A review of action learning literature 1994-2000: Part 2 – signposts into the literature

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Action learning, Journal publishing, Collaboration, Learning, Bibliographies

Abstract

Many organizations now utilize action learning, and it is applied increasingly throughout the world. Action learning appears in numerous variants, but generically it is a form of learning through experience, "by doing", where the task environment is the classroom, and the task the vehicle. Two previous reviews of the action learning literature by Alan Mumford respectively covered the field prior to 1985 and the period 1985-1994. Both reviews included books as well as journal articles. This current review covers the period 1994-2000 and is limited to publicly available journal articles. Part 1 of the Review was published in an earlier issue of the *Journal of Workplace Learning* (Vol. 15 No. 2) and included a bibliography and comments. Part 2 extends that introduction with a schema for categorizing action learning articles and with comments on representative articles from the bibliography.

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Introduction

An introduction to action learning was provided in Part 1 of this review and this learning process continues to be of great interest to practitioners, theorists and researchers in both the academic and organizational fields. As a result, there are a significant number of articles published addressing the various aspects of action learning. This review proposes to provide some organization and understanding of these articles to facilitate access and appreciation.

Two previous reviews of the action learning literature by Alan Mumford (Management Bibliographies & Reviews, Vol. 11, No. 2, 1985; Management Bibliographies & Reviews, Vol. 20, No. 6/7, 1994) respectively covered the field prior to 1985 and the period 1985-1994. Both reviews included books as well as journal articles. This current review covers the period 1994-2000 and is limited to publicly available journal articles. In preparing this review, we have attempted to be as inclusive as possible, gathering articles from and through a number of sources. We have included articles that deal specifically with action learning (highlighted as a keyword or used in the text) as well as some related articles focusing on action technologies. Articles included are listed in the Bibliography section. The Bibliography is intended to be comprehensive; any relevant articles not included were an oversight and not intended as a critique of their usefulness.

We have chosen to follow Mumford in categorizing articles; however, we have revised Mumford's categories, as shown in Table I. These categories were initially determined by an overall examination of the articles and were refined to their final format based on more extensive reading.

In Part 1 of this review we explored the nature of the activity represented by the articles listed in the Bibliography. In Part 2 we provide signposts into this literature via short summaries of articles that we feel best represent the salient features of each category – the representative articles. The choice of articles is subjective and represents only our views. Our intention is not evaluative but rather is intended to convey the typical thrust of a given category. Table II lists these Representative Articles by category and Bibliography Number. The relevant

Table I Schema for categorizing action learning articles

A. Collections:
    1. Special Issues
    2. Proceedings, Reports

B. Action Learning Fundamentals:
    Definition, Description
    Process Variant
    Action Research, Work-Based Learning, Project-Based Learning, Action Science
    4. P Vs. Q
    5. Set Advisor, Learning Coach
    6. Problem Vs. Puzzle
    7. Learning, Adaptation, Reflection
    8. On-Line, Technology Assisted, Distance

C. Action Learning Practice:
    1. Case, Review, Research
    2. Preparation
    3. Design
    4. Implementation
    5. Evaluation

D. Action Learning Focus:
    1. Education, Androgogy
    2. Management/Executive Development
    3. Hi-Potential Development
    4. OD
    5. Knowledge Management
    6. Learning Organization
    7. Competencies
    8. Teams
    9. Union
    10. Leadership
    11. Open Space, Research Conference
    12. Quality
    13. Communities Of Practice

summaries ordered by Bibliography Number are presented in the final section.

Our hope is that this approach will serve to facilitate the dual purpose of indicating sources of information (P) and further avenues for research (Q).

Summaries of Representative Articles

In order to help the reader better understand the categories, we are providing a short summary of each Representative Article. These summaries provide some information on the content and what we felt was the author's intent. They are ordered by Bibliography Number and contain the author names, category and article title.

1. Smith and Day (D4. *Strategic planning as action learning*) describe the fundamentals of a developmental learning approach to strategic planning based on action learning, illustrated via the near and long-term experiences of a mid-sized commercial Canadian company that has adopted this approach.

2. O'Neil and Smith (A2. *Action learning: real work, real learning*) analyze several years of research based articles on action learning written by theorists and practitioners around the world. They describe the key learnings from the research, identify what the learnings tell us about the use of action learning, and make recommendations for application to practice.

3. Marquardt (D10. *Action learning and leadership*) describes how the elements of action learning (i.e., real problems, fellow leaders in the action learning team, a reflective inquiry process, commitment to action, and focusing on learning) contribute to the building of critical leadership skills in seven key roles, namely, as a systems thinker, change agent, innovator, servant, polychronic co-ordinator, teacher-mentor and visionary.

9. Liedtka, Weber and Weber (D2. *Creating a significant and sustainable executive education experience: A case study*) report on the development and assessment of a customized executive education experience, designed to incorporate many of the desirable outcomes of "action learning". A total of 542 managers who participated in the program, over a four-year period, were surveyed concerning its effectiveness. Hypotheses are developed and the results examined.

12. May (D7. *Developing management competencies for fast-changing organisations*) asserts that management developers must identify common competencies that managers need, irrespective of the organisation structure, and fine-tune management's skills to meet the specific requirements of organisational strategies. He suggests how "common" competencies can be identified and a competency framework developed.

14. Baird, Holland and Deacon (B7. *Learning from action: imbedding more learning into the performance fast enough to make a difference*) introduce the After Action Review (AAR) as a means by which teams can reflect and learn while they are

Table II Influential articles by category and bibliography number

A. Collections:

1. Special Issues:

> 31-38. Performance Improvement Quarterly, 11:1, 1998
>
> 59-65. Employee Counselling Today, The Journal of Workplace Learning, 8:6, 1996
>
> 79-83. Education & Training, 38:8, 1996

2. Proceedings, Reports

> 2. Action learning: real work, real learning, Judy O'Neil, Peter Smith, ASTD What Works On Line, 1Q2000, http://www.astd.org/virtual_community/research/What_Works/

B. Action Learning Fundamentals:

1. Definition, Description

> 15. The many faces of action learning, Victoria Marsick, Judy O'Neil, Management Learning; 30: 2 1999; pp. 159-176
>
> 23. The essential principles of action learning, Craig Johnson, Journal of Workplace Learning; 10: 6/7 1998; pp. 296-300, ISSN: 1366-5626

2. Process Variant

> 30. Action Learning: Praxiology Of Variants, Peter Smith, Industrial & Commercial Training, Vol. 30, No. 7, 1998
>
> 73. Business simulations are not just for finance, Peter Smith, Seth Levinson, Organizations & People, Vol. 3, No. 3, 1996

3. Action Research, Work-Based Learning, Project-Based Learning, Action Science

> 21. Work-based learning in practice, Joseph A. Raelin, Journal of Workplace Learning; 10: 6/7 1998; pp. 280-283, ISSN: 1366-5626
>
> 87. Changing managers' defensive reasoning about work/family conflicts, Karen E. Watkins, Journal of Management Development; 14: 2 1995; pp. 77-88, ISSN: 0262-1711

4. P vs. Q

> 51. Q'ing action learning: More on minding our Ps and Qs, Peter Smith, Management Decision, Vol. 35, No. 5, 1997

5. Set Advisor, Learning Coach

> 49. Action learning and action science: Are they different? Joseph A. Raelin, Organizational Dynamics; 26:1 1997; pp. 21-34, ISSN: 0090-2616
>
> 59. A study of the role of learning advisers in action learning, Judy O'Neil, Journal of Workplace Learning; 08: 6 1996; pp. 39-44, ISSN: 0955-8217

6. Problem vs. Puzzle

No relevant citations

7. Learning, Adaptation, Reflection

> 14. Learning from action: imbedding more learning into the performance fast enough to make a difference, Lloyd Baird, Philip Holland, Sandra Deacon, Organizational Dynamics; 27: 4 1999; pp. 19-32, ISSN:0090-2616
>
> 53. Performance learning, Peter Smith, Management Decision, Vol. 35, No. 10, 1997

8. On-Line, Technology Assisted, Distance

> 19. Cyber tutoring and learning: how to facilitate action learning on line, Sandelands, E., GAJAL Published Papers Vol. 3, No. 2, 1999
>
> 46. Designing a quality action learning process for managers, Molly Ainslie, Gordon Wills, Journal of Workplace Learning; 09: 3 1997; pp. 100-110, ISSN: 1366-5626

C. Action Learning Practice:

1. Case, Review, Research

> 44. Action learning team – building bridges within a local council, Lyn Carson, Journal of Workplace Learning; 09: 5 1997; pp. 148-152, ISSN: 1366-5626
>
> 65. Just another talking shop? Some of the pitfalls in action learning, Tom Bourner, Krystyna Weinstein, Journal of Workplace Learning; 08: 6 1996; pp. 54-65, ISSN: 0955-8217

Table II

2. Preparation

20. A "ROSE +6" architecture for customized, single-company management development seminars, Mark E. Haskins, Jeanne Liedtka, John Rosenblum, Jack Weber, Journal of Management Development; 17: 7 1998; pp. 503-515, ISSN: 0262-1711

57. Measuring the ROI from management action learning, Gordon Wills, Carol Oliver, Management Development Review; 09: 1 1996; pp. 17-21, ISSN: 0962-2519

3. Design

16. The design of the action project in work-based learning, Joseph Raelin, Human Resource Planning; 22:3, 1999; pp. 12-28

94. Managers developing others through action learning, Alan Mumford, Industrial & Commercial Training; 2 1995; pp. 19-27

4. Implementation

47. A manufacturing organization action learning programme that has paid bottom-line profits, Richard L. Bunning, Career Development International; 02: 6 1997; pp. 267-273, ISSN: 1362-0436

95. Learning in action, Alan Mumford, Industrial & Commercial Training; 27: 8 1995; pp. 36-40

5. Evaluation

64. Experiencing action learning, Tom Bourner, Paul Frost, Journal of Workplace Learning; 08: 6 1996; pp. 11-18, ISSN: 0955-8217

74. Boundary management in action reflection learning research: Taking the role of a sophisticated barbarian, L. Yorks, J. O'Neil, V.J. Marsick, G.E. Nilson, R. Kolodny, Human Resource Development Quarterly; 7: 4 1996; pp. 313-329

D. Action Learning Focus:

1. Education, Androgogy

61. Action learning: bridging academic and workplace domains, Robert L. Dilworth, Journal of Workplace Learning; 08: 6 1996; pp. 45-53, ISSN: 0955-8217

92. Developing a learning organization through management education by action learning, Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt, The Learning Organization; 02: 2 1995; pp. 36-46, ISSN: 0969-6474

2. Management/Executive Development

9. Creating a significant and sustainable executive education experience: A case study, Jeanne M. Liedtka, Carol Weber, Jack Weber, Journal of Managerial Psychology; 14: 5 1999; pp. 404-420, ISSN:0268-3946

24. Action learning: business applications in North America, David Parkes, Journal of Workplace Learning; 10: 3 1998; pp. 165-168, ISSN: 1366-5626

3. Hi-Potential Development

66. Developing high- potential staff – an action learning approach, John Peters, Peter Smith, Journal of Workplace Learning; 08: 3 1996; pp. 6-11, ISSN: 0955-8217

96. Career development for high fliers, Terry Bates, Management Development Review; 07: 6 1994; pp. ISSN: 0962-2519

4. OD

1. Strategic planning as action learning, Peter Smith, Abby Day, Organisations & People, Vol. 7, No. 1, 2000

42. A networking model of change for middle managers, Hank Schaafsma, Leadership & Organizational Development Journal; 18: 1 1997; pp. 41-49, ISSN: 0143-7739

5. Knowledge Management

33. Transfer of learning from an action reflection learning program, Lyle Yorks, Judy O'Neil, Victoria J Marsick, Sharon Lamm, Robert Kolodny, and Glenn Nilson, Performance Improvement Quarterly; 11:1 1998; pp. 59-73

71. Information overload: permission to not know? Krystyna Weinstein, Career Development International; 4 1996; pp. 29-32, ISSN: 1362-0436

Table II

6. **Learning Organization**

62. Action learning: Route or barrier to the learning organization? Rosemary Harrison, Journal of Workplace Learning; 08: 6 1996; pp. 27-38, ISSN: 0955-8217

72. The evolutionary organization: Avoiding a Titanic fate, Peter Smith, Hubert Saint-Onge, The Learning Organization, Vol. 3, No. 4, 1996

7. **Competencies**

12. Developing management competencies for fast-changing organisations, Andrew May, Career Development International; 04: 6 1999; pp. 336-339, ISSN: 1363-0436

93. Executive education and strategic imperatives: a formula for crafting competitiveness, Albert A.Vicere, American Journal of Management Development; 01: 2 1995; pp. 31-36, ISSN: 1354-57

8. **Teams**

36. Building global capacity with global task teams, Nancy M. Dixon, Performance Improvement Quarterly; 11: 1 1998

9. **Union**

90. Joint action learning: a collective collaborative paradigm for the management of change in unionized organizations, John McAdam, Journal of Managerial Psychology; 10: 6 1995; pp. 31-40, ISSN:72.

10. **Leadership**

3. Action learning and leadership, Michael J. Marquardt, The Learning Organization; 07: 5 2000; pp. 233-241, ISSN: 0969-6474

41. The corporate leadership crisis: Break out this way, Peter Smith, John Peters, The Learning Organization; 4:2 1997; pp. 61-69; ISSN: 0969-6474

11. **Open Space, Research Conference**

70. A journey into open space and an exploration of management development, Margaret Neal, Career Development International; 01: 4 1996; pp. 11-13, ISSN: 1362-0436

12. **Quality**

88. Proof of the pudding, Nancy G. McNulty, Geraldine Robson Canty, Journal of Management Development; 14: 1 1995; pp. 53-66, ISSN: 0262-1711

108. Learning for total quality: an action learning approach, K.C. Chan, The Learning Organization; 01: 1 1994; pp. 17-22, ISSN: 0969-6474

13. **Communities Of Practice**

54. A model of work-based learning, Joseph Raelin, Organization Science; 8: 6 1997; pp. 563-578

performing. Their article describes how AAR focuses on the few critical issues, is done immediately after the action, includes the whole group, is carried out in accordance with a structured process and quickly leads back to action.

15. Marsick and O'Neil (B1. *The many faces of action learning*) propose that there are different "schools" of action learning based on the way in which practitioners think that learning takes place in the practice of action learning. These varying philosophies impact the design of action learning programs and influence the way in which a learning coach would practice. The article also contrasts action learning with other forms of action technologies through application to a case.

16. Raelin (C3. *The design of the action project in work-based learning*) asserts that there can be no substitute for real-time experience in human resource planning and development programs. Action projects afford real-time experience and are designed to have strategic value, thus contributing to, or even challenging, the goals of their own organizational sponsor. The article gives considerable detail noting the benefits and also the pitfalls of action projects.

19. Sandelands (B8. *Cyber tutoring and learning: how to facilitate action learning on line*) explores action learning as a challenge to classroom-based approaches to management development drawing upon experiences gained by International Management Centres (IMC). He explores design issues and experiences of action learners globally from within IMC. Drawing from these experiences, he recommends a schedule for facilitators

enabling action learning to occur with online sets of managers.

20. Haskins, Liedtka, Rosenblum and Weber (C2. *A "ROSE +6" architecture for customized, single-company management development seminars*) present a framework for the design, development, and delivery of management development seminars devoted to the building of an organizational core capability. The framework presented is the outcome of a number of actual client engagements. A key element in the framework is the participants' engagement in the iterative, integrated processes of reflection, observation, synthesis, and exchange.

21. Raelin (B3. *Work-based learning in practice*) concentrates on three action strategies that are typically presented in isolation: action learning, action science, and communities of practice. The article demonstrates how corporate educators and facilitators might distinguish between these approaches, and yet offer them in a meaningful sequence based upon the preferences, skill, comfort level, and needs of their managerial clients.

23. Johnson (B1. *The essential principles of action learning*) offers both a theoretical viewpoint and practical examples. The nature of the organisational problem for investigation in an action learning program is defined, and the constitution and general principles of an action learning set are introduced. By identifying some advantages, as well as drawbacks of an action learning program, the article provides a new practitioner with a balanced picture.

24. Parkes (D2. *Action learning: business applications in North America*) reviews many of the published studies of the application of action learning strategies to management and executive development in North America. He concludes that there are few meaningful examples of action learning that have been analysed for their organizational or developmental effects. He asserts that examples published assess action learning more for its team-building applications, with little attention paid to using this process for individual or organizational learning.

30. Smith (A3. *Action learning: Praxiology of variants*) aims to clarify the logic on which current action learning variants are based

in order to better inform practitioners and aid them in making methodological decisions. He attempts first to understand what Revans and other practitioners are trying to achieve through their variants, and then examines these variants from a praxiological point of view, exploring the extent to which efficiency, effectiveness, ethics and economy justify their usage.

33. Yorks *et al.* (D5. *Transfer of learning from an action reflection learning program*) examine the kinds of learning and learning transfer that took place in an action learning program in an international food company. They describe the program and the research process. They also draw conclusions about the degree of transfer as well as the mechanisms and processes that supported the transfer.

36. Dixon (D8. *Building global capacity with global task teams*) describes action learning teams in General Motors called Global Task Teams. In the article, she discusses the processes used in the teams, the kinds of projects addressed, and the use of facilitators. She draws some conclusions about the successes of the teams and the usefulness of the facilitators.

41. Smith and Peters (D10. *The corporate leadership crisis: Break out this way*) discuss a "Crisis in Leadership" and set out to address the reasons for lack of leaders, which they assert is caused largely by a lack of systemic leadership development. They propose that a derivation of action learning, entitled "Leadership Action-Driven Learning" (LADL) can be used for successful leadership development. They set out the framework of a development initiative using the LADL methodology.

42. Schaafsma (D4. *A networking model of change for middle managers*) describes a model of change management that successfully integrates action learning skills with the manager's networking style. He outlines five key elements of the "concerns-based networking" model of change. This change model was successfully "tested" in two large organizations. He uses case study data from 30 middle managers involved in various action research projects to illustrate how the networking model works.

44. Carson (C1. *Action learning team – building bridges within a local council*) collaborated with a number of her colleagues in an action learning team to analyse the results of adopting a Heart Politics approach towards their political antagonists, using strategic questioning as a participatory tool. She reveals that in the process the action learning team learned a great deal about the importance of genuine listening and relationship building and about how to cultivate trust and respect among a diverse group of community representatives

46. Ainslie and Wills (B8. *Designing a quality action learning process for managers*) describe the evolution of an Internet-driven dynamic quality assurance system for action learning programmes across the world. When the procedures gained ISO 9002-accredited status, they explain that there was an upsurge in interest to further improve the process of Faculty induction, as well as continuous training and development of Faculty facilitation skills, through Faculty development scholarships and delivery effectiveness workshops.

47. Bunning (C4. *A manufacturing organization action learning programme that has paid bottom-line profits*) describes an action learning programme implemented at Pilkington UK to train supervisors in new and more complex aspects of their jobs. Small groups of from four to eight supervisors completed a six-month training programme during which they completed a process improvement project within their work area. The article reports very positive outcomes including contribution of £1.5 million to the business.

49. Raelin (B5. *Action learning and action science: Are they different?*) distinguishes between two branches of action technologies – action learning and action science – in order to assist organization development practitioners who may serve as facilitators for both. He examines criteria, which show the differences between the two approaches, and supports these with specific examples and explanations in facilitator settings.

51. Smith (B4. *Q'ing action learning: More on minding our Ps and Qs*) explores the question "How can we gain a deeper understanding of the contribution of P and Q?" Concludes that P has little or no place in action learning when the programme goal is confined to personal development. He proposes that by further emphasising problem solving and embracing P, another significant complication is introduced related to "learning" versus "adaptation". He identifies the expression $L = P + Q$ itself as a confusing expression, and proposes other more simplified functions.

53. Smith (B7. *Performance learning*) describes a new methodology "Outcomes-driven Performance Learning and Development" (PL) that addresses what he feels are shortcomings often evident in the practice of action learning. These include lack of systemic strategic framing, problem-structuring, problem-solving, and learning processes founded narrowly on the scientific method without due regard for up-to-date tools and methods and lack of routine explicit exploration of mindsets and other "soft" factors important to personal development.

54. Raelin (D13. *A model of work-based learning*) addresses the question: how can a comprehensive model of integrated learning and work be conceptualized? He reports on a study that attempts to combine explicit and tacit forms of knowledge with theory and practice modes of learning. The individual level and the collective level are bound together by a dynamic knowledge development. The article includes a detailed discussion of Communities of Practice.

57. Wills and Oliver (C2. *Measuring the ROI from management action learning*) state that too few programmes of management development seek to evaluate their hard ROI for the enterprise. They describe how action learning's focus on company-specific issues makes this feasible. They report on a four-year impact analysis from MBA programmes that shows that employing organizations benefited greatly from the programmes and that the individual managers also gained a host of soft benefits.

59. O'Neil (B5. *A study of the role of learning advisers in action learning*) discusses the early results of a research study that looks

at the role learning advisers (coaches) play in action learning programmes. Early results found several significant external and internal influences on the work of the learning adviser. External influences included the adviser's background and early work, as well as pressures from the environment and programme design. Internal influences centered on how the adviser thought about the role he/she played. Metaphors for the role included "consecrated self", "mystery maker"; and "radical adviser".

61. Dilworth (D1. *Action learning: Bridging academic and workplace domains*) addresses the need to interrelate academic and workplace domains from the perspective of management development. To address either domain in relative exclusion from the other risks creating a workplace context where learners are able to grasp real-world problems but lack the underlying academic knowledge to solve them. He outlines how action learning can be used to bridge the two domains and provides actual examples.

62. Harrison (D6. *Action learning: Route or barrier to the learning organization?*) asserts that many claims have been made for the superiority of action learning, including that it provides a model of the learning organization. Given the importance of an organizational learning climate that can result in the acquisition of strategically valuable knowledge and insights, she critically examines concepts of action learning and the learning organization in the literature. She explores some of the issues identified by referencing a management development programme for clinical directors working in the National Health Service.

64. Bourner and Frost (C5. *Experiencing action learning*) offer a fresh perspective on action learning by looking at how action learning is experienced by the action learning participants themselves. They do this by asking the members of five action learning sets on their reflections on the feelings and outcomes of being an action learning set member.

65. Bourner and Weinstein (C1. *Just another talking shop? Some of the pitfalls in action learning*) draw on their own experience and that of colleagues in offering a fresh

perspective on action learning by looking at how action learning is experienced by the action learning participants themselves. They achieve this by interviewing the members of five action learning sets to reflect on their feelings and the outcomes of being an action learning set member

66. Peters and Smith (D3. *Developing high-potential staff-an action learning approach*) suggest approaching leadership development by focusing on employees identified as having high potential or those on the development "fast-track". The article identifies key psychological characteristics of fast-track staff, and discusses the match between those characteristics and the properties of an action learning approach to development. It concludes with a plan for adapting action learning to the development of fast-track staff.

70. Neal (D11. *A journey into open space and an exploration of management development*) describes an open space session entitled: "Is current management development appropriate for future roles in organizations?" She explains that one of the key observations was: "What has to be managed is changing", which provides an exciting or daunting prospect to a management developer. She outlines other conclusions from the session that focused on the future emphasis and direction of management development and the implications for the role of developers.

71. Weinstein (D5. *Information overload: Permission to not know?*) argues that as people become less able to absorb or process all the information and knowledge that is around, we need to consider other ways of working. We need to give ourselves permission to not know, and then work together, to share, and to allow ourselves to consider what we really do need to know. She concludes that sharing, co-operating, applying action learning and open space conferencing approaches are just some of the ways forward.

72. This article was awarded the MCB Literati Club prize in 1997 for outstanding article on The Learning Organization. Smith and Saint-Onge (D6. *The evolutionary organization:*

Avoiding a Titanic fate) assert that in dealing with change the mindsets of the organization's managers are the most critical factor. They suggest that approaches to influence managers' thinking should be based on two simple notions. First, the best way to deal with mindsets is to stop them hardening; and second, by changing activities and tools one can change thinking and learning. They describe initiatives designed to renew mindsets and confer business competitiveness, including action learning. They illustrate the approach by detailing the case of a major financial services organization.

73. Smith and Levenson (B2. *Business simulations are not just for finance*) discuss a simulation used to demonstrate to participants the linkage between people management and the bottom line. Unique combinations of action learning and role-plays were included to provide a rich learning context. Follow-up evaluations showed that the approach translated into significant improvement in managers' ability to handle real business and people issues in real time situations, and to learn to think in fresh ways.

74. Yorks, O'Neil, Marsick, Nilson and Kolodny (C5. *Boundary management in action reflection learning research: Taking the role of a sophisticated barbarian*) examine the role of researcher in an action learning program. They hypothesize that the field researchers' efforts to manage boundaries bear similarities to a key phenomenon in action learning, that is, the learning by the researcher takes place as a result of reflection informed by an outsider's perspective. The role is given the label "sophisticated barbarian" because researchers have specialized knowledge and can thus ask sophisticated questions, yet because they maintain some distance from the program, the questions they ask may seem "barbaric" to the insider.

87. Watkins (B3. *Changing managers' defensive reasoning about work/family conflicts*) describes a management development process based on action science which was designed to surface and examine deeply-held beliefs about the role of the manager or supervisor in handling work/family conflicts. The

process enabled individuals to examine their reasoning about work and family conflicts and led to the identification of a number of defensive reasoning patterns among managers in dealing with work/family conflicts, particularly the use of bypass and threats.

88. McNulty and Canty (D12. *Proof of the pudding*) assert that all attempts to improve corporate performance since World War II have led to naught. They discuss the methods of TQM and action learning, and include details of the first formal academic action learning programme: the Belgian Inter-University Programme in 1968. The authors believe that action learning offers what is missing in TQM and "proof of the pudding" will be found when action learning and TQM are combined and fully supported by top management.

90. McAdam (D9. *Joint action learning: A collective collaborative paradigm for the management of change in unionized organizations*) outlines the building of an action science paradigm which seeks to synergize essential elements from within a number of disciplines to construct a new process which engages competing interest groups (in this instance management and unions) in a collective collaborative process called Joint Action Learning. He describes an action science pilot project carried out over a three-year period in six service sector companies in Ireland.

92. Zuber-Skerritt (D1. *Developing a learning organization through management education by action learning*) explores ideas and issues related to management education and development for the new learning organization and presents an example of an MBA (Executive) course design for experienced managers who wish to make a considerable contribution to their organization and receive a university degree in recognition of their work. The course is action learning based.

93. Vicere (D7. *Executive education and strategic imperatives: A formula for crafting competitiveness*) asserts that the need to define the strategic purpose of a firm along with its core competencies is considered to be of paramount importance in current approaches to strategic management. He presents a framework for linking these critical

elements with executive and leadership development initiatives to enhance the competitive capabilities of the organization more effectively.

94. Mumford (C3. *Managers developing others through action learning*) describes a study of interaction between learners, bosses, mentors, and clients on programmes designed through action learning. He reviews what happened with 26 participants and 5 mentors or bosses, and also the perceptions of faculty and management development advisors. He finds that relationships were less effective than could have been achieved and proposes action to ensure that there is clearer understanding of the help that could be asked for or offered.

95. Mumford (C4. *Learning in action*) asserts that action learning was a comparative latecomer to the lexicon of management development techniques. He reviews what we have since learned about the process, how it holds up against development like the competence approach, and how Revans' theories can be updated to apply to the business environment of the 1990s.

96. Bates (D3. *Career development for high fliers*) reports a survey that suggests companies are not making the best use of high fliers. The article provides a method of identification of high fliers, both practical and attitudinal, and supplies development plans, such as learning in groups and mentoring. It concludes that for high-flier development, individual reaction to formal or informal learning should be taken into account.

108. Chan (D12. *Learning for total quality: An action learning approach*) asserts that there is incongruity between what business schools teach and what business organizations actually need. Acquisition of information and honed skills in analysis is essential but inadequate in managerial learning. Total learning for quality management seeks to integrate the core analytical skills with the soft interpersonal skills in the make-up of the competent manager. The author shares his own experience in his pursuit of an action learning focused PhD degree.

Bibliography

Note: Articles listed by date in descending order

1. Strategic planning as action learning, Peter Smith, Abby Day, Organisations & People, Vol. 7, No. 1, 2000

2. Action learning: real work, real learning, Judy O'Neil, Peter Smith, ASTD What Works On Line, 1Q2000 http://www.astd.org/virtual_community/research/What_Works/

3. Action learning and leadership, Michael J. Marquardt, The Learning Organization; 07: 5 2000; pp. 233-241

4. Credit mapping: validating work based training using action learning outcomes, Julian Wills, Journal of Workplace Learning; 12: 3 2000; pp. 89-93

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