**5th Induction**

**ACTION LEARNING**

5th December, 2015 @Sheraton Abuja Hotel

What is the difference between a puzzle and a problem?

There is an existing solution to a puzzle and it simply needs to be found. There is no existing solution to a problem. The solution has to be worked out by a process of inquiry that begins at the point where one does not know what to do next and expertise is of no help.

Action learning explains the process and offers an alternative method of learning to the traditional one, which is based on programmed knowledge instead of encouraging students to ask questions and roam widely around a subject.

Action Learning is all about an alternative to traditional education and training. The method it sets out is a form of “learning by doing”. It is different from “learning on the Job” or “learning by experience” It involves a collaborative effort, humility, a “trading of one’s confusion with that of others” and a deep reflection on one’s experience and on the nature of the problem. Its outcome is personal growth as much as a way out of a current difficulty.

The concept of “Action Learning” is based on a simple equation **L=P+Q**

**Learning (L)** occurs through a combination of programmed **knowledge (P)** and the ability to ask insightful **questions (Q).**

It does not deny all usefulness to existing knowledge, but its focus is on asking questions. Learning must be opened up. Programmed knowledge is one dimensional and rigid; the ability to ask questions opens up other dimensions and its free flowing.

The first step towards asking constructive questions is to acknowledge one’s own ignorance. Too many people conceal this ignorance under a veneer of knowledge. Instead of hiding our ignorance, we should be bartering it.

The essence of action learning is to become better acquainted with the self through observing what one actually tries to do, endeavoring to ascertain the reasons for attempting it and tracing the consequences that results from it.

IMPORTANCE OF SMALL TEAMS

The structure linking the two elements in the equation is the small team or set. The central idea of this approach is collaboration within the set. Its members strive to learn from each other as they confess failures and expand on victories.

Action Learning is a better way to develop managers. Action Learning is also the antithesis of the traditional approach to developing managers. We keep solving the same problems because we do not learn from them. We bring in the consultants to provide solutions or send managers on courses where they are taught but learn little. Action Learning is about teaching little and learning lot.

COLLABORATION COUNTS

In industry, managers and workers need to acknowledge the problems they face and then attempt to solve them. When doctors listen to nurses, patients recover more quickly. If mining engineers pay more attention to their workers then to their machinery, the pits are more efficient. It is neither books nor seminars from which managers learn much, but from here – and – now exchanges about the operational job in hand.

“The ultimate power of a successful general staff lies not in the brilliance of its individual members, but in the cross-fertilization of the collective abilities” **Reg Revans.**

Key – Reflections, questioning, ignorance – battering and collaborative effort.

Solutions are then tested by action.

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