

The concept of action learning is certainly not ~~a new one~~. It was developed by Professor Reg Revans in the 1940's when he was Director of Education for the National Coal Board. According to Johnson (1998:296), where he was Director of Education. Revans He developed the idea, ~~according to Johnson (1998:296),~~ "that the colliery managers who were experiencing organisational problems might learn from one another by talking through their difficulties and personally taking action".

Revans continued ~~with~~ his work on action learning ~~throughout~~ all his entire life ~~from~~ (1907 – 2003. During this time, he )-inspired ~~ing~~ many others, including Mike Pedler, who was a (Revans professorial fellow at the University of Salford. Pedler ), ~~who has~~ updated an original book by Revans entitled (~~The ABC of Action Learning 1983~~) in particular, to ~~take the~~ bring more attention to the concept ~~on board~~. The Revans Centre for Action Learning and Research ~~is based~~ was eventually established at the University of Salford.

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This ~~provides an illustration of~~ illustrates how much progress action learning has made within academia since its inception in the 1940s. The concept of ~~as~~ action learning was ridiculed by management schools ~~throughout~~ in the 1960s and 1970s. ~~However, as~~ Revans described action learning as "freedom from teachers, from any form of printed syllabus or regulations, from any fixed institution or even from any literature save the most occasional... not even a case study or business game". He also ~~and~~ referred to the material ~~what was~~ being taught in business schools in 1976 as "an inexhaustible avalanche of lofty hocus pocus". Given these statements, it is ~~perhaps~~ not surprising that many ~~they~~ were initially sceptical of action learning ~~to say the least~~.

It is this concept of taking ~~of~~ action that distinguishes action learning from any other. Bourner et al (1996); state that action learning is a "process of reflection and action, aimed at improving effectiveness of action where learning is an important outcome". However, the author notes that learning by doing is a long-standing concept. Koo (1999); provides two very early quotes; ~~firstly,~~ "What we have to learn to do, we learn by doing" (Aristotle, a 4<sup>th</sup>-~~c~~ Century ~~BCE~~ Greek philosopher) and ~~secondly,~~ "I hear and I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand". (Confucius 500 BCE). The author's ~~s~~ prefers the following ~~ence for a~~

quotation from Revans: ~~e is~~ "...one is forced to enquire into what one really believes, as distinct from what one may claim to believe while arguing in the seminar or at the case-study". ~~(Revans).~~

In action learning, the learner should become the focal point of the learning process. The success of action learning relies on ~~the~~ learners being motivated to learn for themselves ~~yes~~. (O'Hara 1997, cited by Koo 1999). There should be a collective approach to the problem solving of real problems with a cycle of inquiry that never varies. This cycle consists of a person completing the following:

- Presenting their problem without interruption
- B, ~~being~~ questioned by the other set members
- E, ~~exploring~~ the problem
- S, ~~then the person to~~ summarising what they have heard
- D ~~Declaring~~, ~~state~~ what action they intend to take

~~-~~ This continues for as many set members as time allows ~~and then~~ until the ~~there is a~~ review of the set's progress ~~of the set at the end at the end~~. The review is ~~may focus on~~ ~~could be about~~ the process, the ~~or~~ content or both. This cycle of inquiry will begin again at the next set meeting. However, ~~except that~~ the members who agreed to take actions ~~need to~~ must report back at the beginning. The set needs to maintain ~~be~~ strict ~~about~~ timing and process boundaries each time and recognise that the conduct of the set mirrors it values. Pedler (1991) sums up action learning well by stating that ~~aying~~ it involves ~~has~~ three components: the people who take responsibility for taking action (this is key); ~~;~~ the problems or tasks themselves and the set of colleagues who support and challenge each other to make progress on problems. Zuber-Skerrit (2002) identifies the latter as critical friends.

Revans ~~,~~ (1998) makes the distinction between problems and puzzles. He argued that the difference is that ~~there is often~~ some a puzzle requires some knowledge and a solution ~~to a puzzle~~, whereas there is no correct ~~right~~ answer to a problem. Revans also formulated a learning equation for action learning:

$$\text{which is } L = P + Q$$

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where L = Learning, P = Programmed Knowledge & Q = Questioning Insight. -

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Although ~~There have been~~ some variations to this formula have been suggested (Mumford 1995, Smith 1997), ~~but~~ Revan's equation continues still seems to be the most widely used.

~~There would seem to~~ A be a plethora of articles have been written about action learning during the 1990s: ~~M~~ as more programmes for undergraduate and postgraduate degrees (~~both under and post graduate~~) and management programmes within organisations incorporated action learning as one of ~~or~~ the primary methods of learning. In fact, ~~Indeed~~ the author was the programme manager for Bury Metropolitan Borough Council for a Diploma in Management by Action Learning in 1992/93. This was carried out in collaboration with the Manchester College of Arts a&nd Technology (MANCAT) and Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU).

In this programme, the author played~~had~~ a role as a Set Adviser to one of the three sets ; project supervisor to some students on in the programme, as well as ~~and as~~ a co-deliverer of the design. This project also involved ~~Recruitment to the programme and~~ co-delivery of the residential induction ~~part of the programme were also part of the role for this project~~ and recruiting to the programme which was the first central in-house programme that incorporated ing action learning. The author's set reflected the ~~There were a~~ approximately 20 middle managers who came from a variety of departments and with had a mixture an array of responsibilities regarding ~~on~~ the programme ~~and this was reflected within the author's set~~.

Much of the published research focuses on managers from the same organisation who ~~took~~ aking part in action learning sets. T~~A~~s this was the author's first experience regarding ~~of~~ action learning. Consequently, I have used it as a part of my reflections of action learning and the approach to it within the MSc programme. ~~It will have affected the approach to the action learning for the MSc programme too.~~ A~~It is recognised that~~ although this ~~former~~ experience occured~~is now~~ nearly ~~some~~ 14 years ago, the memory of it still remains clear. ~~;~~ This experience ~~t was represented~~ one of the most challenging and richest ones ~~experiences~~ of my entire ~~life~~, and therefore the memory of it is clear and It can be used to illustrate how it could be incorporated into the ~~thinking and reflection of~~ the more recent experiences.

~~R~~~~There are~~ reflections sheets for each of the sets attended between December 2005 and February 2007 ~~are~~ included in appendices 1-6 using the format by Pedler (1996:85) which will be referred to briefly -in the following paragraphs. However, the author has decided to use ~~the perspective on action learning offered by Bourner & Frost (-1996) when they investigated~~ ~~looked at~~ how action learning had been experienced by the reflections of |

**Commented [T1]:** Incomplete sentence