Action Learning in Practice

Edited by

MIKE PEDLER
Henley Business School, UK
Notes on Contributors

Christine Abbott is Co-Director of the Centre for Action Learning Facilitation and an independent action learning facilitator. Her background is in the health and social care sector where she has worked in a number of senior management roles. More recently she has been engaged in action learning facilitation in the private sector in Europe, Morocco, Syria, China, USA and South America. Christine co-wrote the action learning qualification standards for the UK Qualification and Curriculum Framework and has developed and delivered facilitator training in the UK social care sector and local government. Christine, a former chairman, is a Director and Trustee of the Institute for Leadership and Management. She is working towards a PhD at York University, researching the impact of action learning in global organizations.

christine@c-alf.org (or cabbott0@gmail.com)

Lisa Anderson is Senior Lecturer in Management Education at the University of Liverpool Management School where she leads the online MBA and DBA (by Critical Action Learning) programmes. Lisa has been facilitating and researching action learning for over ten years with groups of postgraduate students and with sets comprised of owner–managers of small businesses. She has a particular interest in the nature of critical reflection in action learning and in evaluating its impact both on individuals and small businesses.

l.anderson@liverpool.ac.uk

Margaret Attwood is a Director of Action Learning for Service Improvement and a Non Executive Director of the Dimensions Group, a large charity serving people with learning disabilities and autism throughout England and Wales. She also chairs Dimensions Community Enterprises – a growing social enterprise organization, providing employment and training. Her consultancy work ranges from action learning and self-managed learning, to work with management teams and boards, single organization development and whole system approaches across organization boundaries, fostering partnerships and improving service delivery through collaboration and the strengthening of innovation.

Hyeon-Cheol Bong is a Professor of the Department of Business Administration at Chonbuk National University in South Korea and Chairperson of the Korean Action Learning Association, which has about 700 members and has operated actively since 2005. His research interest is focused on action learning and human resource development. His activities as a consultant and learning coach include facilitation of action learning teams, design and implementation of action learning programmes as well as training learning.

coaches.hcbong@hanmail.net
Yury Boshyk is an adviser, educator and author. He is Chairman of the Global Executive Learning Network (www.GEL-net.com) and the annual Global Forum on Executive Development and Business Driven Action Learning (www.globalforumactionlearning.com). He was formerly Professor at IMD in Lausanne, Switzerland. He received his doctorate from the University of Oxford and his MSc from the London School of Economics. He is the editor of Business Driven Action Learning: Global Best Practices (2000); Action Learning Worldwide: Experiences of Leadership and Organizational Development (2002); Action Learning: History and Evolution (2010) and Action Learning and Its Applications (2010), the last two with Robert L. Dilworth. He is presently working on a biography of Reg Revans, and Accelerating Business Results, a guide to Business Driven Action Learning.

Yury@gel-net.com

Tom Bourner is Emeritus Professor of Personal and Professional Development at the University of Brighton. He discovered action learning in the mid-1980s when he was much influenced by the first edition of this book. After that, most of what he did professionally was influenced by action learning and the values that support it. Until he retired from full-time work he was Head of Research in the Business School and led the Management Development Research Unit. He is still an active researcher and scholar with continuing interests in action learning, reflective learning, identifying talents/strengths, service learning, developing students’ powers of learning and developing the idea of the fully-functioning university.

tom.bourner@ntlworld.com

Tom Boydell is Joint Managing Director of Inter-Logics and specializes in using action learning and coaching processes in leadership, management and organization development within public services and commercial sectors in the UK and overseas. He has authored and co-authored over 40 books including the best-selling A Manager’s Guide to Self-development (5th Edition, 2006).

tom@inter-logics.net


A.Brockbank@mailbox.ulcc.ac.uk
www.BrockbankMcGill.co.uk

John Burgoyne is Professor of Management Learning in the Department of Management Learning and Leadership at Lancaster University Management School. He is an Associate at Ashridge Management College and Henley Business School. In addition he is a Trustee of Brathay Trust, an outdoor development charity, and a fellow of the Leadership Foundation and the British Academy of Management. His interests are management, leadership and organization development and the evaluation of initiatives in these areas. He has been interested in the learning organization since the late 1980s and is currently working on network theory as applied to all these areas.

© Copyrighted Material
David Casey (1931–2005) was a schoolteacher at St. Benedicts, Ealing, a research scientist at Berger Paints, a manager at Reed International and, from 1972, a freelance consultant. He met Reg Revans in a pub on the Tottenham Court Road in 1969 and worked with action learning in the GEC Programmes and later with chief executive sets at Ashridge College. His 1977 book (with David Pearce) More than Management Development: Action Learning at GEC was seminal for many early practitioners. He wrote in the 1997 edition of this book that ‘he was changing from a consultant who does the odd bit of painting in watercolour to a watercolour artist who does the odd bit of consulting’.

Yonjoo Cho is an Assistant Professor of Instructional Systems Technology at Indiana University at Bloomington, USA. She has worked as a human resources professional for more than ten years in South Korea, in both the business and academic sectors. Her latest position was MBA Director and Visiting Professor at KAIST Business School. Based on her experience as an external facilitator in large companies in South Korea, she conducts research on organizational learning and action learning.


Otmar Donnenberg is Austrian by origin and became an independent OD-consultant in 1987, focusing on learning strategies of change and working on projects in the Netherlands, Germany and Austria, chiefly in industry and health care. In 1999 he published Action Learning: A Handbook, a reader in the German language, offering a combined view on Action Learning, Action Science and the Critical Pedagogy of Paulo Freire. At present he is concentrating on coaching for change and is engaged in the field of community currencies as an essential means to establish favourable conditions for urgently needed social development.

John Edmonstone tries to walk the line between practice and theory in the fields of action learning, clinical leadership and coaching. He runs a consultancy based in North Yorkshire working largely with the UK National Health Service and he also holds a number of part-time academic appointments. His action learning work is largely with clinical leaders and managers. He is author of The Action Learner’s Toolkit (Gower, 2003).

Bob Garratt is a ‘pracademic’ who consults on board and top team development, strategic thinking and organizational change through action learning processes. He is Visiting Professor in Corporate Governance at Cass Business School, London,
Action Learning in Practice

Professor Extraordinaire at the University of Stellenbosch Business School, South Africa, where he chairs the Centre for Corporate Governance in Africa. His books include *The Fish Rots From The Head* (3rd Edition); *Thin on Top; The Learning Organisation*.

www.garrattlearningservices.com

**Allan Gibb** is Professor Emeritus at the University of Durham. He has a lifelong interest in small business development and entrepreneurial research, policy and practice.

enterprise@allangibb.com

**Jeff Gold** is Professor of Organisation Learning at Leeds Business School, Leeds Metropolitan University and a Fellow of the Northern Leadership Academy. He is a founding member of the School’s HRD and Leadership Research Unit. He is also the co-author of *Human Resource Management: Theory and Practice* (Palgrave, 2007) (with John Bratton), *Leadership and Management Development* (CIPD, 2010) (with Alan Mumford and Richard Thorpe) and co-editor of *Human Resource Development: Theory and Practice* (Palgrave) (with Paul Iles, Rick Holden, Jim Stewart and Julie Beardwell) and *The Gower Handbook of Leadership and Management Development* (Gower) (with Alan Mumford and Richard Thorpe).

j.gold@leedsmet.ac.uk

**Mollie Goodman** has been in academic and professional book publishing most of her working life, taking time out to train as an executive business coach, and doing a Masters in the adaptation of informal learning approaches, particularly action learning, coaching and mentoring, to virtual environments, to support learning within an organizational culture. She now works for ‘the book experts’ who help individuals to write, publish and distribute their own books and to maximize the Internet and social media to develop their businesses.

m.goodman380@btinternet.com

http://pentacorbookdesign.co.uk

**Jean Lawrence** (1924–2010) was a Managing Partner (with John Morris) in the Development Consortium, a management consultancy specializing in action learning and organizational change. She had long associations with both Henley Management College and Templeton College, Oxford and was previously a production manager at Cadburys and a staff member at the Manchester Business School where she and John Morris employed action learning ideas in joint development activities with partner organizations.

**Michael Marquardt** is Professor of Human Resource Development and International Affairs at George Washington University. He also serves as President of the World Institute for Action Learning (www.wial.org). He is the author of 24 books and over 100 professional articles in the fields of action learning, leadership, globalization and organizational change. Over one million copies of his publications have been sold in nearly a dozen languages worldwide. His writings and accomplishments in action learning have earned him honorary doctoral degrees from universities in Asia, Europe and North America.

marquard@gwu.edu

**Judi Marshall** is Professor of Leadership and Learning in the Department of Management Learning and Leadership at Lancaster University Management School, which she joined in 2008. She had previously been a core member of the Centre for Action Research in
Professional Practice at the University of Bath’s School of Management. Judi currently works on a range of leadership for sustainability activities, including Lancaster’s MA in Leadership for Sustainability. Her interests also include inquiry as life practice, action research, women in management, systemic change, the gendering of corporate responsibility and ‘responsible careers’. She always seeks to integrate inquiry, research, practice and life.

judi.marshall@lancaster.ac.uk

Victoria Marsick is a Professor of Adult Learning and Leadership at Columbia University, Teachers College. She holds a Ph.D. in Adult Education from the University of California, Berkeley, and an M.P.A. in International Public Administration from Syracuse University. She co-directs the J.M. Huber Institute for Learning in Organizations, dedicated to advancing the state of knowledge and practice for learning and change in organizations. She is also a founding member of Partners for Learning and Leadership, a group that works with organizations to design, develop and implement strategic learning interventions. She has written extensively on informal learning, action learning, team learning and organizational learning culture, often in collaboration with Martha Gephart, Judy O’Neil, and/or Karen Watkins.

Ian McGill is a learning and development consultant. He facilitates action learning sets, as well as enjoying friends, Spain and life in North London. His academic career and work as a senior manager in central and local government led directly to his interest in and writing on action learning and coaching. As well as The Action Learning Handbook, co-authored with Anne Brockbank, a number of his books have related to action learning such as Facilitating Reflective Learning in Higher Education. He is currently preparing a publication which will enable coaches to facilitate action learning.

ian.mcgill@mailbox.ulcc.ac
www.brockbankmcgill.co.uk

John Morris (1923–2005), the first chair in management development in Britain, was a founding academic at the Manchester Business School. As a Professor he maintained his role was learning as much as he could from practising managers and telling others what he had learned. For his pioneering work in project-based learning he was awarded The Burnham Medal from The British Institute of Management. He left Manchester Business School in 1982 to work as a consultant in action learning and organizational change, finishing a distinguished career as a Visiting Professor with the Revans Centre for Action Learning and Research at Salford University.

Judy O’Neil is President of the consulting firm Partners for Learning and Leadership, Inc. which specializes in action technologies including action learning. She holds an EdD and MA in Adult Education from Teachers College, Columbia University, New York and is on the adjunct faculty at Teachers College. Her publications include Understanding Action Learning (2007) co-authored with Victoria J. Marsick. Her clients have included Covidien, the Government of Bermuda, Nielsen Media, Berlex Pharmaceuticals, AstraZeneca Pharmaceuticals, Fidelity Investments, PSE&G, RR Donnelley, AT&T, Ernst and Young, Norwest, and New York Transit Authority.

jaoneil@aol.com www.partnersforlearning.com

David Pearce first worked with Reg Revans on the GEC Senior Management Development Programme in the mid 1970s, which was captured in More than Management Development...
– *Action Learning at GEC*, edited by Casey and Pearce. All sorts of action learning experiences followed – a highlight was Action Learning for Chief Executives at Ashridge Business School. Recently he was involved with Robin Ladkin of Ashridge Consulting in the project to develop the management abilities of Welsh farming families. Managed by Menter a Busnes, this programme is ongoing with more than 2,000 participants in more than 175 sets: see *Seeds For Change – Action Learning for Innovation* edited by Pearce and Williams (also available in Welsh).

**Mike Pedler** works, researches and writes on leadership, action learning, the learning organization and network organizing. He is Emeritus Professor at Henley Business School, University of Reading and co-edits the journal *Action Learning: Research and Practice*. He first edited this book in 1983.

mikepedler@phonecoop.coop

**Joe Raelin** is an internationally-recognized scholar in the fields of work-based learning and leadership. He holds the Asa. S. Knowles Chair of Practice-Oriented Education at Northeastern University in Boston, USA, and is also Professor in the College of Business Administration. He is the author of well over 100 articles and many books, including his well-known *Creating Leaderful Organizations* and its accompanying *Leaderful Fieldbook*, as well as *Work-Based Learning: Bridging Knowledge and Action in the Workplace*.

j.raelin@neu.edu
http://www.northeastern.edu/poe/about/raelin.htm

**Reg Revans** (1907–2003) was the founder of the action learning idea, although he always attributed the essence of it to ancient wisdom. He was successively an Olympic athlete for Britain (1928), a researcher in nuclear physics at the Cavendish Laboratory in Cambridge (1928–1935), an educational reformer with Essex County Council (1935–45), Professor of Management in Manchester (1955–65), and an independent researcher and consultant thereafter. Politically a Liberal, he was a life-long pacifist and was involved in the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. In a tribute, David Casey wrote that Revans had ‘shifted forever some of the world’s assumptions about how managers learn’.

**Michael Reynolds** is Emeritus Professor of Management Learning at Lancaster University. He has been director of full-time and part-time postgraduate programmes and the doctoral programme in the Department of Management Learning and is currently Director of the Doctoral Programme in e-Research and Technology Enhanced Learning in the Department of Educational Research. His research interests are in student experiences of experiential and participative learning designs, the application of critical perspectives to pedagogy and in students’ experience of difference. He is co-editor with Russ Vince (University of Bath) of *Organizing Reflection* (2004) and the *Handbook of Experiential Learning and Management Education* (2007).

m.reynolds@lancaster.ac.uk

**Clare Rigg** is based at the Institute of Technology, Tralee, where she leads an action learning-based MBA programme. She has worked with practitioners from all sectors integrating action learning into management and leadership development programmes, and is particularly interested in the fostering of inter-agency and cross-disciplinary
working through collaborative learning. She has co-authored three books and numerous chapters and articles on action learning, critical action learning, management learning and HRD. She is currently co-editor of the Account of Practice section of the journal *Action Learning: Research and Practice*.

claire.rigg@staff.ittralee.ie

**Lennart Rohlin** is the founder of MiL Institute ([www.milinstitute.se](http://www.milinstitute.se)) and the Action Reflection Learning (ARL™) concept for ‘earning while learning’ and to ‘make strategy happen’. He has had appointments at universities and business schools in Sweden, Finland and the USA, and he has co-founded international institutions for executive education and action research. He has written and edited about 50 books in the business and management areas. He is the owner/president of MiLgården – conference sites designed exclusively for innovative professional meetings ([www.milgardarna.se](http://www.milgardarna.se)). Lennart has been world champion in fencing and he lives in Lund, Sweden, with his two children, Mikaela and Melvin.
lennart.rohlin@milgardarna.se

**Jean-Anne Stewart** is responsible for corporate MBA programmes for a wide variety of international clients at Henley Business School. She specializes in facilitation and leadership development and has led several European and UK research projects, particularly focused on facilitation, action learning, third sector leadership and leadership development and evaluation. Prior to joining Henley, she worked at British Airways developing their internal facilitation and change capability programme.
jean-anne.stewart@henley.com

**Richard Thorpe** is Professor of Management Development at Leeds University Business School. His interests include management learning and development and leadership. His early industrial experiences inform the way his ethos has developed. Common themes are: a strong commitment to process methodologies and a focus on action in all its forms; and interest in and commitment to the development of doctoral students and the development of capacity within the sector; a commitment to collaborative working on projects of mutual interest. He is a fellow of the British Academy of Management and Chair of the Society for the Advancement of Management Studies.

**Kiran Trehan** is Professor in Management Learning and Leadership at Birmingham University, prior to this Kiran was Director of HRD and Consulting at Lancaster University Management School. Kiran is co-editor of *Action Learning: Research and Practice* – the first international journal dedicated to the advancement of knowledge and practice through action learning research and practice. Kiran’s key research interests are in the field of action learning and action research, she is a key contributor to debates on the distinctiveness of critical action learning, and how it can be applied in a variety of organizational and policy domains.

K.trehan@lancaster.ac.uk

**Katie Venner** is an independent action learning facilitator and Senior Associate at Action Learning Associates. Her background is in the cultural sector where she has worked in a number of different roles. With colleagues at Action Learning Associates she developed the Leadership Facilitation Skills course for the Government-funded Cultural Leadership
Programme. Katie has a Masters in Change Agent Skills and Strategies (Dist) from University of Surrey and continues her interest in organizational change as a practitioner researcher. kvenner@btinternet.com

**Russ Vince** is Associate Dean (Research) and Professor of Leadership and Change in the School of Management, University of Bath. His research investigates the emotional and political dynamics of organizing, as well as the impact of these dynamics on management learning, management development, change and leadership. He has authored five books as well as many journal articles, book chapters and conference papers. Russ is a former Editor-in-Chief of the journal *Management Learning* (2005–2010). He is an internationally recognized expert in organizational learning and action learning. R.Vince@bath.ac.uk

http://www.bath.ac.uk/management/faculty/russ_vince.html

**Deborah Waddill** has a special interest in leadership learning and development enabled by technology. Her new, co-authored text entitled *The e-HR Advantage* (2011) demonstrates ways in which technology can support and enhance Human Resource functions. She publishes regularly and speaks at conferences on the topic of technology-enabled learning, including ways to extend the reach of action learning through technology. As President of Restek Consulting, Dr Waddill provides strategic planning assistance for the design of technology-enabled learning systems for government, for-profit, and non-profit organizations. Dr Waddill is an instructor for The George Washington University’s Graduate School of Education online and at its U.S., Singapore, Hong Kong, and South Africa locations. In all of her endeavors, Dr Waddill seeks to enhance learning and provide leadership development opportunities to both current and potential leaders, including those in developing countries. Vwnill@gsu.edu

**Verna J. Willis** is Emeritus Professor, Georgia State University in Atlanta, Georgia, where she took a firm stand that there should be chief learning officers in organizations, fully empowered to serve as members of executive teams. First insights regarding action learning came from interaction with Revans, beginning in 1994. Thereafter, collaborating often with Prof. Robert Dilworth at Virginia Commonwealth University, she began research and practice of action learning in both university and corporate settings. Verna saw that Revans’ ideas matched well with her extensive practitioner experience, with executive chief learning officer accountabilities, and with applications of General Systems Theory that had been a sustained interest in her doctoral work at The State University of New York at Buffalo. Currently, she contributes to the Global Forum on Business Driven Action Learning.

**Roland Yeo** is Associate Professor of Organizational Behavior and International Business at the Kuwait Maastricht Business School. He is also an Adjunct Senior Researcher with the International Graduate School of Business at the University of South Australia and teaches on the EMBA program at the King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals in Saudi Arabia as a visiting faculty. He has recently co-authored a book with Michael Marquardt entitled *Breakthrough Problem Solving with Action Learning: Concepts and Cases*. In addition to action learning, he has carried out research in organizational learning, experiential learning and problem-based learning.

yeokkr@yahoo.com