

Action Learning & Action Research for Organisation Development

(Workshop Proposal)

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Rationale

Recently the present organisation has done good work using a piecemeal approach to organisation development. The director/chairman wishes to introduce a systematic approach of integrating human, task and context development as an integrated process to ensure sustainability (continuous growth) by learning from their experience and sharing their knowledge with other professionals and academics.

Action learning / action research is an emerging methodology where organisations can learn from what they do to produce local/ contextual knowledge. This two week workshop is designed to learn and use this strategy to achieve the above organisational need with guidance from an international consultant with lifetime experience of personal learning and influencing others to learn using this methodology. This organisation has a specific goal.

Aim

The above organisation aims to learn this methodology deeply to acquire competence in designing, using and evaluating this methodology. The following learning experience designed by the consultant aims to achieve this goal.

Programme Content Outline

Day One: What is Action learning/Action Research?

In action research and action learning we explore ‘how do I/we improve what I /we are doing in our organisation’ using reflective thinking. Explanations of the key concepts include: I/self, task, context, living theories, personal /organisation standards of judgement and reflective thinking. Action research has many forms, which are useful for organisation development. Outcomes of its use include sustainability in organisational growth and holistic human development including technical, human and contextual.

Day Two: ‘How’ of Action Learning and Action Research: Processes used.

Process depends on the nature of task at hand, the researcher and the context. It is a creative process researcher uses to conduct his inquiry. The basic framework/model includes organisation vision building, action planning, acting, reflections-in-action and reflections-on-action for meaning-making i.e. interpretation of ‘what is happening’ and/or ‘what has happened’ based on carefully recorded data and reporting results for organisational learning, producing knowledge for accountability and to obtain Higher Academic and Professional qualifications.

Day Three: Why to Use Action Learning and Research?

Exploring the nature of human action on this planet based on the relationship between the individual self, action and the context. The immediate and long-term benefits of action learning and action research include person/organisation responsibility and commitment to improve their practice, self-development including technical and human development as an integrated process based on universal principles of life, generating local practical knowledge to ensure sustainability in growth. Long terms

benefits include producing learning organisations, societies and empowered people capable of taking personal initiatives to make changes in their lives and for common good.

Day Four: Conditions for the Successful Use of this Methodology

The aim of action learning and action research is to match human competence with contextual needs. This is the secret of all fruitful human action. People living on this planet have their own values, ways of living and taking action. We call them cultural differences. Action research is based on certain values borrowed from the belief on the oneness of life in the universe/inclusionality. It values openness, teamwork, commitment for learning and sharing knowledge for organisational and general good of humanity at large. It involves advocacy and enquiry skills. It manifests itself in dialogues amongst professionals sharing these values.

It is best introduced from the leadership engaged in personal development to set an example for others, aligning organisation structure to match action learning and action research, jointly determining the course of action and empowering people to act using their own creativity.

Application of the knowledge from the Four Days Learning to Organisation Development using advocacy and enquiry skills in teamwork facilitated by the consultant.

Day Five: Understanding the Present Situation

Explore the current and the future state of affairs including organisation values, work, structure, relationship with the internal and external context to understand the current and the desired organisation achievements and goals.

Day Six: Creating a new vision and preparing a tentative action plan

Establish action strategy & action plan to fill the gap between ‘what is’ and ‘what is desired.’ Establish ongoing support during and after implementation.

Day Seven: Reporting learning from this experience for stakeholders

The report is to include achievements including participant learning and its potential for application elsewhere in Mauritius.

Learning Strategy

This workshop will use principles of action learning and research outlined above. Using reflective thinking it will produce new knowledge to share it with stakeholders. It will involve team learning by the organisation management under the leadership of an international consultant. The consultant will generate the learning environment, provide talks, learning material including professional papers, case studies and external contacts. The workshop will use a variety of teaching and learning experiences. The participants are expected to take full responsibility for their own learning and influencing others in doing the same in their organisation.

Evaluation for Learning and Knowledge Creation

The participants, consultant, programme coordinator and the head of the organisation will evaluate the workshop for personal and organisational learning in the form of a written report for stakeholders.

Workshop Team

The team consists of the senior members of the management team, workshop coordinator from the host organisation, and the consultant DR Ram Punia who is a renowned international consultant in vocational education and training with special interest in promoting action learning and action research in organisations. His doctorate thesis from the University of Bath is based on his international experience in using and promoting various kinds of action research and learning. The workshop coordinator is responsible for briefing the consultant of organisational needs to enable the consultant to design the learning experience to match these needs. He is also responsible for the overall administration of the workshop, for keeping records for preparing the final report.

Cost

External consultant fees will be £1000.00 a day. All other costs associated with the programme are the responsibility of the host organisation. It includes travel to and from the host country, local accommodation, local travel and other associated expenses. Workshop venue and all other expenses associated with the workshop are also the responsibility of host organisation.

Generalising The Workshop Beyond the Host Organisation

The main aim of action research is to produce knowledge and to share it with other stakeholders. Based on this premise it is advisable to involve as many stakeholders in this workshop as possible. The aim of the workshop is to learn, reflect and report learning. The following strategy is designed to achieve this goal:

In the opening of the workshop

Amongst guests invite all important stakeholders. The Minister, director HRD, Head of the organisation, programme coordinator and the consultant should chair the opening ceremony. The director of the HRD should brief the audience on the government policy on HRD, the head of the organisation should enlighten the audience on the expectations of his organisation, programme director should shed light on the origin of the programme and his vision of the entire learning experience, the consultant should inform the audience about the organisation needs and his role in the workshop.

In the Closing Ceremony

The closing ceremony may include representatives of foreign embassies and aid agencies operating in the country. The success of this workshop is likely to encourage aid agencies to sponsor similar workshops elsewhere and provide aid for ongoing support for the host organisation. The current policy of UN aid agencies is to encourage developing countries to create their own practical knowledge. This workshop is designed to achieve this aim.

Extension of Programme Participation

The programme can be extended to include 5 people from outside the host organisation. Outsiders might attend four sessions designed to gain in-depth knowledge of action research for an attendance fees to be designed by the host organisation. The members of the organisation may prefer to work of their own during the last three days.

