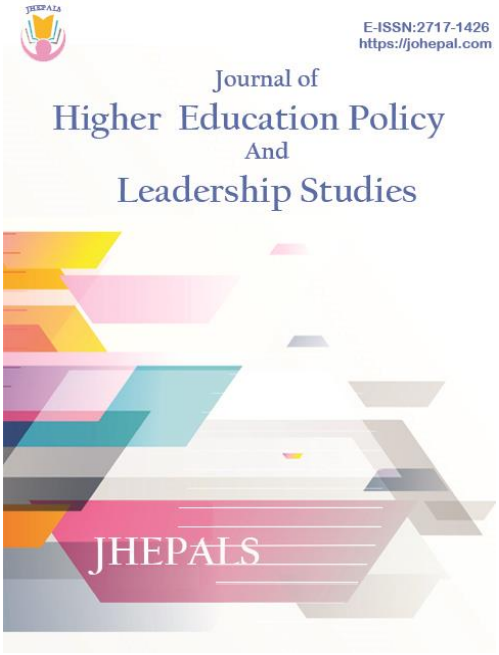
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Leadership Decision-Making and Insights in Higher Education: Making Better Decisions and Making Decisions Better

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Leadership Decision-Making and Insights in Higher Education: Making Better Decisions and Making Decisions Better

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Abstract

This article proposes a new framework for Principals called the Objective Knowledge Growth Framework (OKGF) that is designed to help them make more effective decisions in resolving problems of practice. It also provides a structure to help principals break away from education systems that impose inductive practices, as it provides a framework for supporting the decision-making processes of others as well as enabling rationality in their own practice. The use of the OKGF framework is designed to enhance individual reflection which, in turn, is multiplied by others through dialogue, interaction and engagement with others. Through interaction, dialogue and engagement, greater and improved insights into decisions are more likely to occur than if knowledge and information continues to be compartmentalized within schools and, consequently, performance assessments are more likely to be enhanced. Not only does the OKGF have the capacity to improve principals' performance, it also provides a framework by which principals may maximize student success.

Keywords: Decision-making; Educational Leadership; Objective Knowledge Growth Framework, Insights; Karl Popper

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Introduction

Principals play critical roles in schools. Their roles and responsibilities have expanded in significant and challenging ways. They take on the roles of instructional leaders, curriculum leaders, supervisors, managers, heads of finance, and administrators-in-general, and have to demonstrate an understanding of the implications of non-compliance along with the ability to make good and sound decisions. This is due to a growing movement of accountability in education that has been developing over the last two decades or more. With the increased use of measurable performance criteria, principals are judged on the combined success of students in their schools and also on the performance of schools within their areas (Chitpin & Jones, 2015). The challenge for principals is make the best decisions to attain these measurable outcomes.

School improvement is a complex process with many factors to consider. Student achievement is only one of such factors (Salpeter, 2004; Shen, 2010). Darling-Hammond et al. (2012) state that, if we want our students to do well at school, we must invest in the preparation, mentoring and professional development of our teachers and school leaders. The Objective Knowledge Growth Framework (OKGF), presented in this article, proposes a framework by which principals may make more effective decisions in resolving problems of practice. It also offers a structure that may assist principals to break from provisionary practices. It does this by providing a framework for supporting the decision-making processes of others, as well as encouraging greater rationality in leadership practices. The OKGF is designed to enhance individual reflection which, in turn, is augmented by others through dialogue, interaction and engagement. Through such dialogue, interaction and engagement, greater and improved insights into decisions are more likely to occur than if knowledge and information continue to be compartmentalized within schools, departments and classrooms. Consequently, with the OKGF, performance assessments are more likely to be enhanced. In addition, not only does the OKGF have the capacity to improve principals' performance. It also provides a framework by which principals may maximize student success.

OKGF: A Framework for Principals to Maximize Student Success

The OKGF is built on Popper's (2002) critical rationalism. It proposes a process that helps principals go beyond the spotlight in solving problems of practice. The framework enables them to learn how biases work and how to avoid them. The three steps of the OKGF are sequential in general and can be followed in order, but not rigidly so. Sometimes, one may need to "double back" on something one has learned. For example, in the course of gathering information to test a tentative solution or theory, one might discover a new option that had not previously been considered. At other times, one may not require all the steps. For example, a long-awaited promotion or proposal for increasing the budget probably would not require much distance, time or study before one accepts the offer.

Figure 1 depicts the cyclical process of identifying an initial problem (P1), proposing several tentative solutions to address or resolve the problem by testing tentative solutions (TTn) against information one can trust, and distancing oneself from short term emotion and

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conflicted feelings to make the best choice in solving the identified problem (EEn). The schema then iterates until a satisfactory solution is found (Pn).

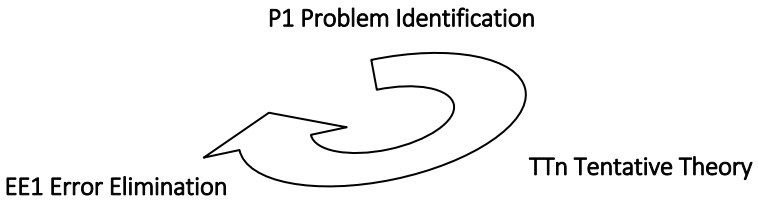


Figure 1. Objective Knowledge Growth Framework Schema

The comprehensive yet simple OKGF has repeatedly been shown to provide a process for understanding principals' decision-making (Chitpin 2015, 2017, Chitpin & Evers, 2018, 2019, Potter & Chitpin, 2021). For example, when the principals in Chitpin and Chitpin's (2017) study were interviewed in depth and their artifacts were analyzed in detail, the OKGF schema was recognized as a useful process for assisting principals' decision-making processes regardless of their professional training, background or prior experience. Its focus assists people to explicitly examine 1) how they identify the problem; 2) how they devise tentative theories through multi-tracking or seeking feedback from someone who has solved the problem; 3) how they apply the many theories/solutions/options to the situation to eliminate errors such as confirmation bias, and 4) how to distance oneself from emotions to resolve the problem at hand.

The OKGF is sensitive to experience, contexts and exigencies (Chitpin, 2015). Perhaps the best known attempt at incorporating all three—experience, contexts and exigences—was the model of the reflective practitioner developed by Schön (1983), who focused on broad procedures for specifying the conditions under which reflecting on and in practice could flourish. However, Schön's work did not provide a structure to guide self-reflection or prompt learners to report on their process when solving problems. The OKGF, however, enables users to broaden their frames of reference by seeking feedback, options, and alternative choices from peers or by seeking out someone who has solved the problems. Furthermore, trusting our "gut feelings" (instinct) or seeking only that information that confirms our bias will not correct the problems, but following the OKGF process can boost one's chances of getting where one wants to go. Additionally, the framework can systematically and simultaneously track the progression of challenges and opportunities employed by principals, so that the users learn the 'shape' (Heath & Heath, 2013) of the problem. Thus, each strategy employed becomes progressively bolder and sharper in empirical content.

Finally, the OKGF is cost efficient and relatively easy to implement, as demonstrated by a study conducted with a group of principals from the South Coast of England who resolved organizational problems using the OKGF (Potter & Chitpin, 2021) as well as by a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) funded study that focused on understanding principals' decision-making (Potter & Chitpin, 2021; Chitpin, 2021b). Participants were essentially asked to document the problems they encountered in their practice, using the OKGF template. Thus, when the OKGF is adopted within a natural

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school setting, as a process, it offers several advantages. Participants are provided with a structured form to record the processes they use and they have a means to explain the actions taken when faced with opportunities or challenges. As a result of the successful implementation of the OKGF, principals also found that they were able to generate more and improved insights and inspiration.

Insights and Inspiration

My original plan for this article was to write about how people make decisions under pressure and uncertainty, and how their decisions impact others. In this vein, I chose to explore how school leaders make decisions in their own contexts in order to maximize student learning in order to reduce perceived achievement gaps. I did not plan to write this chapter on eliminating mistakes and increasing insights based on personal experiences or stories. However, the personal stories included in this chapter seemed appropriate, given that decision-making, in any respect, is an intensely personal activity, as it depends upon the decision-maker's attitudes, beliefs and values. To begin, I had been awarded a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) of Canada grant to explore how organizational leaders make decisions, using a Popperian Decision-Making framework. School leaders from around the world were recruited to participate in this research. These participants were trained in the use of a framework focusing on the growth of objective knowledge (OKGF) that has been shown to support leaders' professional learning and insights (Chitpin, 2018; 2019; 2021a).

I began thinking about insights into decision-making in 2019, when I was stationed for three weeks on the south coast of England to work with educational leaders regarding closing or, at least, reducing achievement gaps in their educational establishments, using Sir Karl Popper's critical rationalist approach. In one of the training sessions, when I showed the participants the slides of the OKGF cycle, based on Popper's schema, I began getting questions as to how we could increase insights after eliminating errors (See Figure 1). My initial thoughts were that insights need to cause a change for the better; for example, how Martin Chalfie won the Nobel Prize for his insight regarding the discovery and development of the green fluorescent protein. Akin to the invention of the microscope, such insights enable researchers to see things that have previously been invisible.

Thus, insights are not about making adjustments to our solutions; they have to transform our thinking, our actions, our understanding, our worldview (looking at the world differently), and our desire to make things better. Based on this working definition, insights are unique, transformative, and subliminal. I was not certain as to how to answer the participants' questions. I told the audience that I did not have an answer for this question but would genuinely think about their questions and would hopefully get back to them when we meet for the third phrase of the study, which has yet to happen due to the current COVID-19 pandemic.

On my way back to Ottawa, I had a long layover at Heathrow Airport, as my flight was delayed. I started thinking about the insights and, to kill time, I visited the bookstore at Heathrow. I found a book called Seeing What Others Don't: The Remarkable Ways We Gain Insights by Gary Klein. I bought the book and read it from cover to cover. While reading it, I

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wondered if I could learn something useful to share with my participants. The question of how one increases one's insights kept popping up in the back of my mind. Where does insight come from? Or can insight be cultivated? If so, how does one goes about cultivating it? Are insights to be equated with knowledge loopholes?

Mr. Li has a Son

On the flight back to Canada, I thought of my collection of email exchanges from my colleagues and students, either describing how I had deviated from guidelines or policy or of painful or exhilarating stories about leaving the orphanage where I lived in Mauritius, starting a new life in Canada and becoming an academic. I had shared these thoughts with friends, colleagues and my two young boys, now young adults. Here is an example of such stories.

I asked my friend and colleague, who was also from Mauritius, "How did you end up with the name 'Lee.'" She replied, "My husband was born in Mauritius, to a set of parents, Irene Sim and Joseph Li." Now, it is common practice in Asian cultures to call an elder or a teacher by their title and last name. So, for example, if I were to return to Mauritius, I would be known as Professor Chitpin. But I digress. To return to my colleague's story, her husband's father, Mr. Li, was a businessman with several employees. In those days, home birth was a common practice on the island and, when her future husband was born, Mr. Li sent one of his employees to the birth registrar and told the employee that the newborn's first name was John.

Now, the literacy rate in Mauritius, at that time, was less than five percent. Many of the employees were illiterate, working mostly in the sugar cane fields or tea plantations. Those who worked in stores were those whose parents or family members had connections with the business owners. Mr. Li believed that his employees knew that his surname is spelled "L-I," as it was the name of their company. However, the employee registered the baby under the name of John Lee instead of John Li. Many years later, when her husband applied to emigrate to Canada, he decided to retain the spelling of his last name. My colleague and friend claimed that this story was first told to her by her husband and, later, told by her to people like me, who asked how she got her last name.

I like this type of story because it shows people being clever, making the most out of an erroneous situation and seeing what other people didn't see. Instead of applying for a legal change of his son's last name to John Li, (John Lee is his legal name, so he would be changing it to Li) Mr. Li decided to leave his son's last name as it was recorded, as he was busy raising his young family while taking care of his business interests. Besides, he thought that the whole island knew that he had a son and would recognize his son as being John Li. That was all that counted. When it was time for John to attend school, the parents registered him under John Li, as no legal documents were required to register a child in the local school system.

After all, what could possibly happen to a son who does not have his father's last name in official and legal papers? John went through elementary and secondary schools under the last name Li until it was time for him to officially register for the Cambridge School Certificate and Higher School Certificate Examinations administered by Cambridge University. At

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sixteen years old, he used his birth surname, Lee, for the first time to register himself for the competitions.

Education in Mauritius

The education system in Mauritius is based on the British system, since Mauritius was a former British colony. Similar to England and Wales, all children aged five to sixteen must receive full-time education. Children start primary school at the age of six and move on to secondary school at the age of 11. Secondary school covers the period from age eleven to fifteen. At fifteen, students take their General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) state examinations. The GCSE is a single-subject examination, set and marked by independent examination boards. Students can take up to ten GCSE examinations in different subjects, including mathematics and English. After GCSE, students may choose to continue with their studies or leave school to find employment. For those who choose to continue with their studies, they may take the A levels (Advanced level examinations) as a pre-requisite for university entry.

Mauritius gained its independence in 1968, becoming the Republic of Mauritius. Children in Mauritius are enrolled in Standard I at the age of six and are automatically promoted every year until they reach Standard IV. Once they reach Standard IV, a streaming process begins. Since the system is highly competitive, a two-year preparation begins in Standard V and continues in Standard VI, until the end of primary school examinations, which results in a Certificate of Primary Education (CPE).

The CPE is a national examination administered to all primary students on the island for the purposes of ranking students and admitting them to secondary school. In Standards V and VI, all students are required to take four compulsory subjects such as English, French, mathematics and science or environmental studies. According to the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research, in 1998, 25,629 students participated in the CPE examinations. However, only 8,000 students were admitted to secondary schools with another 3,000 students being admitted to vocational or technical schools. Students are placed in a secondary school, based on their ranking in the CPE examinations. The higher a student ranks, the more prestigious the secondary school he/she is able to attend. The country, however, was left with another 14,000-plus students without a secondary education (Ajaheb-Jahangeer & Jahangeer 2004). Thus, the education system helps to create social inequalities and further perpetuates the poverty that has existed in the country for decades (Chitpin, 2011).

Many middle-class and wealthy families prefer to send their children to the United Kingdom, France and other European countries to do their post-secondary education. Beginning in the late ‘80s, many Mauritian families began to send their children to Canada and the United States for their bachelor’s degree or other post-secondary degrees. After completion of John’s Cambridge High School Certificate, he applied to emigrate to Canada to pursue his studies. In his application to Canada, he changed his last name from “Li” back to “Lee,” in order to make his last name sound more British. Because he was educated at St. Esprit College, a Jesuit all boys school on Mauritius Island, taught mostly by Irish priests, he had acquired a British accent. However, because he did not appear to have an Asian last

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name and was schooled by Irish and British educators, he was often referred to as someone who was born and lived in the United Kingdom. At the immigration interview, he was complimented for his British accent, even though he never left Mauritius prior to emigrating to Toronto. He was granted permanent residency status without issue. On the other hand, his sister, who was studying to become a chartered accountant, had trouble getting her residency paper as she had her father's actual last name.

Marriage and Name Change

Some years later, Mr. and Mrs. Lee met in Toronto through a mutual friend. After a short courtship, he proposed and they were married a year later. He asked his wife to take his surname, as her maiden name was an Asian last name and he believed that, although they lived in a multicultural country, the surname, Lee would serve her better than an Asian last name. And, so, she took his surname.

Surely, having Lee as a last name can be both a blessing and a curse. So far, it has served my friend and colleague well. One could say that her husband had prepared her case well and that she had benefitted from his incubation stage where he had stopped consciously thinking about how he ended up with his last name and let his unconscious mind take over so that his wife could pass as a British subject, like him. John's insight is not to be confused with intuition, much like the decisions made by firefighters, who make their decisions by recognizing how the situations they encounter fit the pattern they have learned. As a result, the decisions made are fast and automatic. In other words, firefighters use their intuition to quickly identify an option that will likely produce a satisfactory result. They then evaluate their intuition, not by comparing their options, but by consciously and deliberately assessing how they would fare if they put their insights to the test. This strategy is used by firefighters more than 80 percent of the time to resolve their toughest problems (Klein, 2017).

Of interest, here, however, is how did John come up with such an insight? How did he make sense of this jumble of unconnected and sometimes contradictory facts, events, and impressions? My friend and colleague then recalled several situations where, having Lee as a last name, worked in her favour. For example, upon receiving her doctorate degree, she applied for a tenure track position at several Canadian and American universities. She was granted an interview 90% of the time. Once one gets shortlisted for an interview, one is able to present one's research agenda, meet the faculty and, if one has enough charm, one might get the job. One is also one step ahead of those who are not invited for an interview.

In all the interviews she attended, at one point or another, it was alluded to that the search committee did not expect to see an Asian woman with a Western name. They said it in a polite manner, although this mismatch of name and appearance did not stop there. In her first tenure-track position at the University of Alabama in Huntsville, where I first met Dr. Lee, students regularly asked her about her nationality and how she ended up with an Anglo last name. Was it her husband's last name and, if so, was he a white anglophone? These questions about her nationality and last name continued to be a mystery for students and colleagues.

I identify with this story, because, eventually, when I left Huntsville to join the faculty of education at uOttawa, I did not expect my last name and nationality to become a subject

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of conversation or inquiry among colleagues and students, as I had grown up in Toronto and believed that Ottawa was as cosmopolitan as Toronto. However, both my francophone and anglophone colleagues were intrigued to find another Asian woman with a non-Asian last name who speaks not only English but "standard" French. How could it be, many wondered?

Insights may not Always Lead to Positive Outcomes

Here is a story from my own experience. One day, two years into my assistant professorship, a white male was sent by my colleague to speak to me about his interests in researching the professional development of school leaders. When he knocked at my door and saw that my last name did not match my Oriental appearance, he checked the name on my office door to ensure that he knocked on the correct door. When I asked him how could I help, he was so surprised that hardly any words came out of his mouth. He eventually proceeded to run in the opposite direction.

Eventually, I caught up with the colleague who had introduced the white male student and asked if I had said anything to scare her student off. She laughed and said, "No, it's your look." "What is it about my look?" I asked. She answered, "The student did not expect to see an Asian woman with an Anglophone last name. As well, he was probably expecting to work with a non-Asian supervisor." This insight moved me and made me nervous because I had made a new discovery by getting a new piece of information (e.g., some students prefer to work with white professors) and combined it with other information that I already had (e.g., my appearance) to form a new conclusion or idea. Insights may not always lead to positive outcomes.

Insights are not just reserved for Nobel Prizes winners; people have insights all the time. Sometimes, we notice them, as in John's story, who decided to align himself more with the British than with the Asians. Most insights, however, as revealed in my own story, are often so trivial that we don't pay much attention to them unless we are looking for solutions to our problems.

Insights

For school leaders to improve the performance of their school, they might find that they not only need to eliminate or reduce the errors in their decisions, but also increase their insights. In other words, relying on patterns that they draw upon to make rapid decisions do not have lasting effects, because each situation calls for a different solution. It is not one size fits all.



Figure 2. Adapted from Klein's (2017) Performance Improvement Model

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To a large extent, my research has focused on how organizational leaders make decisions, using a Popperian decision-making framework called the Objective Knowledge Growth Framework (OKGF) (Chitpin, 2015). The focus of the OKGF is to identify ways to eliminate errors (the down arrow) in the resolutions to problems encountered in educational practice. When school leaders encounter a new and unexpected idea (insight) and apply it to resolve a problem, they have a greater potential of arriving at a new understanding of the original situation, and/or may even expand the range of actions they could potentially take. Thus, insights, combined with error elimination, afford leaders a much more powerful tool to improve the performance of their schools.

According to Klein (2017), to improve performance, we need to reduce the errors and increase the insights. However, if we focus on eliminating all the errors but haven't created insights, the error elimination will not help us or the leaders in coming up with the best solutions to the problems they face. Thus, by only eliminating errors without creating any new insights, the performance, outcomes or results would not be improved. Eliminating errors would not have helped Mr. Li to get his son, John, to receive his residency paper without problems. In other words, if Mr. Li had rectified his employee's error of giving the birth registrar the spelling of Lee instead of Li, it would not have prepared John to align himself more with the British than with the Asian culture. In an ideal world, reducing mistakes or errors will help us gain insights but, unfortunately, this is not how it works. When energy is focused on eliminating errors, there is less likelihood that one will gain insights. Having insights is different from preventing mistakes, however. What organizations need is a productive balance between the two arrows (Figure 2), rather than one dominating the other.

According to Wallas, insights happen as a result of an unconscious stream of associations; it is like connecting the dots. He further suggested that we can increase the number of our insights by exposing ourselves to different ideas that will lead us to form new connections. However, Klein (2017) rebutted Wallas' idea on connecting the dots. He believes that connecting the dots trivializes the business of making sense of events to arrive at insights because anyone can connect dots. It is the non-dots that slow the stories down, yet they are an important part of each insight.

Graham Wallas's Insight

Graham Wallas a British freethinking intellectual and co-founder of the London School of Economics, was the first to publish a modern account regarding the phenomenon of insight. Wallas succeeded in finding clear themes in his collection of insight stories. His book, How Insight Works: The Art of Thought (1926), describes a model that is still commonly used to explain how insight works.

Wallas was born in 1858 in the northeast corner of England, called Monkwearmouth, Sunderland. He was given a standard religious upbringing by his father, who was a minister. However, Wallas abandoned his Christian faith and replaced it with socialism when he attended Oxford University, from 1877 to 1881. In 1884, Sidney and Beatrice Webb founded the Fabian Society and Wallas joined it soon after. The society was named after Fabius Maximus who avoided open battle with the Carthaginian leader Hannibal. Fabians believed

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that society could evolve gradually, rather than by revolution. Its members were comprised of Bertrand Russell, Leonard and Virginia Woolf, H.G. Wells and other luminaries.

The Fabian Society advocated for causes such as minimum wage, slum clearance, a universal health care system, and a national education system. Several of its members also helped form the British Labour Party in 1900. Wallas quickly formed a close connection with the Webbs and, when the latter established the London School of Economics in 1895, Wallas was offered the first directorship, which he turned down. However, he agreed to teach at the college. He was remembered by Beatrice Webb as a tall, slouching man with pleasant features, driven by moral fervor rather than ambition. He was a gifted teacher and inspired his disciples. Additionally, Wallas had many personas, among which was that of a psychologist. He believed that psychology could be used to improve society, including the stresses created by the Industrial Revolution. He did not believe that people behave rationally or base their behaviour on cost benefit analysis. In his book, The Art of Thought, Wallas applied concepts of psychology to demonstrate how people can think more effectively. His most lasting contribution in this book was a chapter called "Stages of Control," in which he described a four-stage model of insight, namely (1) preparation, (2) incubation, (3) illumination, and (4) verification.

Stages of Control

In the preparation stage, the problem is investigated by applying ourselves to an analysis that is rigorous, conscious and systematic, but ultimately fruitless because insights pop up expectedly, and spring from themes that matter to us and which are difficult to verbalize. Next, comes the incubation stage, where we stop consciously thinking about the problem to allow our subconscious mind to take over. Wallas referred to the German physicist, Hermann von Helmholtz, who, in 1891, at the end of his career, offered some reflections as to how this incubation stage feels or works. Helmholtz stated that, after a hard day's work on a project,

> happy ideas come unexpectedly without effort, like an inspiration. So far as I am concerned, they have never come to me when my mind was fatigued, or when I was at my working table. They came particularly readily during the slow ascent of wooded hills on a sunny day. (von Helmholtz, 1977, p. 19)

Wallas went on to advise his readers to take this incubation period stage seriously by seeking out mental relaxation and by not consciously thinking about the problem. He added that we should avoid anything that might interfere with the free working of the subconscious mind, such as engaging in serious reading materials. Wallas further illustrated his point by quoting the poet John Drinkwater about the way insights come about:

> Haunting the lucidities of life
> That are my daily beauty, move a theme,
> Beating along my undiscovered mind.

The illumination stage occurs when insight comes forth with conciseness, suddenness and immediate certainty. Wallas called this insight the "happy idea," resulting from the culmination of a train of unconscious associations. These associations require time to

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mature outside of conscious scrutiny until they are ready to surface. Wallas went on to claim that people could sometimes sense that an insight was brewing in their minds when it starts to make its appearance in fringe consciousness, thus giving people an intimation that the flash of illumination is nearby. The insight might also drift away and not evolve into consciousness; for example, we may stop and gaze out into space after reading an interesting or intriguing idea, hoping that an insight will appear. However, Wallas warned of the danger of prematurely trying to put the insight into words before it is fully formed.

In the final phase, the verification stage, we put our ideas to the test to determine their validity. It is also at this stage that we work out the details of the ideas. This stage is similar to Popper's error elimination stage, where one puts one's solution/hypothesis to the test to eliminate weaknesses in order to verify its robustness in solving one's problem.

Wallas claimed that most people use his four-stage model to explain how insight works. This is quite plausible on the surface, until we examine it closely. For example, in the story of how my colleague got her last name, Lee, her father-in-law did not spend any time preparing to change his son's last name. The insight came unexpectedly and was, in fact, a surprise. Hence, Wallas' claim does not hold, universally.

Preparation is not to be confused with expertise. After we have defined insight, we can see how the person gaining it acquired special kinds of knowledge. Our previous interests and experiences prepare our mind to register the insight in ways that others may have missed (Klein, 2017). For example, Mr. Li and John did not prepare to re-engineer their arrangements with the birth registrar or the Canadian Consulate. However, John also had an insight when he was able to connect the dots by getting new piece of information (i.e., his British accent), combined with the spelling of his last name, Lee, to form a new idea.

A Specifically Prepared Mind

Wallas recommended that we develop a specifically prepared mind by making deliberate preparations to resolve problems. Furthermore, he believed that, when we are stuck and need to find an insight that would help us solve our problem, we should start with deliberate preparation. Wallas used James Watson and Francis Crick, who worked on the structure of DNA, to illustrate the usefulness of his preparation stage. They worked hard to identify the structure of DNA and eventually discovered that it was a double helix. If they hadn't gone through such deliberate and specific preparation, they would not have succeeded in their discovery.

While the idea of deliberate preparation fits into my story of how my colleague ended up with Lee as her last name, it can be viewed both as a factor and a non-factor regarding the insight for her story. By waiting to change his name from Li to Lee, when he became a teenage and went on to secondary school, John had the time to use the resources at his disposal – that is, he was able to pass himself off as a British subject and, therefore, had an easier time getting his permanent resident status in Canada.

Mr. Li, however, did not deliberately prepare to have his son take on the surname, Lee. As so many insights are accidental and spontaneous, exposure to various ideas and specific preparation might not lead to breakthroughs. Therefore, I do not see how I could advise leaders to start with a preparation stage once they have identified their problem using the Objective Knowledge Growth Framework, based on Popper's critical rationalism.

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Having leaders rely on patterns of their decision making process or policies/guidelines alone would not help them improve their decision making skills or performance, or increase insights.

As for the incubation stage, the story of how my colleague ended up with the surname, Lee, can be viewed from two different angles. On one hand, there was not an incubation period when John ended up with Lee as his last name. It was merely a mistake. On the other hand, John had time to think of how he could pass Lee as a British name. Note that the difference may have simply been the separation in time (incubation) between the two instances that would have allowed time for the younger Lee's insight.

One may say that, while preparation aligns well with our work ethic, incubation is more about our play ethic. Some people recall having insights while walking their dogs, a welcome break, but increasing the walks would not increase the rate of insights. So, incubation periods may not always be necessary and sometimes, such breaks may be impossible to implement.

The illumination stage occurs when insights burst out with conciseness, suddenness and immediate certainty, which Wallas called the "happy idea." When viewing the culmination of a train of unconscious associations, with a newborn child ending up with Lee as a surname, there was no time to consciously analyze the event as to whether taking Lee as a surname was a good choice. The mistake had been made. Furthermore, Wallas claimed that people can sense when an insight is brewing. However, hinting that it would make its appearance, shortly, is also not plausible because insights are spontaneous; they do not give us warning signs.

Conclusion

Insights transform us in different ways. They change how we understand, act, see, feel and wish. They also change our understanding of things and transform our thinking. The story of how my colleague got the name Lee allows for differing viewpoints, which may even change the way we act next time we encounter British or Asian names. In some cases, insights can transform our abilities and understandings. For example, Mr. Li's story shows how insights change our notions of what we can do to make our lives better. However, Mr. Li's story was more about how to turn a mistake into an insight. Hillary Mantel, in Wolf Hall (2009), saw that "Insight cannot be taken back. You cannot return to the moment you were in before" (p. 16). When we have the insight, we say, "Yes, that is it." We are sure about our answer. There is also a sense of closure when we finally find the answer we are looking for. John found the answer he was looking for when he finally accepted Lee as his last name. It made him feel good.

This article has discussed how one may be able to eliminate decision-making errors and how one may be able to increase the frequency of one's insights. Along the way, we have met Dr. Lee, who benefitted from an early mistake in her husband's surname and was also able to capitalize on his insight about how that name is more Western sounding. We have also been introduced to Graham Wallas, a Fabian and co-founder of the London School of Economics.

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Also, a brief discussion explored the virtues of the OKGF and identifies how it may benefit the process of decision-making in conjunction with insights. Hopefully, these personal experiences and stories will prove useful in improving conditions necessary for insights to be experienced in greater frequency. In addition, this chapter has revealed how organizational leaders tend to make decisions, using a Popperian Decision-Making framework in order to allow for the growth of objective knowledge, which has been shown to support leaders' professional learning and insights.

Exactly how one goes about increasing the frequency of one's insights remains cloaked in mystery. However, one may be able to facilitate the increase in insights by investing in positive conditions that may encourage a greater number of insights. Truly, one of the ingredients in promoting this is to have a vivid imagination or, at least, some imagination. A second key ingredient is to be able to access conditions that encourage insights. Long reflective walks or a peaceful environment are clearly more conducive to developing greater insights than riotous surroundings are likely to have on one's reflectivity.

All this being said, increasing the frequency of one's insights can be encouraged but not forced. Because the development of greater numbers of insights helps to increase the strength of the "up arrow" (Figure 2) to improvement performance requires that conditions be met that are outside of the OKGF, the increase in the frequency of insights remains outside of the parameters of the decision-making model. However, if we combine insight with the OKGF, it gives leaders a more powerful tool. If one is able to relax, enjoy the natural and built environment and reduce the stress that surrounds us all, perhaps this is a good way to increase insights. In fact, increasing insights and wellbeing may have more in common than is at first suspected. Like everything else in this world, there tends not to be just one purpose for things. Therefore, reducing stress in one's life may ultimately lead to not only becoming healthier, it may just help to increase the number of insights that one has and this, in turn, may lead to making better and more insightful decisions.

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