Author's response to reviews

Title: Evidence in the Learning Organization

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Dear Editors,

I am writing to submit revisions to our manuscript entitled “Evidence in the Learning Organization” to BioMed Central’s *Health Research Policy and Systems* (MS: 105039411522522). We believe that we have adequately addressed the referee’s concerns, and a detailed response list is included in this letter.

If you have any further questions, please e-mail (gerald.e.crites@wright.edu), or call at 937-224-3078.

**Regarding Referee 2’s comments:**

1) Referee 2 noted that the last three frameworks are discussed in a superficial manner. He/she suggested that they be briefly mentioned and referenced. We have two concerns regarding this last suggestion: 1) by significantly deemphasizing the last 3 frameworks, we are concerned that readers will get the impression that there were only 4 rather than 7 important frameworks that came out of our systematic inquiry and, 2) we revisit many of the concepts and principles from these frameworks during our later discussions about the ELO model and the scenario resolution. Instead, we have expanded the discussion of these last three frameworks to include more detail and healthcare examples, and these last three frameworks are now more reflective of the first four frameworks (*pages 17-21*). We believe that, by expanding these sections, we have adequately addressed Reviewer 1’s original request (adding more discussion depth and healthcare examples with all 7 frameworks) while also addressing Referee 2’s concerns about superficiality.

2) We have added reasons for the lack of consensus around several models, along with citations (*page 11, lines 3-9*).
3) Argyris and Schon were the originators of the organizational learning (OL) concept, mainly applied through their loop learning concept. Many follow-up models were subsequently published to offer clarifications to this original description. The 4i framework is considered a specific extension and clarification of the original OL concept, thus 4i framework is considered by many academicians to be part of the OL literature. We have clarified this section by changing the subheading of this section (page 11, line 11), describing the original formulation as the loop learning framework rather than OL framework (page 11, lines 14-17), and how the 4i extends and clarifies loop learning across organizational levels (page 11, line 23, through Page 12, line 11).

4) Citations are added to table 1.

5) The tacit to explicit clarification is added to Table 1.

6) Regarding the TQM column in Table, we added practitioners as one group that creates knowledge. We agree that they can build knowledge through single-loop learning processes, but, as described in the expanded TQM framework section, only leaders typically form higher order knowledge around assumptions of policies and procedures, so we have left them as the other group of knowledge generators.

7) On the original page 16, para 1, we have changed the last sentence in the section of Organizational Culture to be more clear and less contradictory (page 16, line 24 through page 14, line 4).

8) Regarding the comment about TQM and double loop learning, we have failed to find any reference that supports this contention and have found three references that explicitly describe TQM as limited to adaptive and single-loop learning. This confusion is understandable, since we are describing the traditional TQM theory and not the practical work of quality managers. We have no doubt that successful quality managers can use double-loop learning processes, but they are likely drawing upon other theoretical foundations when they use these practices. We have added these three references to the TQM section (page 20, line 23) along with the distinction between TQM theory and the practical work of quality managers (page 21, lines 5-8).

9) In the last sentence in the Diffusion and Dissemination framework section, we were referring to the systematic review described earlier in the paragraph rather than our literature review. We have removed this phrasing to avoid confusion.

10) Regarding the ELO model, we realize that it could be perceived as confusing. We have clarified this section by changing the “learning” theme to “inquiry” to better reflect the role of individuals as inquirers for OL (page 21, line 19; page 24, line 4 and; Figure 1). We also clarified in the preceding paragraph that an organization must successful at all processes reflected in the four themes to be considered a Learning Organization, and that these processes are not necessarily sequential (but can be concurrent and interactive, as represented in Figure 1) (page 21, lines 14-17).

11) We have removed the communities-of-practice reference in Table 2.
12) Regarding the suggestions about changing Figure 1 to reflect the positive learning traits of the exemplary unit originally described on page 24, we believe that this modification would change the original intent our research. In the introductory section, ELO model section, and the discussion, we state the intent of our inquiry to build a model to help organizational scholars and leaders diagnose flaws in their organization’s capacity to learn and share knowledge. Because of this intent, we believe that a demonstration of how to use this model as a diagnostic tool with the narrative scenario description and a figure is still necessary. We do, however, like Referee 2’s suggestion to demonstrate how a unit can effectively use learning and knowledge. We, therefore, expanded the narrative about this unit and used the screening questions in Table 2 to demonstrate why the unit is learning and generating knowledge more effectively (page 26, line 18 through page 27, line 14; Table 2). We believe that, by using her/his suggestion this way, we have adequately demonstrated the utility of the screening questions (leaders would want a quick tool to help reduce the time/analysis of well-functioning units to free time/resources for less-functioning units).