‘The Use of Action Learning as Part of a National Innovation Strategy’

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Regional networks comprising HEIs and FE colleges; regional centres for CEBE, CIC and CITB Construction Skills; local business communities and trade associations.
Universities Involved
Building a Common Understanding

Material Supply Chain

Product Creation → Product Development → Material Sourcing → Product Assembly → Product Use

Continuous Flow of Information and Knowledge

Developing a Common Understanding

Knowledge Supply Chain

Creating or Discovering New Knowledge → Making Knowledge Transferable Tacit to Explicit → Transferring Knowledge Documentation & People → Applying Knowledge

Continuous Flow of Information and Knowledge

Useable Knowledge → Useable Product

Johnson, W.C. (2003) University relations: the HP model
Establishing the need

Capturing and sharing knowledge

Reaching out and building capacity

Evaluating and feeding back

Knowledge Sharing Cycle

Innovation circles

Companies assisted
Secondments
Business awareness

HEI/industry forums
Collaborative projects
Case studies
Knowledge portal
What is an Innovation Circle

- Provides a practical method of solving ‘real business issues’
- Typically between 6 to 8 people
  - Focus of action determined by practitioners (individual or collective)
  - Supported by facilitator
  - Accountability to take action and learn from it
- Action Learning Context
  - ‘Internal’ = Project Co-ordinators
  - ‘External’ = Companies & Universities
Who benefits?

- Project teams
- Experts from different business organisations
- Members of professional development groups to share and develop best practice
- Individual enterprises of different sizes, working collaboratively to improve collective performance
ACTION LEARNING

• Action Learning is a method for individual and organisational development.

• It involves working in small groups (sets) of 6-8 people, where they tackle important organisational issues or problems.

• As a result of this, they learn from their attempts to change things.

• It brings people together to exchange, support and challenge each other in seeking to act and learn.
Action Learning was developed by Reg Revans as the best way to educate managers. It is based on a concept where:

\[ L = P + Q \]

Learning = Programmed Knowledge + Questioning
HOW ACTION LEARNING WORKS

1. Each set member joins and takes part voluntarily
2. Each must own a managerial or organisational problem on which they want to act
3. Set members meet to help each other think through the issues, create options and above all…
4. Take action and learn from the effects of that action
5. Action Learning can be viewed as a powerful triangulation of three distinguishable learning experiences.
Botham & Morris
Learning Triangle

Work

Set

Information

M
THE CHALLENGE OF TRIANGULATION

1. **WORK** – The first angle is a focus on the learning experiences from work. It is recognised and sustained as the individual observes and records his or her own actions and experiences gained from the actions of others engaged in a work setting.

2. **SET** – This focus is on the learning experiences gained from participating in an Action Learning Set. As the Set challenges and questions the learning experiences gained from work and the set, the focus is increased.

3. **INFORMATION** – Focus on learning gained from information such as books, articles, papers, courses, seminars, workshops or whatever the individual believes is informing his or her mind.
SETTING GROUND RULES

• GROUND RULES need to be established to govern behaviour inside and outside the set.
• SHARING problems involves some self disclosure and also confidential information.
• SUPPORT and challenge. Warmth (or support) is often needed before light (or challenge) can be accepted. Sets improve in their ability to both support and challenge as they mature.
• QUESTIONING – The aim is to find those questions which lead to the person questioning themselves.
Action Learning: Reflective Cycle

Experience

Action Planning

Reflection

Making sense
INNOVATION CIRCLES IN THE NORTH WEST

• Regional CE Clubs
• North Manchester SME Group
• Women in Construction (Lancaster, Leyland and East Lancs)
• CITB Training Plan and Employer Network Forum Groups
• Housing Developer Researching MMM
• Collaborative Working Learning Group
• Intelligent Building Technology Group
Examples of Issues Discussed

• Recruitment
• Marketing
• Employment Contract Law
• Appraisal Systems
• Partnering
• Off Site Manufacturing
• Lean Manufacturing
• Health and Safety
• Insurance
Women in Construction Groups

Create the opportunity for individuals:

- To meet and network with like minded people (joint events)
- To share ideas and learn from each other
- To also learn from construction industry experts on for example tax issues, health & safety, employment legislation
- Personal development and confidence
CITB Groups

- Businesses work with CITB Construction Skills to produce training plan matrix
- Obtain grants for training
- Employer Network Forum discusses Management and Leadership issues in relation to the new Investors in People standard
National Housebuilder: The Benefits

- Working as part of the companies R&D Group looking at Modern Methods of Construction
- Assistance in terms of national policy in this area
- Virtual Reality Model developed of new houses showing technical, environmental and lifestyle features
- Monitoring of waste
- Time Lapse photography of build process
- Assistance with capture of good practice and in-company transfer
Summary

Innovation Circles:

• Helps achieve organisational goals
• Develops individuals
• Develops networking skills
• Structural benefit, better relationships
• Adapt to change
• Time to reflect
• Additional support when requested
• Help organisations take action and learn from it