research project alone. Just like the opinions on the use of agencies created to do research; where OPPAGA and other groups had as many supporters as detractors, the views on how best to handle the research processes is quite blended and divided. Rather than continuing to insert more opinions and comments along these same lines I will summarize much of what was offered in a grouping of suggestions for change. Preferences for committee structure and rules vary widely, however, there are common perceptions that could be addressed, each of which would add organizational learning qualities to the way the House goes about considering issues, especially the more complex ones. Other suggestions for change made in other sections of this chapter will also deal either directly or indirectly with these same issues. They should all be taken into account when seeking to model improvements in the learning processes, mostly reflected in how the House considers topics through filed legislation and through appointed study groups on some of the more hot button issues.

Suggestions for change:
1) Use greater staff teaming among committees on issues that warrant multiple referrals,
2) Assign staff and member teams during interim periods to go deep into issues likely to become important in the near or distant future,
3) Use committee processes to more fully vet legislation, allowing sufficient time for a thorough investigation of an issue at the first stop, perhaps requiring two agenda placements before passage onto the second committee of reference or to the calendar,
4) Schedule interim projects that delve into legislation passed in sessions 2-3 years prior or for appropriations of existing programs to determine effectiveness of programs. Is the intent being met?
5) Create a greater usage of created agency options during interims, using this specific expertise to arm decision makers on complex issues. This could be managed by sitting Chairs or by expected returnees during the interim prior to elections. During the extended
interim period before the fall election cycle the sitting Speaker should team with the Speaker-Designate to assign specific staff to work directly with resources such as OPPAGA and EDR to develop long range or historical perspective analyses on issues known to be coming during the approaching year. Additionally they could create working teams, on a scheduled basis, to evaluate the effectiveness of previously passed legislation, agency performance and program performance.

Impact of Rules and Structure

Internal to the operations of any legislative body are rules and structure, which are designed to foster a system that can maximize the operation of the institution while creating pathways of issue management for legislative leaders. The elected officials gaining control of the Florida House of Representatives are placed in the position of designing whatever structure is preferred to be used for the coming term, subject to approval by the full House at the Organizational Session. Tradition has held in Florida that there are significant changes to structure as each new Speaker takes control each two years. Within the legislative arena there exists an administrative function that manages the operation of a large bureaucracy and also a structure that manages the policy agenda that contains all of the issues that will be addressed within the elected term (biennium) of those in power. Newly selected leaders traditionally place among their first actions, at the organizational session in November following the elections, the restructuring of the legislative body in Florida government. The House committee structures, the choice of members as Chairmen of the substantive committees and the assignment of staff to each committee creates the early framework for the prioritization of policy. House structures, committee assignments and even the terminology used in naming the committees, all reflect the influences of structure on agendas and outputs in a political setting (Appendix A).

It was suggested in the interviews that perhaps the focus on organizational structure takes away from a more appropriate focus on substance. Following are some sample exchanges of this nature:

In each transition, the incoming administration puts a lot of time and effort into changing the committee names, and restructuring committees, subcommittees, and counsels. A significant portion of the interim before the first session of the 2-year term is used for administrative purposes. These structural changes are transient and usually do not survive the next transition. The result of this constant juggling is that the staff and members spend the first year getting used to the new system. By the time everything is
working as intended, the Speaker is in his or her last year of the Speakership and is much less likely to be able to affect changes to public policy. (Staff)

The first committee meeting should include a presentation from the prior Chairman to provide the committee with an overview of the issues/bills that were addressed the prior two years. It would also be beneficial to have continuity with respect to who serves as staff on the various committees. (Elected)

Other elected officials had similar complaints concerning the loss of effective use of the time available for more in-depth discussion during interim periods:

There tends to be interim projects done in the middle year of a 2-year cycle. In election year cycles, I don’t believe that we’ve ever had the continuity that we should have, simply because of the politics of it. So in election year cycles, I think we really drop the ball on bridging the gap between the end of session and coming back. (Elected)

I believe we can improve the use of this time by a dramatic movement towards House Majority Leaders, House Minority Leaders, future leaders of both parties, and current and likely former chairmen of specific issues working together to develop an agenda. The minority party often will not like the proposals being studied but will agree, if they are reasonable, that before a major policy shift is initiated, the committee ought to study in detail those proposed changes. I also believe that finding ways to reward those staffers that work hard and focus during down times, would be helpful. Rewarding staffers that are energetic during the off months of legislative process in order to delve into specific policy, research and vision can dramatically improve the legislative process. (Elected)

An external observer with decades of experience commented on the lack of engagement by policy makers during interim periods, especially prior to election periods:

It does seem wasteful of the time when committees are essentially rudderless; the chairman is a lame duck, the new chairman has not even been designated… it seems desirable for an incoming speaker to designate at least some committee chairs in June. A quirk like Sam Bell’s loss would wreak temporary havoc, but not that much, and you might miss an opportunity for a gifted freshman to take a committee chair. (External)

Another respondent with over 30 years of experience made a similar observation concerning staff roles:

Staff collapses after each session and in even numbered years frequently leaves to run elections – although there are some interim reports created, I see little evidence that meaningful work occurs. Certainly this could be improved. Elections and changing leadership roles are the biggest impediments to this – if we created a more professional
and less political staff and banned the constant switching between those roles it might help (External)

For all practical purposes, once Thanksgiving gets here and if it’s an election year or frankly when you are in the organizational session you don’t get anything done until January. (Elected)

It is important to note that the template for evaluation, the Six Elements for Effective Organizational Learning, used in this study includes several component parts that relate to these issues. Incoming leadership (Element 1) can get an opportunity to evaluate both staff and potential chairmen during this interim period, to see how selected teams work together, (Elements 2, 4, 6) and to pair both majority and ranking members so that both Parties can develop information for issue evaluation while allowing members to get to know each other better during a timeframe that is currently apparently not used effectively based on the comments made. (Element 5)

Suggestion for Change: A large number of respondents focused on the large time gap between second session and elections. Of special concern to many was this time gap between the last session in a term of office and the actual implementation of new structures after the Organizational Session each November. Two primary suggestions were frequently made:

1) When the Speaker-Designate is known, that individual should assemble all known returning members who are senior leaders and likely to be selected as part of the leadership team, assign them substantive areas of responsibility for both managing research and working with sitting staff on investigation activities. This should be done even if ultimately the Members and the Staff are assigned to other substantive areas as the final organizational structure is put into place. A research agenda can be developed with this team of leaders, blending holdover issues from the most recently concluded session with issues expected to arise in the coming session. They could also conduct research into issues passed in previous sessions and link to the other learning agents available to the House. This should be a much more formal process than the “Interim Projects” listings, which many respondents perceive to be almost non-existent in this interim period.

2) These temporary work groups must make sure that all research done during this time is widely distributed, especially to members later assigned to the related committees of substance. They should also make sure all work is cataloged, placed on the web-site and made available to the public and other Members who might not be assigned to a committee where research of interest occurred.

Multiple Resources and Issues
The policy activities of the House, as described in the interviews, have become both more complex, with increasingly larger numbers of exogenous groups involved in the process, and more short-term focused as both term limits and other structural changes and non-controllable external factors influence agenda setting and the expenditure of resources towards non-agenda problems. The first session of Johnnie Byrd’s tenure as Speaker was dominated in large part by issues not driven by legislative initiative, with many of the focus items driven either by approved constitutional amendments, such as classroom size, Article V and indoor smoking, or by external groups, such as the medical liability issue driven by three external groups, doctors and hospitals, trial attorneys, and insurance companies. It can be projected that legislative actors will find it increasingly more difficult to establish lasting parameters for legislative activity for two primary reasons: 1) if agendas become more externally driven and less structured and predictable and 2) if both members and staff are reassigned every two years diminishing opportunities for the development of a lasting body of knowledge even within the time frames of term limits. Both of these assumptions were confirmed repeatedly by participants in the interview process and in the written submissions.

The Florida House of Representatives, with one exception in the modern era, has always replaced the top leadership every two years (Don Tucker as Speaker, 1974-78, two terms). What this study has found is that in addition to the traditional turnover of the Speaker there is a high frequency of senior staff turnover and chairman and member re-assignments, creating a situation where long range planning and policy development is hindered. This is exacerbated, based on the comments made, in part due to time limits imposed and in part due to a compressed calendar, as the more volatile issues of the day take precedence over detailed analysis and in-depth reflection. Concerning the impact of compressed time formats one elected member commented:

…the moment that you are engaged in debate is a very difficult time to do research. If you don’t have some idea going into that debate, if you haven’t done that homework prior to the debate, it would take somebody very talented…pretty quick…to find the information, rationalize in their mind how it relates to the current debate and then throw it in. (Elected)
A long term senior staff person commented concerning how best to use groups not directly controlled by the House but within the legislative branch of operations and why they are needed based on the complexity of the processes:

...clearly we’re not always using those external groups as effectively as we could but we couldn’t do without the auditor general’s office and OPPAGA. That research is extremely important to us ... (external groups) helps us focus in on those things that we need to learn and need to know when we don’t have time to go out and look for it ourselves. (Staff)

Some members might shy away from complex policy issues. Some may choose to become masters at the structural rules of procedure while others seek leadership roles on limited issues due to personal comfort with the subject matter under discussion. Too short time frames, as imposed by both term limits, a compressed sixty day session and by the biennial re-structuring, force members to choose early where they seek to become involved, in most instances well before they have detailed understanding of the policy realms. This is why Speaker Feeney (2000-02) delayed appointment of committees until such time as the training sessions he constructed were completed, allowing members more time than usual to explore areas of interest. Comments made by respondents seem to imply that elected officials, as described by Frederickson (1997, p.29), “avoid policy discussions that tend to focus on purposeful long range ends”, where “we seek to do good by not doing evil” and in doing so “because we cannot define what is good, it is simply easier to find what is wrong and try to fix it.” In addition to timeframes is the problem of regular member and staff turnover in substantive areas. Several participants suggested creating an office within the House similar in nature to the Governor’s Office of Policy and Budget, which would have consistent staffing and purpose over time and maintain stability while other structures might be changed. This kind of office would assist in meeting the Six Elements of Effective Organizational Learning. Others called for greater engagement with fully external organizations that do detailed studies on issues of relevance. Respondents offered these comments in relation to the creation of an office of this nature and the need for a more consistent policy review processes:

**House Policy Office**

*It would add to the process by providing another protection against repeating mistakes or undoing good policy without all of the facts.* (Elected)
A workable solution could be to create a policy committee involving the incoming speaker’s team that could assign the committees to work on significant projects in the interim. (External)

I suggest a specific policy office, responsible for content preservation and large issue coordination as a good idea. It might bring more substance into the process. (External)

The policy office, much like the Governor’s office of Planning & Budgeting, could achieve that goal. I believe it would add to the historical memory of the House and would be positive. (External)

**Outside Organizations**

Leadership should be more forward thinking by working closely with National, and Regional policy institutions that have their pulse on current and future trends that may impact Florida. The presiding officers should empower their leadership teams and Chief’s of Staff to engage in in-depth policy reviews and studies that result in meaningful public policy (Staff)

Experience is critical when fashioning good public policy and hopefully term limited chairmen and term limited members will seek wise guidance not just from special interests that have enormous background and commitment to a specific idea, but also from unaffiliated organizations that attempt to do a reasonable and dispassionate review of that which is good or bad about a specific policy proposal. (Elected)

**Suggestion for Change:** Give consideration to the creation of a permanent House Policy Office with an appointed Committee with permanent staff that would remain in place over time, regardless of other re-structuring of committees, similar to the constancy of the House Clerk, Sergeant at Arms and House Administration functions. Membership of the committee could be comprised of Chairs from major committees. This office would be an ideal location to share substantive issues from major committees. Additional assigned duties would include some of the following, all of which could be linked to the library resource procedures suggested earlier:

1. Major role as policy advisor to leadership, coordinating investigation of policy alternatives during interim periods, developing futures oriented research linking the functions of EDR to the House processes.
2. Develop and implement new member orientation; organize staff and committee roles in training and information exchange.
3. Coordination with ALEC, NCSL, ATR, Heritage, Cato, Reason, and other national groups as information resources.
4. Assist with staff training and orientation. Develop issues and subject matter contacts.
5. **Linkages to OPPAGA, EDR, Joint Committees and Commissions.** Serve as the general coordinator of these larger multiple staff arrangements on complex issues
6. **Coordination of House emergency response needs, COOP and other disaster related activities, which is an on-going responsibility and should not be subject to other restructuring that occurs each two years.**

The comments immediately preceding this Suggestion for Change had frequent references to the creation of a committee of this nature. Using the Six Elements as a template the creation of this committee offers avenues for a better implementation of organizational learning characteristics by meeting the component variables contained within all Six Elements, and would serve a valuable learning role, linking the learning that occurs in the component parts, the sub-units of the organization. It would also better link the created agencies such as OPPAGA and EDR to the issue development and consideration process. An effective Policy Office would be able to serve as an information resource and conduit to all of the substantive committees and respective staffs.

**Developing Resources**

A consistent theme voiced in both interviews and written submissions is the need for greater linkages to resources outside of direct committee staff. Concurrent with this theme was a consistent complaint that there was a need for better linkages to resources outside of direct staff to better inform members, assist staff with research and add to the quality of the debate. As with other points, this one was voiced from all categories of respondents, elected, external and staff. Following are some sample comments received in these topical areas

**Maximizing Information Resources**

*Does policymaking on a topic require that you know what you are doing? I think so. But let’s suppose they are not expert. Is there some source of information besides lobbyist that they rely on? How often does a professor, a scientist, a futurist become an advisor to a legislative committee in the same way that a lobbyist becomes a permanent “advisor” to a committee by always being there to answers questions and provide bill drafts (External)*
I thought the freshman orientation that JMI created was a great model, bringing in many different speakers and stakeholders. NCSL, ALEC, the JFK School and other leadership programs could be availed. (External)

I don’t even begin to know all the things the universities are doing that are available to the legislature. Members are not trained to avail themselves of all that information. Where would I go to find out who has done work on a particular topic? (Elected)

You know, it’s a waste of a state resource to have some of these extraordinary gifted people in our university systems that you don’t even have available to ask a question to…because you do not know who to call. (Elected)

Storage of Data and Information Collected

Better training of members and aides as to how to access prior bill analyses and committee reports would be useful. Many committee reports are not available except in hard copy in a committee file. Having a librarian that develops a good electronic record of all reports would be useful. Consideration of bringing the “legislative library” back under the Legislature is advisable. (Staff)

The only thing you could do is maybe create some form of separate website for almost a data dump of libraried (sic) issues that are out there. (Staff)

History is a critical learning tool. It should not be a necessary answer to addressing issues but another tool in the tool box. With the advent of term limits, the availability of this information in new formats is critical. (External)

Create a research/library office under the Clerk that would systematically store information on legislative issues and actions. The House should adopt guidelines to govern the process, determining what should be stored, for how long and how the data should be organized for easy meaningful retrieval. (External)

… the legislature understands that its own history needs to be systematically preserved and passed along. (Staff)

Without a formal procedure to tap into institutional memory, the House runs the risk of making the same mistakes that were made a decade ago, only no one remembers. There is considerable value in on-line storage of research organized by topic. (External)

Suggestion for Change: Since it is abundantly clear from the conversations and submissions that the preservation of historical information and the development or better utilization of resources for policy research efforts are critical to the policy decision
processes, steps should be taken to build upon these resources. Among these steps should be:

1) Build upon the library and legislative history resources that exist for the legislature. There exists a legislative library but it lacks the resources necessary for a comprehensive tool to be used in the learning processes and there is no formal capture of information used in the policy processes as suggested in this study. Place responsibility for this project either jointly under the curator structure or if within the House alone under the Clerk. These offices already have structures in place, such as a bar code system used to preserve the history of bills filed and amendments filed, so adding additional resource tracking and control should be easily accomplished.

2) Create an on-line data base of materials collected using all staff in this process. If a document is used in issue consideration or research it should be bar coded and added to the collection, (see earlier suggestion) scanning where possible so the document is available as an on-line resource.

3) Build a library of human resources, including think-tanks, specialty investigation groups, and university and college experts. These can be arranged by topic of expertise or interest and made available to all members and staff through the website portals. A House Policy Office, suggested previously could be responsible for maintaining these lists, updating when needed and seeking out new experts for inclusion.

4) Assign the Policy Office responsibility for on-going training on substantive topics, creation of approved one or multi-day policy seminars, and management of expert panels that can be brought in for larger issue development, especially during interim periods.

5) Expand upon the House website to incorporate access to more resources, perhaps linking to one of the state university library systems or through the actual state library, so staff has full access to academic databases similar to those available to university researchers.

6) Use the House webpage for notification to members and to staff where new studies can be posted and new research obtained can be listed by topic.

7) Improve the usage of OPPAGA, EDR and other quality research organizations so Members and staff are made aware of studies as completed using email and web technology and insure that all studies are cataloged and made available through the mechanisms described above.

These suggestions would implement the Elements that are focused on the value of historical information, the breaking down of artificial barriers to information, the expansion of resource capabilities. These allow for improved detailed learning activities to precede decision making. They help to overcome the limitations to cognitive gathering and interpretation of clues by offering expanded and improved resources for legislative researchers. They would also link the individual learning that occurs when staff conducts research and obtains materials of
relevance to the process, to the needs of the component parts of the organization and to the entire deliberative process.

Revisiting the Impact of Turnover and Expertise

It should be obvious from the preceding chapters that systemic turnover, not just member turnover due to term limits, but turnover from members leaving early, shuffling of committee chairmanships, shuffling of committee member assignments and shuffling of staff all have an effect on how the House might implement organizational learning components. How best to potentially remedy the impact of turnover, and how it has a real effect on the process, were consistent topics in each of the interviews. There was truly a balance of opinion of whether term limits served the public good or are detrimental to the processes. The following comment, made by a former Speaker, captures this diversity of opinion:

*I believe the benefits are that you get fresh ideas, a fresh look at issues, and people that are not corrupted or influenced by longevity within the system. I also believe it is important to break down traditional fiefdoms within the legislative process, witnessing Congress where some committee chairman served as long as 20 or 30 years and killed any idea that they didn’t personally agree with, no matter how much public support it had. The down side is that you lose an enormous amount of experience. Experience is critical when fashioning good public policy.* (Elected)

Using questions designed to capture how the respondents felt about term limits did not suffice in capturing how they perceived the true impact of systemic turnover, since turnover from term to term goes far deeper than just the forced turnover of term limits. I have attempted to go deeper using questions designed to bring out potential changes in the system that go beyond the constitutionally imposed “Eight is Enough” term limits process. Following are sample comments from the interviews or written submissions on how the House might change behaviors to better accommodate the known turnover of members due to term limits. I have also included in this some comments on the impact of staff turnover, which can be more easily implemented if embraced by the leadership changes that occur every two years.

**Member Turnover**

*I believe term limits makes it somewhat more difficult for individual legislators to get a comprehension of the most complex issues as they move forward in the process.* (Elected)
I think they need more time. The state budget and the state issues and the complexity of education or Medicaid or insurance issues... you are just not going to walk up here and solve it. (Sic) And you’re not going to understand all that in a term or two. (Elected)

**Staff Turnover**

I believe staff experience in specific issues is absolutely critical. With term limits limiting the ability of legislators to take the time learning on the job about specific issues, it is often impossible for legislators to become master of a specific issue. (Elected)

Knowledge of both content and process is optimal. Knowledge of either content or process is essential. A new staff person with no knowledge of the subject matter and little or no knowledge of the process is largely ineffective for about 3 sessions. (Staff)

New staff spend a lot of time learning the basics and rarely are able to effectively contribute positive input into complex issues in the first few years. (Staff)

**Suggestions for change**-

1) Speakers should seek to balance member experiences with staff experiences when placing actors in roles. Repeatedly suggested by respondents in all categories was the need for knowledgeable staff that knows and understands its role. Experienced staff is also more likely to have an understanding of the role balance between elected officials with ultimate responsibility and staff roles designed to provide as much useful information as possible. Staff that over-steps can easily be removed, but consistent staff knowledge, built up at much time and expense, is too valuable to shuffle roles too often.

2) Consider placement of members after their first election after a detailed training session that involves large amounts of material that is topic oriented, similar to what Speaker Feeney did in 2000. Place them in committees on a trial basis for the first session and allow for substantive switching after the first session, with the intent that if they return as members for subsequent elections that they are expected to develop expertise in assigned subject matter areas. This should not bind future Speakers or members against re-assignment but instead seek to institutionalize member expertise, so that changes are far less frequent in assigned areas.

3) Seek to maintain consistent membership on committees over time by having the Speaker work closely with the Minority Leader in a conscious effort to build subject matter competencies in all committee jurisdictions.

4) Efforts should be made to retain staff in areas long enough to develop subject matter expertise. From the comments and interviews it is clear that participating actors are concerned that members do not serve long enough in the same subject matter area to be paired with inexperienced staff.
It is clear when using the elaborated Elements that in order to improve the learning processes of the House that continuity of roles in a term limited environment must be maximized. If both members and staff are constantly rotated how can the House provide enough historical information and perspective regarding previous decisions and the impact so issues that have been heard before by the committees? Coupling greater consistency in leadership roles, committee assignments and staff roles with the added information resources described earlier would better link the learning processes over time.

**Leadership Training &
Committees and Select Committees**

As mentioned previously, all interviews were filled with references to the power of the Speaker, (Element 1) a role that changes hands every two years, creating tremendous turnover in structure, leadership and staffing. It is unusual for the entire Speaker’s suite of staff to not be replaced when new Speakers take control, and we have seen previously in this research the depth of replacement of chairmen as well as Staff Directors, thus, in fact, creating a situation where in the private sector we would see the entire corporate leadership replaced every two years. This would not be suggested in any business textbook as an ideal situation. Concern was raised by many of the role of potential Speakers, prior to selection for that office, and also about how a Speaker may or may not look ahead, knowing they are leaving office after their leadership term. Here is a sample comment.

*I think the current system is all around who is committed to working statewide to raise money for candidates. Interestingly, the next three speakers are of fine quality but not because of this ability. They have intellectual curiosity, are principled and are fine leaders as far as I can tell. (Elected)*

However, it was also widely recognized that leadership responsibilities go well beyond how the House elects its primary leader. The selection, grooming and training of leadership was also a consistent concern of respondents.

*...if being speaker were the end all of legislative service that would be one thing, but for every speaker (over four terms of office) you have...chairman over appropriations processes, you have, you know, 32 chairman in some years over substantive issues. And then umpteen members underneath each one of those chair people and so...if the end all were to be speaker that’d be one thing, we*
could probably find the exceptional dynamic person each go around. But the fact of the matter is a lot of what moves and shakes this process is not just the speaker it’s the chairman that serve under them. (Staff)

I have to believe that someone who has been the insurance chairman for 5 or 6 years has a better handle on what’s really going on, on that issue. It’s hard for someone who served on education last year and then comes in to be the insurance chairman the next year to really be an effective resource. (Staff)

Somebody who’s been a teacher, who then becomes a legislator, knows education. Someone who’s been an insurance agent who comes in the legislature, they’re going to know something about insurance. But what we tend to not train are people that, for instance, that get to know the Department of Management Services and know why they do the things that they do and understand it to the nitty gritty detail that someone who in previous years before 8 is enough would spend 5 to 10 years before they would be the chairman of that committee. (Staff)

Critical to the implementation of an effective learning organization is the need to link the individuals to the organization as a whole. Cited repeatedly in the interviews is the important role of the Speaker, largely based on the Speaker’s selection of others to serve in the critical roles of committee Chairman. Linking current Speakers to future Speakers and the reverse linkage of current Speakers to those who have previous served in this role, is an essential element of continuity of purpose and knowledge, allowing for the creative tension that occurs between that which is already known and that which can be learned.

Suggestions for changes:
1) Build a recognized but informal leadership training ladder. Several respondents cited the recent triumvirate of Speaker Rubio, and subsequent chosen leaders Sansom and Cannon, as one model to follow to allow for consistency over time and longer term projects.
2) Develop general leadership training classes that could be structured for each incoming class, helping them to understand the complex roles of leadership,
3) As cited in the previous section on turnover, build in an institutionalized step ladder for chairmen, seeking to maintain member placement on subject matter committees for more than two terms in order to maximize their expertise,

Regarding the importance or potential usage of Select Committees or Task Forces on complex issues the responses were rather standard, all seemed to like to use these when the issue is longer term in nature or crosses over multi-jurisdictional lines. Here are some comments on the use of these committees:
I like the use of Task Forces and Standing Committees rather than the current model of renaming and recreating committees, councils and rules so frequently. (External)

... usually on a select committee, they are going to take a substantial amount of public testimony and an example would be right now we have affordable housing, a select committee on affordable housing, and that committee has been out on the road taking multiple days worth of testimony across the state and that tends to have a little bit different affect than if you were to have 5 or 6 members that are put in charge of an issue that are just kind of working off to the side going through the committee process, working on an issue and getting it accomplished. What I think tends to happen is they probably have a little bit different opportunity to pick at the brains of Floridians and to get input from them on the way they see issues, and it probably covers the legislation a little bit different. (Sic)(Staff)

They can be important on unique issues. They create a focus on a particular problem that there is an expectation that something needs to be done. (Elected)

Suggestion for Change:
1) Use blended committees as Select Committees, using blended staff talent, when issues are long lasting, highly complex, and multi-jurisdictional.
2) Create linkages to these efforts with established research arms of government and to the standing committees likely to be committees of reference for materials produced by the Select Committee efforts.

Unexpected Gems Mined From Conversations

As in any study there arise unexpected offerings or information found that surprise the researcher. By using extended conversations, in addition to question sets requiring longer answers, I was able to hear or read quite a few unexpected or creative ideas that actually add to both the structural and cultural aspects of an analysis of the Florida House. While I do not offer specific, suggested changes from these, I thought it worthwhile to offer these for consideration should future leaders of the Florida House read this paper and seek to effect changes as to how the House goes about the business transacted. Some of these go beyond the scope of the criteria for effective organizational learning, but with that being said, even the discussions of the role of
the interpersonal aspects of family and informal gatherings indicates clearly that learning takes place in many settings. The building of trust among members, wherever it occurs, adds value to the process. Element 5 emphasizes the ability see things in new ways at the individual, group and total organization level. Element 4 asserts that Members must rely on others due to the limitations of individual knowledge. Personal relationships, while not a topic of this study, clearly are important in building the trust that is required to accept the information and leadership aspects of this process.

*I think the value of stakeholder input into the process is diminished by the zero tolerance policies of the food and beverage provisions of the lobbying reforms. Members and staff need the very valuable input these NGO lobbyists can offer. The importance of relationships has been diminished and thus the process is hurt. Legislative member and staff bunkering will cause policy problems if not corrected. This is not to support unrestricted spending but rational limits where bread can be broken and appropriate fellowship and casual dialogue can be undertaken.* (External)

*Now we’ve got to try of necessity to convert the politics into good policy. It should work the other way. There is an old saying that good policy makes good politics. That seems to have been lost on us in contemporary times.* (Elected)

*There are a number of institutions and organizations and agencies that do things that should add great value to what we do but quite frankly, when members are in the frame of reference if this is a part-time endeavor and I spend 60 days engaged in exciting public policy debate and then the rest of my time is focused on politics, it doesn’t lend itself very well to an engaging kind of consistent consideration of public policy.* (Elected)

*…members back then took a subject, researched that subject, understood that subject and you took pride in the fact that you could stand on the floor and debate that issue based on your knowledge of it. You didn’t have a talking point sheet, you didn’t have a staff member sitting there, that was unacceptable. That was for people who didn’t know what the hell they were talking about. And so to me I guess because of the time constraints, people haven’t been able to get briefed as much or learn as much or become as confident so they’ve had to rely on staff more.* (Elected)

*I mean it’s not as politically correct to say, but I think the gift laws have hurt the legislative process dramatically. In the ‘80’s, I mean, it wasn’t as partisan even though the numbers were just different, Republican vs. Democrats. But you had families that would go to Disney weekend. There was Dade Day in Dade County. Pensacola Day you go over and the Blue Angels would fly. Daytona, you’d come down and go to the race. So you would have 25 or 30 members going to different
communities as guest of the Chamber of Commerce or community groups. They’re lobbying, they want their whatever they want but for someone like James Harold Thompson who grew up in Gretna to go down and see traffic and the congestion of Miami or Palatka or something like that, while you know intellectually all that stuff exists, until you walked it, and been through it and seen it, it’s a different feel. And the other thing is that you took your wife and your kids. And everybody got to know everybody… While you may have disagreed on an issue, you didn’t become so disagreeable and so I think it built for a stronger process (Elected)

The Florida legislature meets in a 60-day session which has the advantage of forcing decisions to be made in a specific time period or not at all, but the disadvantage of prohibiting legislators forced to concentrate on the here and now from long-term, thoughtful, visionary policy in the period leading up to and during Session. (Elected)

Facing the Future: Actions for Implementation

Predicting the future has been a pastime for centuries. Organizations, such as the World Future Society, exist in part for the purpose of linking those who spend their time seeking clues as to what issues might emerge to those who seek to craft responses and solutions on the emerging public policy agendas. It is clearly stated in the organizational learning literature that in order to thrive, all organizations must be able to adjust and transform themselves to meet the unknown challenges of the future. They must be able to adapt, see things in new ways and apply what is learned to their processes. (Element 5) They must learn to thrive on the creative tension that can be crafted from new learning and what was thought to be known. (Element 5) And they must react to new knowledge based on an adaptation of previous responses in a continuous feedback process as described by Argyris in his double-loop process. (Elements 2 and 3))

Since the future is largely unpredictable, the legislative organization can use available tools such as the consensus forecasting processes to, at worst, map out what can be expected for the coming fiscal year. While attempts are made to go longer term, we often face surprises in the policy realm that would not have been predicted. The current, 2006-07, school year reductions in K-12 school enrollments in most of the larger counties of Florida were not a part of the predictive policy processes when the budgets for this year were crafted just last spring. The enrollment estimating conferences did not anticipate these declines and therefore the 06-07
budget was based on what was expected and not what occurred. In February, 2007, Duval County announced that K-12 enrollments were down 1,400 students with the Times-Union reporting “Overall, The Department of Education expects to send about $200 million less to school systems because of declines in urban school districts.” (February 26, 2007) Further, in trying to predict what might be the outcome of this enrollment drop for the preparation of the budget forecasts for the 07-08 fiscal year the estimating conferences will use rolling values for the past several years as guideposts in establishing what might be expected.

This enrollment estimating conference process does not include intensive forecasting and investigation. For example, what is not known is the impact of these enrollment declines and future high school graduation numbers, which will effect college enrollments. The number and quality of the high school graduates is in part a driver of the expected costs of programs such as the Bright Futures college scholarship program. What is not known in 2007 is if there is going to be a constant decline in high school students and if so, what kind of students are in the decline cohort. Are they students likely to attend college in Florida public or private colleges, community colleges, vocational schools does it include students not likely to attend any of these venues? Future research should investigate how organizational learning techniques could be applied to improve forecasting activities, keeping in mind the impact of these forecasts and the government programs likely to be affected.

Anticipating changes of this magnitude become problematic for policy makers. Even with the changes suggested in this paper, the creation of a pure learning organization, capable of anticipating all scenarios is not likely. But to this author that does not seem to be the intent of the organizational learning literature, which is largely crafted to help organizations improve their thought and learning processes. In general, the major authors of the learning literature assume that forecasts will likely be wrong and that surprises will occur. An efficient learning organization will be prepared to meet the challenges of the unexpected.

The best goal is to create an environment where the decisions made have better foundations and both the decisions and the foundation are subject to constant review. We must adopt a mind set that tells us that when we see a “no problem” attitude, that is the real problem. Florida needs to develop what the Japanese refer to as Kaizen, seeking to institutionalize their activities in a continuous learning process. What must be created are learning mechanisms and processes that enable the Florida House to use feedback and learning as an integral part of the
policy evaluation processes, to prompt them to consistently evaluate that which has been done, why the solutions were chosen, and to seek to alter strategies to meet these kinds of unexpected situations. Continuous learning is a central component in effective learning. Legislatures repeatedly handle issues that are similar, but not identical. This part of the process should be viewed as central to a continuous, double-loop feedback process of policy evaluation, adjustment, and re-evaluation.

It is interesting to note how respondents commented on what the legislature of the future might look like and what changes they would like to see occur. Here are some of the comments:

*I see even greater use of technology coming. More virtual hearings, better analysis of state program expenditures, more controls on outsourced spending. Expansion of interim projects and investigations. I can see where testimony is catalogued and digitized and becomes a historical reference tool for future policymakers.* (External)

*Evolving technology. This makes historical data and public input much more available.* (Staff)

*I think that the with mass media and communication, it’s very easy for members to keep up to speed with things like emails and other communications devices that are now available to them that they didn’t have before so even 10 years ago 12 years ago… Unlike previous years where members might get a 100 letters, now they get 2000 emails. Now they get multiple calls in to the office about those issues.* (Staff)

*As Florida becomes more diverse, both in population makeup and the demands for economic and business development to support the ever changing and expanding demands of its’ population, the Legislature of the future may be greatly expanded to better represent those demographics. The Florida Legislature of the future could become more inclusive of its populace by restructuring the legislative cycle to incorporate multiple sessions with specific goals and objectives. Rather than taking a “shotgun” approach to resolving political and policy issues, perhaps a more defined approach should be considered. As a result of ever changing technological advances, the Legislature of the “not to distant future” may require less staff and physical resources to manage the needs of the legislature.* (Staff)

The issues of thinking with a greater futures orientation were sufficient enough to warrant the National Conference of State Legislatures to convene a study panel designed to determine the implications of change on traditional legislative processes and structures, with the stated intent,
“to study how legislatures may change in the future and develop ideas to meet the challenges caused by change” (2000, p. IV). Participants from 14 states convened for this purpose. They were able to develop four possible scenarios of the future, each of which would impact the Florida House processes. It is interesting to note that only through connections with people involved in this study process was I able to get a copy of their report. The website for NCSL did not list this as a past study and the materials were not available here in Florida. This perhaps serves as another example of institutional effort on a critical topic not remaining available for future participants. The NCSL also produced a guide to conducting futures studies within the legislative processes that would serve as an excellent template for research within any legislative body interested in building futures research processes.

The four scenarios they developed are (p. vii):

- The Harassed Legislature, where direct democracy challenges the fabric of the institution;
- The Circumvented Legislature, where direct democracy initiatives dominate a weak legislature;
- The Traditional Legislature, where the legislative institution has maintained public confidence and has reduced the perceived need for direct democracy initiatives;
- The Diminished Legislature, where a loss of interest and confidence in representative government has allowed strong political personalities to assume unchallenged leadership.

Their primary conclusions, after analyzing these scenarios, include these admonitions:

- Legislatures Must Take a Positive Approach to Change While Protecting the Core Values of a Representative Democracy.
- Legislatures Must Help Improve the Quality of Public Participation in all Forms of the Democratic Process
- Legislatures Must Help Improve the Quality of Public Debate on Public Issues, Showcasing the Advantages of the Legislative Arena Where Possible
- Legislatures Must Continually Reassess and Refine Their Public Policy Role
- Legislatures Must Protect the balance of Power
- Legislatures Need a Renewed Commitment to the Institution, Better Education for the Public and the Membership, and Expanded Communication and Technological Capability

All of the materials contained within this study should lead the reader to these same conclusions. It is imperative for the Florida House to embrace change in order to maintain
relevance in the policy process as well as to develop, review and modify programs funded to meet the needs of a complex and growing state.

Suggestions for changes:
1. A section in each bill analysis format that will institutionalize future thinking by requiring comments on future trends and expected outcomes for proposed bills.
2. A greater historical reference in House bill analyses, with a history of the issue, not just the bill under consideration, linked to item 1 to offer trends.
3. Create a standing Committee of the House, staffed by the created Policy Office, the purpose of which is to stay focused on future trends and issues and to create an annual report for the House on new trends, demographics and economic issues that might be emerging that would affect policy decisions and programs already in place. This office should be closely aligned with the Office of Economics and Demographic Research.

One caveat should be noted, and interestingly was only raised by one respondent, but is a very valid point to raise here. Legislatures pass bills that become law, but in the language of the bills passed there can be many interpretations, which in many court related actions goes to the question of intent. What did the legislature really mean when it passed a bill? What did it hope to accomplish? Rosenthal (2004) indirectly speaks to the complexity of issues and the potential for varied interpretation, with the likelihood of later court interpretations rising from the contention in the process. “Anything can go wrong, and sometimes frequently does.” (p.102) “Disagreement is a normal part of the legislative process” (p.104). “There are nothing but obstacles to overcome here” (p. 105). This complex situation was described by one staff person as follows:

The only thing that would not be of value, it would have value temporarily while the issue’s still fresh and alive but so much of the background material that get’s created has a limited shelf life. Are you saying it gets stale? It get’s stale, exactly. Unless it’s updated, the one thing you hate to have are a lot of documents out there that clearly have no longer any research value to them but they were posted out there as what the Florida Legislature says. And in fact that’s one of the things that our attorneys constantly are fearful of is that we would have research documents—fearful is probably too strong of a word—there’s been a concern for years dating back to the Tedcastle years that published information in the legislature, that the courts would use that as a legislative intent as to why we passed the legislation. And a staff document is just that. It’s a perception of a staffer. It’s not necessarily the legislative finding or the legislature’s direction and why they passed the legislation or didn’t pass the legislation. So we tend to put information out that is the official work product but even with staff analysis you’ll notice that when we get to a final bill usually we don’t do a final bill analysis for that very reason, because that analysis is only a good as the
consideration. What ultimately the members do in voting on an issue may not have been the original research direction from OPPAGA or the final bill analysis that was produced on that document may have no direct connection with what ultimately passes legislatively. And we don’t put documents out there that indicate that that was the direction to the court that was the direction of the legislature or the reason, with intent, as to why the legislation was passed. (Staff)

This is a serious issue and one that goes deep into issues of separation of powers and the roles of both the legislature and the courts. However, one must weigh the relative values of this constraint with the value of improved record retention and collection and the need for the creation of a more historical record on issues. Perhaps a legal scholar could develop language to be added to documents and to be used in each step of the process to define that materials used are designed for reference only and in no way reflect the “intent” of the legislature in passing bills. However, one caveat is required here. An absence of obvious ‘intent’ and actions to reduce interpretive intent seem to fall into the trap that the current policy seeks to avoid. Absent clear intent it is then up to the courts to be more interpretive, leaving interpretation to potentially be less accurate and more in contest to what the legislature intended.

Suggestion for change: Staff Analysis for bills should also contain a caveat laying a foundation for actual intent or notice that the work papers were just that and no more, if that is the desire of the House, as should all memos, documents, studies, whitepapers or research materials used and stored during the issue analysis process.

It does not seem logical to this writer that materials should be not kept based on a fear of any potential judicial review, when it could be made clear that nothing collected, stored or disseminated, directly or indirectly lead to the passage of legislation unless floor debate contains reference to that material. Future legislators using the same materials may reach entirely differing conclusions of fact and purpose and alter the statutes accordingly, but at least they will have an improved foundation upon which to build their positions. If floor debate is also constrained due to not wanting to establish a record, then it is suggested that this is an issue worthy of detailed study by other scholars, as truly the value of deeper and more complex knowledge available for future legislators, scholars and historians should outweigh perceptions about what future courts might do in unknown cases.
Summary

In this study I sought to determine if there exist some possible options for improvements in making the policy makers and staff researchers “well informed” by seeking improvements in the information collection, assimilation, disbursement, response evaluation and expansion or exportation, (CADRE) activities with the intent of using this study for continued study and analysis by practitioners and scholars. It remains unclear which has more influence in the development of policy; structure or norms, but the pursuit of a better information and reflection process should offer a higher quality discussion on policy issues and lead to the creation of a better track record of evaluation of problem solutions offered each year. It is not enough to continue to pass remedies if those who pass them do not take time to deeply consider the underlying premises of their actions. Thinking through how you do something, not simply accepting processes as they are offered, appears to be a good first step towards creating an advanced learning environment.

Argyris and Schon (1996, p. 201) offer four issues that capture an essential debate in the organizational learning field of study. These four issues apply to the setting of this study. First is the issue of levels of aggregation. Where in each organization should there be placed emphasis on organizational learning? In the House learning occurs at the staff, member, subcommittee or committee under council structures, councils, and then at the full chamber level. The second issue raised is what is the “meaning of productive learning”? There is value to be gained in any organization in learning at both the single and double loop levels. These authors differentiate further between two types of double loop learning, one that produces changes in outcomes, changes in organizational values, and one that involves changes to the processes of organizational inquiry. In the House all levels of learning provide value if the learning is retained and shared. If implemented, many of the changes suggested in this study would influence the acceptance and institutionalization of both levels of double loop leaning. Third, they raise the issue of the “nature of the impediments to productive organizational learning” in real world situations. In the House, as shown in this document, especially by many of the comments cited,
there seem to exist numerous impediments from historical to cultural to structural. Implementation of the suggestions for change can help ameliorate many of the impediments, but not all. Finally the fourth issue they raise, identifying the “kinds of interventions that are likely to be effective in enhancing organizational capability for productive learning”, certainly has been the focus of this study. By using an examination of the tools available, the structure and processes and the changing roles of the actors, this study has identified many options for change and tools to accomplish the creation of a more capable learning organization.

Schwandt and Marquardt (1999, p. 77), focus on the complexities of both the organization and the environment in which the organization exists. “Our ability to predict cause-effect relations has been limited by the complexity of the social action system. There are simply too many variables to control for and their nonlinear nature creates highly complex relations.” The complexity of the Florida House, where actors and key decision makers are in constant flux, combined with the increasing demographic and social changes seen in Florida in recent times, demand that the legislature improve their abilities to anticipate possible changes and create scenarios for adjustments to policy.

Irrelevance is a distinct risk for any legislative body on selective issues. Legislatures face a reduced legitimacy and increasing inadequacy if they cannot better learn to monitor, manage and even manipulate the rapid changes in the environment served.

While legislatures do not seek a competitive advantage, such as companies in the corporate world face regularly, they are responsible for placing the state they serve in a position of competitive advantage in attracting visitors and businesses, creating a stable and educated workforce and a quality living environment. Schwandt and Marquardt (1999) contend, in this fast paced world of massive social changes and rapid advances in technology, organizations must transform how they work by improving how they learn through actions to “develop a higher form of learning capability, to be able to learn better and faster from their successes and failures from within and from outside their organization” (p. 17). The modern legislature is no less needy than any other organization in requiring changes designed to facilitate this enhanced learning process.

Whether or not the Florida House could ever be structured to meet the double loop model described by Argyris and others remains to be proven. I suspect that there is value in the complexity and confusion in the legislative process and that a perfect model is neither likely to
occur nor fully preferable to what exists. Each two years bring a re-consideration of structure and of process, since the rules are always revised. The reasons for this re-structuring have as much to do with leadership preferences as they do with any analysis of how the House can best function. But even in this rules revision process there is not much engagement outside the leadership team, nor is there much, if any, questioning by the membership at the time of adoption at organizational sessions.

From a larger perspective, the process is largely the same regardless of the structure, even if tweaks occur in how long it takes for a bill to be considered, how many bills can be filed, or when debate occurs and amendments can be considered. The actual process of doing all this remains the same and the actors simply change their approaches to effecting changes. What can be changed greatly is the amount of information available for decision makers and the time they have to digest the material. It is these changes that would most impact the ability of the House to move closer to the organizational learning models offered in the literature. The application of the Elements for Effective Organizational Learning, in this setting, is best applied to how bills are considered, how issues are resolved and how the research activities are managed. Expanding available resources and allowing time for a thoughtful review of prior actions are two critical tools that need to be incorporated into the House processes.

Clearly, for every comment heard by this interviewer about shortcomings in the policy processes there were likely as many commensurate comments about “maybe this is how it ought to be” and “perhaps this is how it is best designed to be.” So it is my intent to offer potential changes to practice to make the House more efficient or accurate in the policy review processes and to open up the thought processes by participants as to how the policy investigation and review processes might be done differently. To this author this seems to be a critical aspect of organizational learning theory; Argyris’s and other’s notions of double-loop learning and the willingness to constantly self evaluate, seeking new and better methods of conducting the primary functions of an organization. This was reaffirmed by the NCSL study in 2000.

Using Hirst’s (2000) concept that government is the only institution with the breadth and depth of powers capable of instituting collaborative management on a broad scale, one might place the legislature at the top of this power matrix since it alone combines the ability to statutorily distribute power and duties, represents the broad public sector by a networking of political districts, has accepted legitimacy of decision making authority and more largely, can
muster and allocate resources. It is clear that the legislature has the resources to create an extensive collaborative learning effort. Finding ways to overcome the frequency of changes in actors in both elected, appointed and staff positions will be the primary challenge to the implementation of a true learning organization in the Florida House of Representatives.

In Chapter Two the importance of networking in the legislative process was discussed. Here is a re-statement of some of the writers who focused on networking, offered here as a point of emphasis and to also re-focus on the need for effective learning to occur at all levels, individual, group, and organizationally. Fosler (1992) asserts that “state government needs to conceive of itself as a learning system encouraging a constant flow of useful and useable information coming from whoever has it and moving to whoever needs it.” The legislative branch of state government, largely the entity charged with developing policy initiatives, can be viewed as a network of constitutional officers, each with their own constitutional status and authority, but each hugely reliant on the network of fellow officers for information and support to accomplish their authorized tasks. Agranoff (2005) used Senge (1990) to advocate for the need for reliance on collaborative learning in governance. Berry and Brower (2005) conclude, “not only does network management imply major new challenges for learning on the part of individual managers, the network’s collective participants must learn how to learn together”, a learning process requiring “an awareness of the network’s own change processes, learn from these processes, and work collectively to adapt the network for greater effectiveness.” Pfeffer and Sutton (p.47), conclude, “That is why creating a culture that fosters an evidence based approach to management and problem solving is one of the leader’s most crucial tasks, regardless of whether they are in charge of a business, a non-profit or a government agency.”

We face the dilemma of relevance in all research efforts. It is hoped that this project can and will be used by future leaders in the Florida House and potentially leaders in legislatures elsewhere. It is further hoped that other scholars and legislative organizations will use this project as a stimulus for further investigation into how our governmental policy investigation processes can be improved, enhanced and modified to keep step with our rapidly changing times. Lofland and Lofland capture this dilemma, “the consequences can be difficult to forecast. Some reports “catch on” right away and shape thinking about topics for many years. Others drift about in the literature for a considerable period of time and then “take hold” suddenly. And, sad to report, many (probably most) published reports have very little impact on the corpus of
knowledge” (1984, p. 158). My hope is that this study will follow what Lofland and Lofland describe as infrequently possible, that, “specific inquiries may have an effect on the wider world” (p.159).

I close with again noting that prior to becoming Speaker, Marco Rubio embarked, along with future leaders of the House, on a process of collecting “100 Innovative Ideas for Florida’s Future” (2006). In the forward to the book that came out of this process he stated, “We cannot see Florida only as it is today. We must envision it as it could, and should be tomorrow, and have a plan to turn that vision into a reality.” To this author the most critical “idea” in the book, and one that links to this research project, is number 100, “create an ‘Idea bank’ where ideas are submitted and successful ideas are chronicled.” However, it is not just the ideas that should be stored, but also the efforts that derive from the exploration of ideas, the data and information obtained in the process, thus creating a repository of information on Florida policy issues that can be used as a resource for all.

In the end it is clear to me, as Plato describes in his Allegory of the Cave in The Republic, that education and enlightenment are not processes that serve to place bits of knowledge into empty minds, but more should serve as tools that show people that which they already know and make them desirous of pursuing knowledge more vigorously. Crafting a more capable learning organization in a politicized, and constantly changing setting, like the Florida House of Representatives, may involve more of the providing of tools that show the highly capable elected officials more of what they already know, just in a deeper and more complex manner, than it does a teaching/learning process. Providing lit pathways to success might do more than any reorganizations of structure or process.

Revamping the organizational structures of legislative bodies has occurred throughout history. As example, on May 8, 1780 Edmund Burke spoke to Parliament against a bill designed to shorten the periods between elections for Members. His words spoken then could just as easily be spoken now. “There is not, there never was, a principle of government under heaven, that does not, in the pursuit of the very good it proposes, naturally and inevitably lead into some inconvenience which makes it absolutely necessary to counterwork and weaken the application of that first principle itself, and to abandon something of the extent of the advantage you proposed by it, in order to also prevent the inconveniences which have arisen from the instrument of all the good you had in view” (Kramnick,1999, p. 164).
Florida, a fast changing, complex state has a dilemma when it comes to what level of performance it can expect to get out of a legislature that is constitutionally bound to be part time. Every interviewee spoke about the need to accommodate changes in actors and the need for information to be available, accurate and retained. A common response sounded like this:

Member turnover, due to term limits, has impaired the institutional and historical perspectives of the legislature, in that it appears to take most Members at least one full two year cycle to learn the legislative and budget process. The learning curve isn’t because of term limits, but has historically been a factor. The same would apply to the policy investigation process... (Staff)

It is generally conceded that term limits has affected the knowledge exchange and information strength. Here is a typical comment:

They’ve had to become more dependent on staff and they’ve had to become more dependent on the lobbying core to get to know their issues. And frankly, I think... where you’ve had the failure of 8 is enough is that for members it takes a while to learn this process and to know how to be proficient in it and I think that’s the failure of 8 is enough. (Staff)

There is also ambivalence among respondents regarding what should be done in interim periods, but clearly it is understood from the interviews that more could be done in teaming staff and members and a better usage of interim periods, especially in the period before the elections, would add greatly to the policy investigation processes. The hours are long for some staff, but not all, and they are especially long immediately before sessions, during sessions and during committee weeks. As one long term staffer pointed out: I will tell you the down time really is needed by staff to get back up to speed on their issues. Not to mention the fact that the only time that you would ever get to take would be during some of that down time period. And that’s true of members not just the staff. But clearly staff can be better utilized and trained better to incorporate long term analysis in bill reviews and can be instructed to build future oriented thinking into interim projects, independent research and other assigned tasks.

In the end we find the dilemma of knowing that what can be done will require the will of future leadership to enact. (Element 1) Two comments best capture what is really required to effect the changes needed to improve the organizational learning capabilities of the Florida House of Representatives and one, offered as a closing dilemma, is the impact of term limits and what is gained and lost by the turnover of power so frequently:
Legislative and executive branch leadership are ultimately the factors which are much more important than all the tools though. Internal vs. external are not as relevant as the leadership use of the product, research or forecast. All the forecasting, research, tools, planning etc that governments across the country wouldn’t have predicted a 9-11 scenario, yet Florida’s proper fiscal restraint and measured size of government lent itself to us being in one of the best financial situations in the country during the time. (External)

... learning an issue is still available to members if they want to. Dudley Goodlette could learn an issue faster than any member ever I’ve been associated with. I won’t mention some members that served twenty years that never learned much about any issues! It is nonetheless helpful to have institutional memory and staff members that have the other characteristics necessary to be retained are beneficial to the state and public policy. (External)

I don’t want to say that legislators aren’t doing their job or that they are not effective at doing their job. They are as effective as they will ever be and are very proficient in what they do based on the amount of experience that they’re given. But the voters in effect created a situation where they didn’t want people to become professional politicians. The problem is that they really have not gained that through Eight is Enough because there were always professional statesmen and women who served in this process that were not professional politicians but dedicated themselves to public service and became the peoples representatives and experts in areas because the number of years that they did it. And Eight is Enough barely gives them time to even get to know the process. (Staff)

In the end, it is the quality of the people empowered to vote on the critical issues of the day that make the differences. Who gets elected is up to the voters. But once elected, legislators have the choice of continuing to improve the knowledge base processes so they can be better informed and armed with the knowledge required to make intelligent and thoughtful decisions that have lasting impact on the future of Florida. This study was designed to offer options for improvement as seen through the eyes of highly experienced participants. As stated by Rosenthal, (2004) “The job entrusted to American state legislatures…is extraordinarily tough….but it somehow gets done-albeit somewhat differently by different people in different states and at different times” (p.245). This study may not be fully indicative of what other state Houses of Representatives experience, but my hunch is that it does mirror what would be found if similar studies were undertaken.
## APPENDIX A

### Florida House of Representative Partial Senior Staff Chart 2002-04

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Previous Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Direct Speaker’s Staff</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief of Staff</td>
<td>Staff Director House Procedural Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Chief of Staff</td>
<td>Member District Aide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications Director</td>
<td>External Position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Press Secretary</td>
<td>External Position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaker’s Scheduler</td>
<td>External</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Affairs</td>
<td>External</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Assistants</td>
<td>Two from Committee staff, one external</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>One remained in Speakers Office</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Speaker’s Office of Policy and Budget

Analysts for:
- Agriculture and Natural Resources: Local Government
- Courts: Council for Smarter Government
- General Government: Insurance
- Business and Commerce: Competitive Commerce
- Procedures: Rules, Ethics and Elections
- Health and Human Services and Education: External
- Policy Coordinator: Office of the Governor

### Substantive Committee Staff Directors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2002-04 assignment</th>
<th>previous assignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture and Natural Resources</td>
<td>Agriculture Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriations</td>
<td>Governor’s Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Regulation</td>
<td>Business Regulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commerce</td>
<td>Judiciary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education K-20</td>
<td>Commerce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future of Florida’s Families</td>
<td>Elder and Long Term care</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finance and Tax</td>
<td>External Position</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health Care</td>
<td>External Position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurance</td>
<td>External Position</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public Safety and Crime</td>
<td>Healthy Communities</td>
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<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Administration</td>
<td>Competitive Commerce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>Transportation</td>
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</table>
APPENDIX B    Florida House of Representatives Committee Structure

Note: Committee structure and assigned chairmen have a major influence on legislative policy development. Continuity of structure or roles can affect learning curves and due to term limits there is a reduced opportunity for development of expertise. Inserting specific member names in chair roles and tracking their assignments from term to term and also linking outside professional expertise as a possible variable as part of a comprehensive study of the impact of transitional change in structure and responsibility on policy development and member behavior would be useful.

Structure for 2002-04 Term of Office       Equivalent Structure for 2000-02 Term

Non-Substantive Committee Roles
Speaker                                          Speaker
Speaker pro tempore                               Speaker pro tempore
Majority Leader                                   Majority Leader
Majority Whip                                     Non-existent
Minority Leader                                   Minority Leader
Clerk                                             Clerk
Sergeant at Arms                                  Sergeant at Arms
House Policy Office Chairman                      Non-existent

Subject Matter Jurisdictional Structure for 2000-02 Term

Council for Competitive Commerce
   Committees on: Agriculture and Consumer Affairs, Banking, Economic Dev. and International Trade, Insurance, Tourism.

Council for Healthy Communities

Council for Lifelong Learning
   Committees on: Colleges and Universities, Education Innovation, General Education, Workforce and Technical Skills

Council for Ready Infrastructure
   Committees on: Information technology, Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, Transportation, Utilities and Communications.

Council for Smarter Government
Committees on: Business Regulation, Judicial Oversight, Juvenile Justice, Local Govt. and Veteran’s Affairs, State Administration.

**2000-02 term**
Fiscal Responsibility Council

Procedural & Redistricting Council
Committees on: Claims, Congressional Redistricting, House Redistricting, Rule, Ethics & Elections, Senate Redistricting

(a total of 7 major councils with 34 committees, 41 total leadership appointments)
(76 Rep., 44 Dem.)

**Subject Matter Jurisdictional Structure 2002-04**
Committee on Agriculture
Committee on Appropriations
  Subcommittees: Agriculture and Environment, Commerce and Local Affairs, Education, Health, Human Services, Judicial, Public Safety, Transp.& Econ. Dev..
Committee on Business Regulation
  Subcommittees: Energy, Gaming and pari-mutuels, Telecommunications Trades Professions and Regulated Businesses
Committee on Commerce
  Subcommittees: Banking and Securities, Tourism, Workforce and Econ. Dev.
Committee on Education
Committee on the Future of Florida’s Families
  Subcommittees: Elder Affairs and Long Term Care, Children’s Services
Committee on Finance and Tax
Committee on Health Care
  Subcommittees: Health Services, Health Standards
Committee on Insurance
  Subcommittees: Health Access and Financing, Insurance Regulation
Committee on Judiciary
  Subcommittees: Claims
Committee on Local Govt. and Veteran’s Affairs
  Subcommittees: Local Affairs, Military and Veterans Affairs
Committee on Natural Resources
  Subcommittees: Environmental Regulation, Public Lands and Water Resources
Committee on Procedures
  Subcommittees: Ethics and Elections, Rules
2000-02 term
Committee on Public Safety and Crime Prevention
  Subcommittees: Corrections, Criminal Justice, Juvenile Justice
Committee on State Administration
Committee on Transportation
  Subcommittees: Highway Safety, Transportation System

(total of 16 committees, 37 subcommittees, 53 leadership appointments)
(81 Rep., 39 Dem.)
APPENDIX C  Reflection on House Turnover

Turnover and the resultant loss of “institutional memory” make the presentation of policy data and information all the more compelling. How can a learning organization be created and maintained when turnover of participants is pervasive? Demographics in Florida have also changed considerably in the nineties and 2000’s. The House makeup for the 2000-02 term was as follows.

### 2000-2002 House

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Republican</th>
<th>Democrat</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>(90)</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>(30)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The membership demographics in 1990-1992 were as follows:

### 1990-1992 House

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Republican</th>
<th>Democrat</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>(100)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>(20)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The House makeup for the 2004-06 term was as follows:
2004-2006 House

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Republican</th>
<th>Democrat</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>(90) 67</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>(30) 18</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of comparison appear to be counter-intuitive. The 1992 legislative reapportionment process was controlled by a Democrat majority of seventy-four to forty-six; a large enough minority to use procedural tactics to delay consideration of a reapportionment plan, but certainly not enough to fashion a reworking of the electoral map to yield a Republican majority by 1996 and the substantial reversal of the majority ratio by 2000 without an intervening reapportionment. A frequent tactic in many areas would be for a minority party to align with selected minority group members. However, even these numbers yield only fifty-five votes; still six short of a majority.

Further apparently counter-intuitive to what would pass for conventional wisdom would be the demographic shifts to what would be perceived as a more “left” identity based on typecast roles and ideologies. White male membership dropped from eighty-three to sixty-nine, a seventeen percent reduction which was maintained in the subsequent 2004 session; white females increased forty-seven percent, black membership increased twenty-five percent, increasing again in the 2004 elections and Hispanic membership increased thirty seven and one half percent, increasing by one in 2004..

2000-02 freshman class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Republican</th>
<th>Democrat</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>(49) 30</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>(13) 5</td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## 2002-04 Freshman Class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Republican</th>
<th>Democrat</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Males (13)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females (9)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There appear, at least based on demographic characteristics, to be several changes with the 00-02 class compared to the larger full House membership. While the ratio between Republicans and the total membership was close when comparing the freshman class (55%) to the full membership (57.5%) it bears comparison to see if this has trended to see if this ratio declined even further with subsequent elections. There was a clear change in the number of male members, with the freshman class being 78% male and the full House membership only 57.5%. Retention of these members and a continued trended growth in these numbers would surely alter the gender balance in the House potentially erasing the fifty percent gain from 1990 to the 2000 election. White membership was 79% in the freshman group and 78% in the total House not showing any significant change within this class of elected members. Clearly the Florida House has changed in the decade from 1990-2000.

The 2004-06 freshman class (including one member elected to fill a term due to the death of a member) is 41% female, 59% male. Racial and ethnics trends have not seemed to form as this class is 82% white, an increase over 2002. Republican numbers have increased with 86% of this class compared to 53% of the class of 2000. Total House Republican membership in 2004 was 72%, an increase of 14 seats in two elections.
APPENDIX D  Sample Interview Questions:

Following is a list of sample questions used in the written submissions and verbal interview processes to elicit participant recollections about their experiences as actors within the Florida House of Representatives processes. This is by no means a complete listing as sometimes the flow of the interview went into more or less detail on various issues based on the particular roles of the participants, which largely were in three categories, External, including lobbyists and media types, as well as public agency heads, Staff, focusing of senior House staff such as Chiefs of Staff and Staff Directors and Elected, which included members who served in senior leadership roles, leaders of both Chambers and elected Executive leaders.

General Topics

1) Thanks you for being willing to visit with me on this study. For the record can you give me a short history of your involvement in the Florida legislative process?

2) Can you recall instances on issues in which you had direct involvement when the information used on that issue had sufficient quality information, review and discussion to pass without concern the issue would return? Where you felt that enough had been done and it was time to move on? Instances where you knew the information was insufficient but the bill passed anyway? Can you describe why this might happen?

3) What kind of longer term research occurs in your experience? How does the legislature anticipate future policy needs?

4) How do you think the legislature uses established research arms of government such as OPPAGA, EDR and other planning or estimating groups? Should these kinds of efforts be done through independent arms of government, using collaboration with the Senate, House and Executive Branch, or should the House have their own research arms? How should Consensus Forecasting tasks be used by legislative staff?

5) What is your opinion of institutional memory on major issues in the House? Would there be value in maintaining some form of on-line storage of research issues by topic or do typical issues that come before the legislature get “stale” too quickly?

Process Topics

6) What do you think about legislative efforts to examine the success or failure of prior passed programs or laws? In your experience, have you found staff engaged in reviewing issues where you had prior interests? How would you change any review procedures? How do past legislative actions relate to current evaluation of issues? Is there institutional retention of information and data on issues over time?

7) Can you think of instances where the legislature broadened the scope of the inquiry on a complex issue, going deeper into the topic than what you would think is the normal
routine investigative process? How effective was the change in approach? How did they alter from normal procedures?

8) Between end of session and reorganization session in Florida is approximately seven months? How is this time used by members and staff in policy investigation efforts? Are there ways to improve this use of time? Impediments?

9) How does the hand-off of power between Speakers affect committee level activities? What could be changed in this process?

10) How could the House better develop future Chairmen? Future Speakers?

**Committee Topics**

11) In your experience, what kinds of internal communications, formal or informal, occur between substantive staff jurisdictions on bills that have more than one committee of reference? How would a greater use of joint meetings of committees on major topics affect consideration?

12) How frequently are inter-committee staff teams used on major issues with multiple committee references? What advantages or disadvantages do this type of interaction offer?

13) What do you think the role should be for Task Forces/Select Committees or special investigative bodies within the House?

14) How often do you recall committees meeting for purposes other than the hearing of bills? Can you recall them meeting, for example, in open session with executive branch agency heads to talk about trends, conditions or the future of the state, in an exploration mode not involving a specific bill or budget request? Does this occur frequently? Why or why not?

**Staff Topics**

15) How important is subject matter experience for staff directors prior to their committee assignments? What criteria have you experienced in the selection of key staff? Which has more value, process knowledge or subject matter knowledge in this process?

16) What is your view of staff turnover? How does key staff turnover affect the ability of the legislature to study complex issues? How does it affect normal issue consideration activities?

17) From your experiences, do you think there is a marked difference in the experience level of staff directors appointed after term limits? Is there an increased or decreased level of partisanship? Why do you think this?

18) How do you view relations between legislative staff and executive branch officials? Has this changed since before term limits? How?
Member Topics

19) What is your view of member turnover? How have term limits affected the policy investigation processes? How does turnover of Chairmen or members assigned to committees affect the system?

20) How do you think member life and educational experience prior to serving has been used as criteria for committee assignments? From your engagement do you think there is a marked difference in the experience level of members appointed as Chairs after term limits?

21) With term limits timeframes are shortened and members do not have the luxury of longer times to learn more about issues as prior to term limits. How do you think this affects issue consideration? Does the process require detailed subject matter knowledge by members?

Conclusion Questions

22) Do you have any general thoughts you would like to share about how the Florida House of Representatives can improve the investigation, retention and sharing of information on complex issues?

23) Could you describe for me some changes you might think will be made in the legislature of the future? Some changes you would like to see for the legislature in 20 years?
APPENDIX E  Sample Daily Session for Legislative Training Sessions

Day Title “A Mixed bag- Federal, Urban, Education and Ethics”

Timeframes

9:00  National Government Funding- Allure and Traps
9:45  Urban Revitalization- Building Healthy Communities
10:15 Break
10:30 E-Commerce and the New Economy
11:00 Florida in the Global Economy
11:30 Lunch with Guest Speaker – Economic or Trade Expert
1:00 Education Reform Issues
2:00 Break
2:15 “A Few Minutes With…”Invite Education Expert”
2:30 Lifelong Learning Models and Opportunities
3:30 Modeling Change in Florida’s Education Systems
APPENDIX F     Sample House Daily Committee Meeting Calendar

(H) - Health Innovation, Morris Hall (9:30AM-12:00PM)
Orientation to Florida's Medicaid Program
Update on Medicaid Reform Implementation
Update on Emergency Department Utilization, Costs, and Staffing

10:00 AM Events
----------------------------------------------------
(H) - Health Quality, 216 C (10:00AM-12:00PM)
Presentations by the Agency for Health Care Administration regarding:
- Health Quality Assurance
- Florida Health Information Network
- Medicaid Gold Standard E-Prescribing Pilot
Presentation by the Department of Health on Medicaid Quality Assurance
Presentation on Physician E-Prescribing

(H) - Healthy Seniors, 24 H (10:00AM-12:00PM)
Presentation by Department of Elder Affairs
Overview of DOEA Programs
Update on Aging Resource Center Implementation
Update on Nursing Home Diversion Program

01:30 PM Events
----------------------------------------------------
(H) - Healthcare Council, Morris Hall (1:30PM-3:30PM)
I. Opening Remarks by Chair Bean
II. Staff Presentation on Background for HHS Budget
III. Discussion of Forensic Mental Health Issues
   a. Presentation by the Department of Children and Families
   b. Public Comments
IV. Adjournment
APPENDIX G  Informed Consent Form

Florida State University
Office of the Vice President For Research
Human Subjects Committee
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2742
(850) 644-8653  FAX (850) 644-4392

REAPPROVAL MEMORANDUM

Date: 8/18/2006

To:
Edwin Moore
2453 Bass Bay Dr.
Tallahassee, FL 32312

Dept.: ASKEW SCHOOL

From: Thomas L. Jacobson, Chair

Re: Reapproval of Use of Human subjects in Research: Can a Learning Organization be Created and Maintained When Turnover of Participants is Perssasive? An Analysis of the Florida House of Representatives

Your request to continue the research project listed above involving human subjects has been approved by the Human Subjects Committee. If your project has not been completed by 7/11/2007 please request renewed approval.

You are reminded that a change in protocol in this project must be approved by resubmission of the project to the Committee for approval. Also, the principal investigator must report to the Chair promptly, and in writing, any unexpected problems involving risks to subjects or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the Chairman of your department and/or your major professor are reminded of their responsibility for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in their department. They are advised to review the protocols of such investigations as often as necessary to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHS regulations.

Cc: Earle Klay
HSC No. 2000.0543-R
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I freely and voluntarily and without element of force or coercion, consent to be a participant in the research project entitled

"Can a Learning Organization Be Created and Maintained When Turnover of Participants is Pervasive? An Analysis of the Florida House of Representatives"

This research is being conducted by Edwin H. Moore, who is a doctoral candidate at Florida State University. I understand the purpose of the research project is to better understand how the structure and organization of the Florida House of Representatives can be altered in order to create a learning organization designed to accommodate the impact of significant turnover in membership. In addition, the formal structure and organizational rules the study will explore the impact of informal, social organizational variables and how leadership can best manage in this environment. I understand that if I participate in the project I will be asked questions about my perceptions and recollections about the operations of the House, the structure and organization of the body, and about my recollections of incidents that may help to better describe the functions of the organization.

I understand that I may be asked to fill out paper and pencil questionnaires. I will also be asked to participate in an interview with Mr. Moore. The total time commitment would not exceed one hour unless I consent to an extension of time or a follow-up interview. I understand I will not be compensated for this effort.

I understand my participation is totally voluntary and I may stop participation at anytime. I can ask for all or portions of my comments to be kept confidential, to the extent allowed by law, but understand that the narrative results of this project are intended to identify source materials when possible in order to provide for summation of what I perceive to be best practices for the House of Representatives. I am able to stop my participation at any time I wish.

I understand there are benefits for participating in this research project. Member turnover due to the impact of term limits and the attendant re-structuring of the organization every two years provide an opportunity to analyze how best to structure this organization to maintain acquired knowledge for future use. I understand that my perspective as a former participant in this process will add greatly to the analysis provided through this research project.

I understand that this consent may be withdrawn at any time without prejudice, penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. I have been given the right to ask and have answered any inquiry concerning the study. Questions, if any, have been answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that I may contact Ed H. Moore, 850-681-3188, for answers to questions about this research or my rights. Group results will be sent to me upon my request.

I have read and understand this consent form.

(Signature) (Date)

Audio taping participants:

I understand that I will be tape recorded by the researcher. These tapes will be kept by the researcher in a locked filing cabinet. I understand that only the researcher and a paid transcriber will have access to these tapes and that they will be destroyed by December 31, 2010.

If you have any questions regarding this consent form please contact the FSU IRB office at 850-7500 or email jmh588@fsu.edu
REFERENCES


Leary, Alex. “Next House speaker to hire 18 staffers from governor’s team”. St. Petersburg Times. Published October 19, 2006


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Edwin H. Moore is the President of the Independent Colleges and Universities of Florida, (ICUF), a Tallahassee based association of 28 private, not for profit colleges and universities with over 120,000 students. He also serves as the Executive Director of the Higher Education Facilities Finance Authority in Florida, a statutory body.

Prior to this position Ed served as Staff Director for the Florida House of Representatives Policy Committee and concurrently served as Staff Director of the Select Committee on Medical Liability Insurance, the Select Committee on Worker’s Compensation and the House Public Security Coordinating Committee. In these roles he was engaged in legislative efforts on such complicated issues as medical malpractice, worker’s compensation, public security, public official integrity, environmental permitting, constitutional amendment consideration, court funding, and many others. He began his professional career working for the Florida House of Representatives in 1973 as a legislative assistant and as a committee staff analyst, after which he worked for the Comptroller of Florida and then ran his own consulting firm for over two decades, before returning back to the House in 2002. He has been with ICUF since 2003.

He has been married to Kathleen for 33 years and has four children, Cason, Allison, Ashley and Brady.

He was in private consultancy in Illinois for 21 years, where he also served that state in various capacities such as a member of the Illinois Board of Higher Education, the Governor’s Privatization Council and the Illinois K-20 Joint Education Board.

Ed’s family first moved to Florida in 1835. He grew up in Alachua, Miami-Dade and Broward Counties.