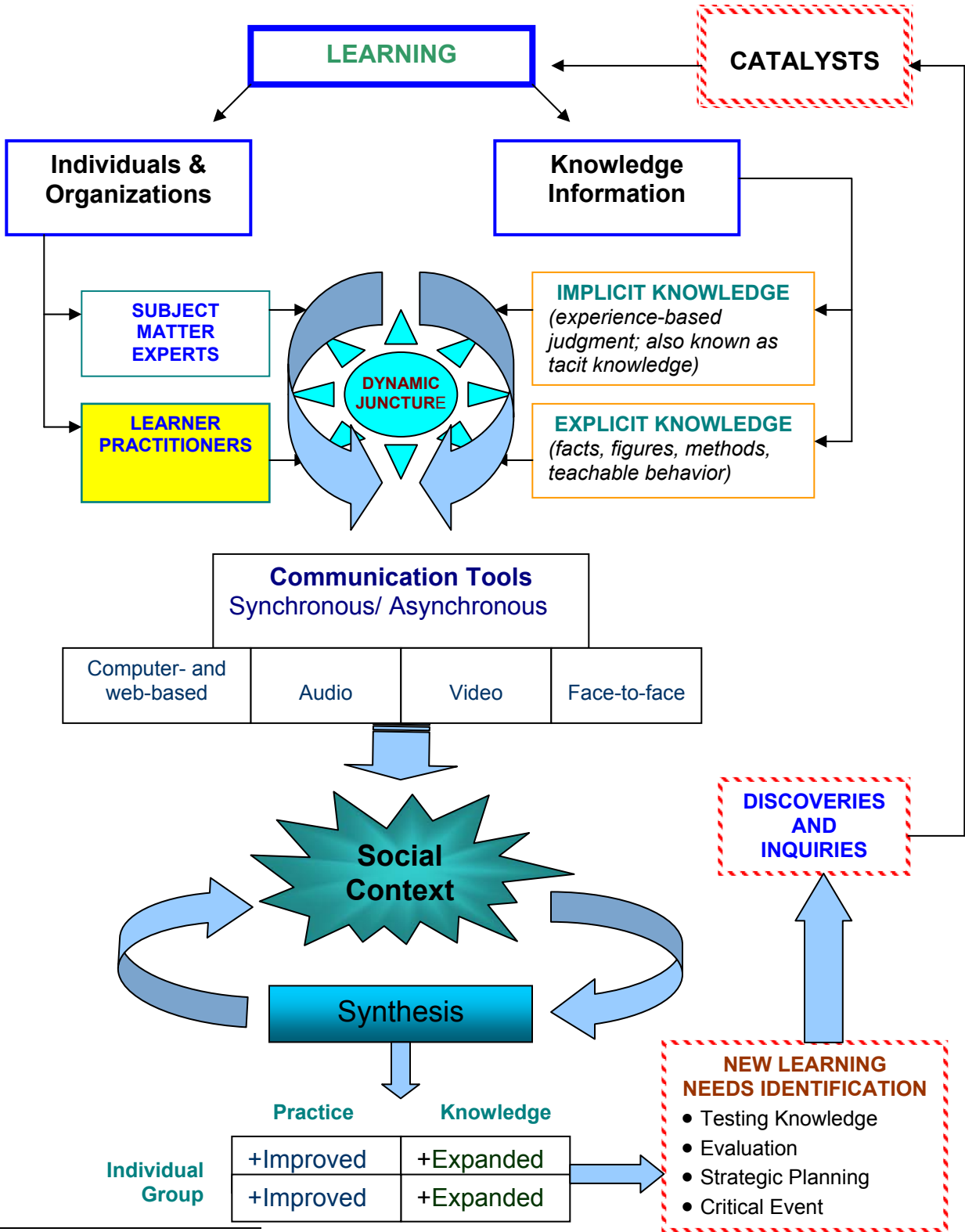


# Learning Support Model<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> A blend of ideas informed by the work of John Seely Brown and Paul Duguid and articles/books on web-based training, virtual teams, knowledge management, and electronic performance support systems.

# Learning Support Model

## Background

This model evolved in 2000-2001 as Faye and I did lots of reading on training, knowledge management, virtual teams, web-based training, and electronic performance support systems. Our literature review convinced us that a convergence of ideas and practices from different disciplines is occurring in how effective organizations facilitate group and individual learning, using the wide range of existing and emerging communications technologies. This model represents our current understanding of these trends.

## Operating Principles

- The cycle of individual and/or group learning is initiated by catalysts (*when the student is ready, a teacher appears*).
- Learning may occur on an individual or group basis.
- Individuals in a learning situation are typically divided into subject matter experts (SMEs) and learner-practitioners.
- The practical knowledge that learner-practitioners bring into the learning context is often seriously undervalued by the subject matter experts
- Knowledge is of two types: implicit (based on judgment formed through experience) and explicit (largely facts, figures, methods, and teachable behavior).
- Once implicit knowledge is recorded, it becomes explicit.
- It is not possible to translate all implicit knowledge into explicit formats such as documents because the body of knowledge increases continually. Also, some of it can only be acquired through extended mentoring/internship type learning contexts.
- The acquisition of explicit knowledge often has its roots in implicit understanding i.e., giving someone a recipe to bake a cake only works if that person has mastered certain prerequisites of working in a kitchen.
- The dynamic juncture of SMEs, learners, and implicit and explicit knowledge in the learning situation will always be different based on how and in what proportion these ingredients are assembled.
- The wide range of communication tools makes a variety of social contexts—opportunities for formal and informal interaction among learners—possible for learning to occur.
- Social context is vital to support maximum learning by individuals and groups.
- If the social context encourages sufficient interaction among the participants, they may achieve synthesis.
- Synthesis allows the individual and/or group to improve practice and expand knowledge.
- New learning needs are identified as individuals test their knowledge, or as part of formal evaluation efforts and strategic planning, or by other critical events.
- As these learning needs are identified, they prompt additional discoveries and inquiries that can restart the learning cycle.
- Effective learning organizations try to reduce the length of this learning cycle by regularly identifying and evaluating the needs of learners, and addressing those which enable the organization to achieve its most important short- and long-term goals.