

Business Administration and Business Economics**Action Learning by Professionals: Evidence from Nigeria****Idowu, H.A.O.¹, Akinbola, O.A.², Ojubanire, O.A.³**

Abstract: This paper is centered on the concept of action learning, which emphasizes the direct outcome or consequence of acquiring skills or competences through the process of finding solutions to substantive difficult organisational issues. Primary data were collected from 100 respondents from 5 financial service providers/information communication and technology practitioners in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. Simple percentages were used to analyse the data while correlation matrix was used to test the hypotheses. The result showed that 88% of the respondents affirmed that action learning, among other benefits, enhances both individual and team problem-solving capabilities, thereby resulting in resource leveraging as the most important factor at the organisational level. The correlation matrix showed that action learning positively impacts organisational changes at ($r=0.466$) while it also facilitates improvement of performance given ($r=0.578$).

Keywords: action learning; skills; competences; performance

JEL Classification: D83

Introduction

The theory of action learning revolves around the structured team process of reflection and action consciously undertaken with a view to accomplishing collective competence development, addressing employees' as well as organizational issues. Marquardt and Banks (2010) viewed action learning as a process and a tool that enables individuals and groups learn while solving problems and implementing actions. During the process, a learning coach, typically, through questioning, plays the crucial role of leading the team to focus on problem-solving and reflecting on the action learning process for effective learning and performance outcomes. (Cho, 2013) It thus enables participants to learn effective problem-solving skills and tools as well as the content involved. Essentially, this paper is an attempt at examining the

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degree of importance of action learning process to professionals in the financial services and information and communication technology sectors in Nigeria.

Action learning as a concept was argued to have evolved in the knowledge industry around the mid 1940s with various formats and numerous variations. (Reubling, 2007) The process of action learning is normally signaled by awareness, closely followed by inquiry; insight and possibilities; plan and commitment; accountability and execution; reflection; experiential learning and ultimate recalibration. Mary Stacey (2007) in her study covering several business enterprises including 100 fast food companies, 100 financial institutions, large insurance companies, and selected retail companies found out that fast food companies emphasized three biggest trends in leadership development centered around the use of senior executives as facility in learning programs. Particularly, people team up to focus on current challenges or opportunities, and executive coaching. She concluded that “in our clients’ experience with action learning, managers learn to ask questions that challenge limited assumptions, broaden perspectives, and see opportunities in ways that lead to more strategic and sustainable results.”

Action learning provides an absolute method for collective competence development within the ranks of information technology professionals involved in many challenging situations revolving around different organizational, semantic and technical issues. Action learning has gained immense popularity, largely due to its tangible outcomes and solutions as well as its relevance to real organisational issues using teams in organisations. (Raelin, 2008) By and large, action learning is concerned with profound knowledge of oneself, and one’s immediate working environment. It thus explains why Pedler (2002) describes action learning as an approach to individual and organisational development. By working in small groups known as “sets”, employees gather together to challenge important organisational issues or problems and learn from their attempts and resolve to change the status quo. The process of learning through a non-formal learning media was best explained under the Copenhagen process where major emphasis was laid on the authority to develop and enhance the principles for the validation of skills and qualifications. (OECD, 2005a)

It is important to state that while there are statistical evidences as reported by Stacey (2007) and Park, Cho, Yoon and Han (2012) about the significance of action learning to professionals in developed economies, there is little or no record of research in this regard from Nigeria, except with regards to teaching profession. This was evident in the submission of Afolabi and Akinbobola (2012) that action learning enhances students to achieve higher performance in physics than problem-based learning strategy. Therefore, this research serves as a medium to fill the gap in literature as it relates to adoption of action learning by financial service providers and information and communication technology professionals in Nigeria.

The paper will consequently proceed to review relevant literatures, discuss the method of data gathering and analysis and conclude accordingly.

Literature Review

The strategic importance and essence of continuous learning to update skills, exposures and experiences of employees cannot be over-emphasized. Therefore, training, re-training and development programmes have become tools in this regard, particularly in the contemporary ever-dynamic working environment. In this perspective, Boshyk (2002) posits that in many situations, a fundamental assumption remains the understanding that organisational survival is dependent on the resolve of the workforce to ensure that learning keeps pace with, or indeed strives to advance beyond the rate of changes exhibited within the external environment. The primary proponent of the concept of action learning, Reg Revans theorized in the 1940s while undertaking a research into the coal mines of Wales and England that action learning revolves around the collective resolve of real people taking actions on real problems in real time and learning in the course of doing so. (Revans, 1971) Revans emphasizes the fact that learning and action are closely inter-related. According to him “there is no learning without action and no (sober and deliberate) action without learning.” It has been argued that action learning brings employees together in the work-place with a conscious view to exchange, support and challenge each other in action and learning. Pedler (1991), founding his work on the research by Revans (1971) posits that action learning could be likened to a continuum of practices from “practice-based action learning” at one end to “action research” at the other. He further expatiated that there is no practice-based action learning without concern for ideas, and no action research is conceived merely with conceptual output. However, while placing a value on both action and learning, approaches are bound to differ in the amount of attention given to, or importance attached to, the conceptual or knowledge output of the process.

It is necessary to state that most action learning models lay great emphasis on reflection, and that reflection is not in opposition to action but is intrinsic as an enabler, and even as an aspect of action. McGill and Beaty (1995) emphasize this fact in their submission that “reflection is more significantly achieved in a social context” and “reflection is an intentional incident”. Senge (1990) provided an insight into a better comprehension of reflecting instincts with the suggestion in his work predicated upon the research efforts by Argyris and Schon (1978) and Schon (1983) that some useful skills are capable of enhancing workers’ ability with respect to reflection. Skills of reflection, he posits concern slowing down our thinking processes so that we can become more aware of how we form our mental models and the ways they influence our actions. Mental models are represented by images, assumptions, stories that individual worker carries in his/her head about individuals,

families and organisations. Senge (1990) posits that a person's mental model determines not only how he/she makes sense of the world but how it affects subsequent actions. In terms of leadership and organisational development, action learning has served as a useful and most widely used intervention. (Boshyk, 2002; Marquardt, Leonard, Feedman & Hill, 2009; O'Neil & Marsick, 2007; Raelin, 2008; Tushman, O'Reilly, Fenollosa, Kleinbaum & McGrawth, 2007) The increasing popularity of action learning has been attributed to its direct relationship with related tangible outcomes as well as relevance to real organizational issues. (Bolt, 2005; Day, 2000; Korpiaho, Paivio & Rasanen, 2007; Raelin, 2007)

Action learning avails unique opportunities through which participants are able to solve long standing problems which transcend conventional training while at the same time developing their leadership abilities. (Lanahan & Maldonado, 1998) Through the various sessions, participants are empowered and emboldened to take control of their challenging situations and problems. (Mumford, 1991) Moreover, action learning allows flexibility of design and enables participants to accommodate different crucial objectives. As a result, York (1998) posits that action learning enhances transfer of learning due to opportunity at the disposal of participants in taking immediate action.

On the contrary, action learning poses certain concerns with respect to its interpretation, or misinterpretation; methodology and effectiveness. As noted earlier, action learning is frequently confused with "learning by doing", which covers and entails everything from task forces to case studies. For instance, Wallace (1990) casts doubts on the suitability of encouraging set members to work on unfamiliar problems to improve normal job performance. In addition, the postulation by Revans (1971) which opposes teaching through questioning has been criticized with the explanation that meaningful questioning can be stimulated and imparted by experts in the course of learning by participants in a particular set. (Smith, 1988) Yet in another dimension, Vince and Martin (1993) posit that the possible influence of political and emotional factors in the group process cannot be easily discountenanced. Similarly, action learning, particularly in its pure form, may be difficult to implement in cultures with largely didactic approaches to education. (Pun, 1992) Finally, the assertion that action learning actually increases performance has not been adequately validated. While evaluations of the impact have shown traces of participant's personal growth, with little effect on the organisation, other results however, suggested that organisational impact may occur over a period of years. (Wallace, 1990)

At this juncture, it is important to state that some scholars argued that action learning bears direct influence on human resource development, particularly in the areas of scholarship and practice. (Cho & Egan, 2009) Dilworth and Wills (2003) claimed that action learning is a reflection of a person's conviction to leverage on the

experience of peers to solve real problems at work. Although, action learning is often considered as an organization's change strategy, in reality, it is most often implemented in a form directed towards individual learning and development. (De Loo, 2001; 2002; 2006; Pedler, Burgoyne & Brook, 2005; Vince, 2003; 2004) A rather crucial aspect of this approach for the participants is to strike a balance between action and learning. (Kim, 2007; Kuhn & Marsick, 2005; Pedler, 2002; Raelin & Raelin, 2006; Tushman et al, 2007) It thus becomes important to carry out an examination of balanced action learning approaches through evaluation of action learning processes, participants' experiences and the manner in which action learning is framed in the exercise. Action learning can facilitate better communication, work climate, cooperation, shared vision and development for both individuals and organisations. Therefore, when applied appropriately in organisational contexts, balanced action learning can enhance employees and management development. (Dilworth & Wills, 2003; Marquardt et al, 2009; Reynolds & Vince, 2004; Vince 2003; 2004; Willmott, 1994) Participants in action learning environments acquire knowledge as they work by taking time to reflect with peers. Revans (1971, 1998) indeed emphasised the need for conceptual and practical balance between action and learning. Action learning is most effective when directly related to work applications or to action. The real value of action learning that differentiates it from other action strategies is a pragmatic focus on learning for the sake of problem solving. (Brooks & Watkins, 1994; Marsick & O'Neil, 1999; Raelin, 1999) As it were, unbalanced approach to action learning is not productive, as action without learning is unlikely to return fruitful results and learning without action does not facilitate change. Action learning, O'Neil and Marsick (2007) assert balances working on a problem and learning through that process.

In terms of conceptual analysis, the key themes from existing action learning literatures revolve around the process which involves inquiry (awareness, and insight and possibilities); reflection (experiential learning and accountability); recalibration (awareness and experiential learning); and plan commitment (insight and possibilities) insight and possibilities and accountability/execution.

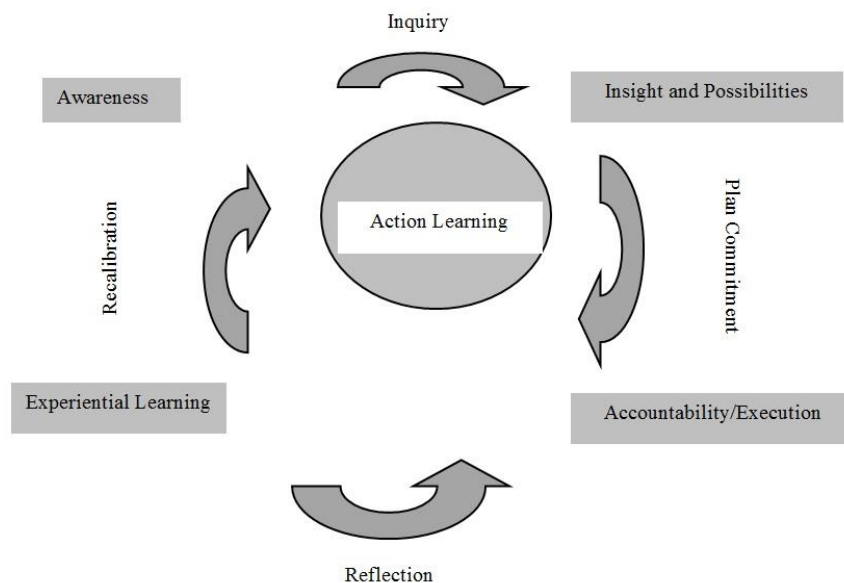


Figure 1. GAMA Model of Action Learning

Spence (1998) identified five (5) basic elements of action learning including the problem, set, client, set advisor and process. The Problem(s) by necessity must be salient to the action learning participants. Dixon (1998) stressed the imperative of seeking a solution as an outcome of the problem to the participants. It may however be structured such that participants within the set or affected group work on the same problem or different problems. (Froiland, 1994) Moreover, the problem(s) may either deal with strategic issues (what to do), or tactical issues. (how to do it) (Dilworth, 1998a) However, the process is devoid of any form of technicalities which may attract sanctions from the “coalition of powers” within the organization. (Dixon, 1998) The Set refers to the selected or affected four (4) to six (6) action learners billed to work together to proffer solution to the problem(s) with each serving the multiple roles of a consultant, advisor and the devil’s advocate to every other set member. (Inglis, 1994) It is important, but not sufficient for every set member to be a specialist, but they must be versed, competent and committed to the process. In order to appreciate and see the problem(s) with “fresh eyes”, the sets should comprise people from diverse disciplines, or rather present problem(s) with which they are green and unfamiliar. (Dixon, 1998) The Client is the centre piece of the problem. The client may be synonymous with the set member or the sponsoring organisations. (Inglis, 1994) The Set Advisor acts as the group facilitator. This role is crucial at the initial stage and the responsibilities of the advisor may be assumed by the set participants. He is charged with the responsibility to increase group cohesiveness with detail explanations and as desired, build appropriate interpersonal skills. Furthermore, he may apply his discretions to upgrade the confidence, and

commitments of the client of set members through open communication and/or question-answer sessions. Lastly, the Process involves observation of the problem, reflection and hypothesis forming, and action. On a consistent basis, effort is made to gather factual information about the problem. Reflection and forming of hypothesis takes place before, after and during set meetings. Action however may be immediate or at the completion of all set activities. (Mumford, 1997)

In conclusion, action learning, as a veritable medium of training may be used at such times when learners have a salient, non-technical problem to solve and the capacity to work in small groups. In this respect, Willis (1998) submits that action learning, for instance has been effectively used in University human development graduate programmes as an avenue to help students more creative in applying the HRD principles to real-world problems.

Methodology

The study adopted the quantitative method of analysis. It selected 100 respondents to serve as the survey sample from the population of financial service providers/information and communication technology practitioners in Ibadan; a commercial city and the capital of Oyo State, Nigeria. The respondents were surveyed between September 2015 and June 2016 and were requested to provide answers to such questions as relevance of action learning to professionals in terms of enhancing capability to reflect on and learn from collective experience; developing individual and team problem-solving and decision-making capability; positioning organizations to adapt better in turbulent times and achieving lasting behavior change. Questionnaires were personally administered on the respondents to collect primary data, and following repeated visits to respondents locations, the entire 100 questionnaire distributed were returned. These data were analysed by simple percentages across the proxies identified as relevant to action learning. The hypotheses were tested with correlation matrix.

Results and Discussion

The years of experience is presented in the bar chart in Figure 1. It shows that 62% had at most 10 years of experience, 26% had at most 20 years of experience while 12% had at least 21 years of experience. The average year of experience therefore was 11 years which implies that most of the respondents had at least 10 years of experience in their respective organisations.

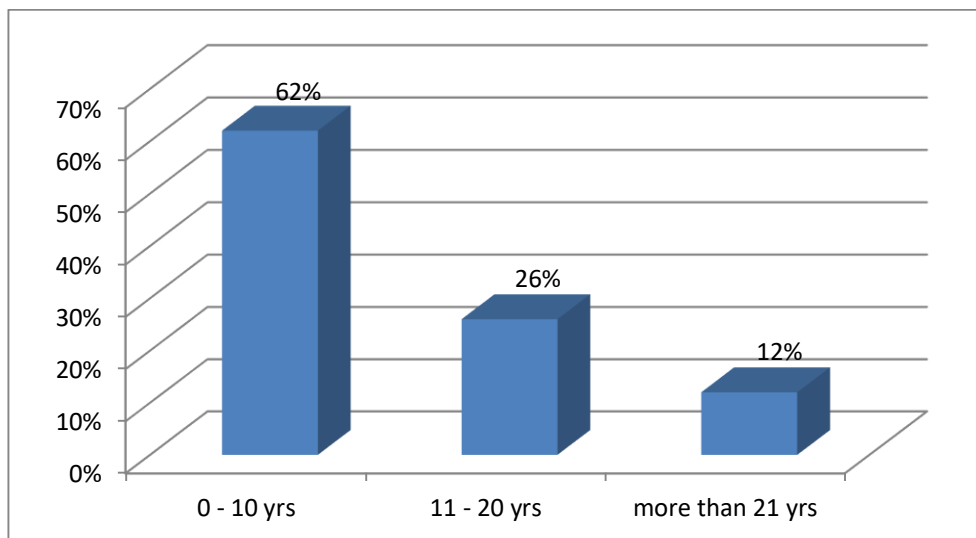


Figure 1. Respondents' Years of Experience

The bar chart with the y-axis indicating the numbers of respondents expressed in percentages and the x-axis indicating the years of experience show that 62% respondents had at least 10 years of experience in the industry.

Table 1 shows that majority of the respondents (78 %) agreed that questioning insight is always the starting point while 22% disagreed, which implies that questioning insight is paramount for successful action learning program. 72% of the respondents agreed that the problem must be real and tactical or strategic while 28% disagreed with the statement. This means that real and tactical or strategic problems must be identified in action learning. While 68%, 60% and 58% of the respondents respectively agreed that learning must be strategic, reflective and primary to problem solving, 32%, 40% and 42% disagreed. It can be inferred that strategic learning and reflection are central to action learning. Moreover, while 77% of the respondents agreed that determination of the right action learning set is key, 23% disagreed, which implies that constituting the right action learning set is crucial. While 68% agreed that action learning takes careful thought in execution and the facilitator's role is important, 32% disagreed with the statements, indicating that execution of action learning requires careful thought and facilitator's role is equally important.

Table 1. Understanding of the Fundamentals of Action Learning

	Yes F %	No F %
Questioning insight is always the starting point.	78 78.0	22 22.0
The problem must be real and tactical or strategic.	72 72.0	28 28.0
The learning must be strategic	68 68.0	32 32.0

Reflection is as important as Action.	60 60.0	40 40.0
Learning is the primary, even though the problem solving is real and important.	58 58.0	42 42.0
Determining the right Action Learning set is key	77 77.0	23 23.0
Action learning takes careful thought in execution	68 68.0	32 32.0
The Facilitator's role is important in Action Learning	68 68.0	32 32.0

The table shows the understanding of the fundamentals of action learning among respondents. The respondents agreed that questioning insight, real problem, learning and reflection as well as right action learning set and a good facilitator are important elements of action learning.

Table 2 shows that 69% of the respondents agreed that action learning enhances personal effectiveness and productivity always and 47% responded that it always foster reflection and learning from individual experiences. It implies that action learning enhances personal effectiveness and productivity as well as learning from individual experiences. A total of 54% and 64% of the respondents respectively responded that action learning enhances personal leadership and soft skills and develops self-confidence and assertiveness. Also, 49% agreed that individual awareness of how assumptions, beliefs, attitudes and organisational interests influence thinking, decisions and actions sometimes improves, 50% agreed that the emotional intelligence sometimes develops while 52% agreed that individuals sometimes find courage to speak up and encourage others to do the same. This implies that action learning contributes to the development of personal leadership, soft skills, emotional intelligence, courage to speak up and the how assumptions, beliefs, attitudes and organizational interests influence thinking, decisions and actions.

Table 2. Benefits of Action Learning to Individuals

Benefits of Action Learning to Individuals	Always F %	Sometimes F %	Never F %
Enhance personal effectiveness and productivity	69 69.0	27 27.0	04 04.0
Reflect on and learn from individual experience	47 47.0	43 43.0	10 10.0
Enhance personal leadership and soft skills	32 32.0	54 54.0	14 14.0
Develop self-confidence and assertiveness	24 24.0	64 64.0	12 12.0
Improve awareness of how assumptions, beliefs, attitudes and organisational interests influence thinking, decisions and actions	36 36.0	49 49.0	15 15.0
Develop Emotional Intelligence (EI): self awareness, others' awareness and adaptability	30 30.0	50 50.0	20 20.0
Find the courage to speak up and encourage others to do the same	34 34.0	52 52.0	14 14.0

The table establishes the benefits of action learning to individuals within the set as shown by the results in columns two to four to include improvement of personal effectiveness and productivity, increased ability to learn from others, leadership, emotional intelligence and soft skill development. Action learning encourages self confidence and assertiveness and boosts organisational awareness.

In Table 3, majority (46.0% and 44.0%) of the respondents agreed that action learning dramatically enhance team performance, 54% agreed that it sometimes develop positive, mutually-respectful working relationships with co-workers at all organisational levels, while 52% equally agreed that it sometimes develop individual and team problem-solving and decision-making capability, about half (48.0%) agreed that it enhances capability to reflect on and learn from collective experience as well as develop awareness in the context of multi-cultural diverse teams while 52% agreed that action learning continually monitor and enhance team functions. This indicates that action learning develops positive, mutually-respectful working relationships with co-workers at all organisational levels, develops individual and team problem-solving and decision-making capability, enhances team function, capability to reflect on and learn from collective experience and team performance.

Table 3. Benefits of Action Learning to Teams

Benefits of Action Learning to Teams	Always F %	Sometimes F %	Never F %
Dramatically enhance team performance	44 44.0	46 46.0	10 10.0
Develop positive, mutually-respectful working relationships with co-workers at all organisational levels	36 36.0	54 54.0	10 10.0
Develop individual and team problem-solving and decision-making capability	40 40.0	52 52.0	08 08.0
Enhance capability to reflect on and learn from collective experience	42 42.0	48 48.0	10 10.0
Develop awareness in the context of multi-cultural diverse teams	40 40.0	48 48.0	12 12.0
Continually monitor and enhance team function	34 34.0	52 52.0	14 14.0

The table shows the benefits of action learning to teams. The second to fourth column show the results in terms of benefits of action learning to team. The results reveal that action learning dramatically enhances team performance among other benefits.

Table 4 reveals that majority (71.0%) of the respondents agreed that action learning always enhances business performance at all levels, 49% agreed that action learning solves urgent and important business challenges while 50% believed it achieves a substantial Return on Investment (ROI) on organisation improvement projects. More than half (55.0%, 57.0% and 55.0%) agreed that action learning develops a culture of staff engagement, involvement and performance, establishes effective succession

planning by developing highly qualified candidates for promotion to executive leadership positions and turns the organisation into a learning one respectively. Moreover, 49% agreed that action learning makes organisation more strategic in goal setting and 58% agreed that action learning positions organisation to adapt better in turbulent times. It can be inferred that action learning programs significantly enhance business performance, position the organisation better for turbulent times, achieve a substantial Return on Investment (ROI) on organisation improvement projects and develop a culture of staff engagement, involvement and performance among other benefits.

Table 4. Benefits of Action Learning to Organizations

Benefits of Action Learning to Organizations	Always F %	Sometimes F %	Never F %
Enhance business performance at all levels	71 71.0	25 25.0	04 04.0
Rapidly solve urgent and important and business challenges	45 45.0	49 49.0	06 06.0
Achieve a substantial Return on Investment (ROI) on organisation improvement projects	43 43.0	50 50.0	07 07.0
Develop a culture of staff engagement, involvement and performance	37 37.0	55 55.0	08 08.0
Establish effective succession planning by developing highly qualified candidates for promotion to executive leadership positions	33 33.0	57 57.0	10 10.0
Become a learning organisation.	33 33.0	55 55.0	12 12.0
Become more strategic in goal setting	35 35.0	49 49.0	16 16.0
Position organisation to adapt better in turbulent times.	31 31.0	58 58.0	11 11.0

The table shows the benefits of action learning to the organisation. The second to fourth column show the results in terms of benefits of action learning to organisation. The table shows that action learning greatly increases business performance at all levels of the organisation.

While the figure reveals that most of the respondents (85%, 84% and 80%) agreed with effective team presentations, skilled coaching and diversity and behavior of team members respectively, 77% also agreed with self-directed team process as well as review of team process as significant success factors for conducting successful action learning programs at the team level. Therefore, it can be concluded that for effective action learning programs to be conducted in organisations, skilled coaching, diversity of team members, self-directed team process, effective team presentations and clear review of team process are necessary success factors at the team level.

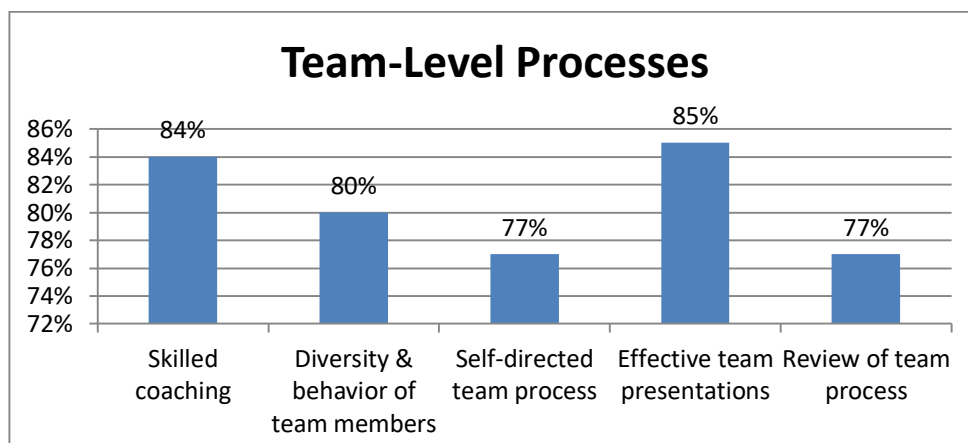


Figure 2. Significant Success Factors for Conducting Action Learning Programs at Team Level

The bar chart shows the success factors for conducting action learning. The y-axis indicates the level of significance of success factors in percentages while the x-axis shows the different success factors for conducting action learning programs at team level.

The data in figure 3 reveals that most of the respondents (88%) agreed with leveraging resources, 80% agreed with orientation-communication alignment (OCA) and importance of problem, 79% agreed with problem selection while 70% and 66% agreed with support of top decision makers and ensuring implementation of solutions as success factors for action learning programs at organisational level. This implies that resources leveraging is the most important success factor for action learning at organisational level. Orientation-communication alignment (OCA) and importance of problem, problem selection, support of top decision makers or management and ensuring the implementation of solution also constitute significant success factors for action learning program at organisational level.

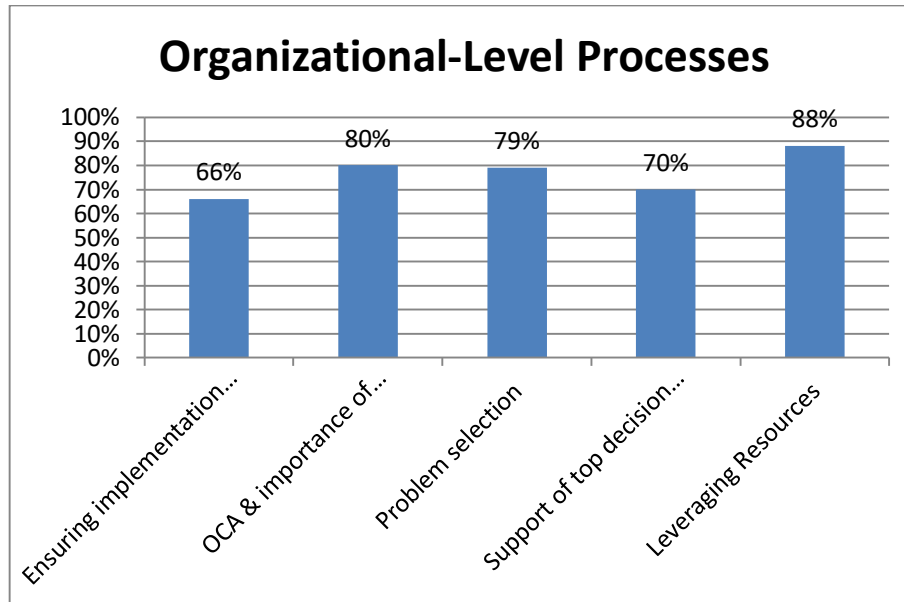


Figure 3. Significant Success Factors for Conducting Action Learning Programs at Organizational Level

The bar chart shows the success factors for conducting action learning in an organization. The y-axis indicates the level of significance of success factors in percentages while the x-axis shows the different success factors for conducting action learning programs at organisational level.

The data in Table 5 shows that most of the respondents (80%) agreed that action learning achieves lasting behavior change, 50% agreed it develops essential leadership skills, 74% and 65% believed it shifts organisational culture and promotes information sharing across business functions respectively. Majority (63%, 67% and 60%) agreed that, through action learning, best practices are systematically identified, shared and improved; everyone can see how her/his work relates to the organisation's vision and high performance teams are built respectively. Furthermore, 54%, 56% and 66% responded that action learning develops capacity at all levels, closes the "knowing-doing" gaps and builds learning and problem solving skills respectively. This implies action learning greatly contributes to change and performance improvement in organisations.

Table 5. Organisational Change and Performance Improvement Indices

Organisational Change and Performance Improvement Indices	Yes F %	No F %
Action learning achieves lasting behavior change	80 80.0	20 20.0
Action learning develops essential leadership skills	50 50.0	50 50.0
It shifts organisational culture	74 74.0	26 26.0
It promotes information sharing across business functions	65 65.0	35 35.0
Best practices are systematically identified, shared, and improved	63 63.0	37 37.0
Everyone can see how her/his work relates to the organization's vision	67 67.0	33 33.0
Builds high performance teams	60 60.0	40 40.0
Develops capacity at all levels	54 54.0	46 46.0
Closes the "knowing-doing" gaps	56 56.0	44 44.0
Builds learning and problem solving skills	66 66.0	34 34.0

The table shows the indices for organisational change and performance improvement. The second and third column show the results in frequency and percentages to the question statements raised in the first column. The results show action learning as a potent tool for achieving lasting behavior change and culture shift within the organisation.

Hypotheses Testing

H1: There is no significant relationship between organisational change and action learning.

The data in table 4.8, shows a positive and significant relationship between organisational change ($r = 0.466$, $P = 0.000$) and action learning. This implies that action learning has positive impact on organisational changes hence the null hypothesis is accepted.

H2: There is no significant relationship between performance improvement and action learning.

The correlation matrix (table 4.8) further shows that there is a positive ($r = 0.578$) and significant ($P = 0.000$) relationship between performance improvement and action learning. It can be inferred from this that successful action learning program enhances organizational performance improvement. Therefore, the null hypothesis is also accepted.

Table 6. Correlation Matrix between Organisational Changes, Performance Improvement and Action Learning

Variables	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Co-efficient of Determination (r ²)	Significance Level (P)
Organizational Change	0.466*	0.217	0.000
Performance Improvement	0.578*	0.334	0.000

*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The first column shows the variables correlated with action learning. The second column shows the results of Pearson's test for relationship with significance at the 0.01 level.

Conclusion

The paper emphasized on the aspect of action learning which has direct correlation with learning process of financial service providers as well as internet communication and technology professionals. A total of 100 respondents were sampled and administered with questionnaire which were subsequently analysed with inferential statistics. It was discovered that action learning, whether at the level of "sets", i.e. a group of employees, or at the organisational level has proven to be relevant to individual or organisational development. The respondents found it useful for personal effectiveness and productivity as well as reflection on, and learning from individual's experience. It equally enhances business performance at all levels through the provision of solutions to urgent and important business challenges, at a rather rapid rate. Most importantly, it was established that action learning has positive relationships with organisational change, on one hand and improvement of organisational performance, on the other.

Nevertheless, the study found that respondents were naturally exposed to all forms of training and learning processes. While action learning was an integral part of these trainings, it was executed more at the subconscious level with the implication that employees paid little or no attention to its relevance for its research usefulness. Given this shortcoming, future research should endeavor to distinguish respondents at work from respondents on vacation with a view to ensuring that respondents do not confuse the administration of questionnaire for research purposes with another medium of the learning process at work.

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