



The
IGUANA Project
Improving Education Together

IGUANA LEARNING PROGRAMME

Running Action Learning Sets

MODULE	Organisational Intelligence
SUB-MODULE	Practice based development activities
VERSION	1
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IGUANA Action Learning Sets

The purpose of this document is to provide the context for running Action Learning Sets as part of the IGUANA programme in your school; to offer some simple steps for setting them up and direct you to more detailed resources and guidelines on working in this way.

Action Learning is an approach to develop people and organisations, which uses the ‘task’ as the vehicle for learning. It is based on the premise that there is no learning without action and no sober and deliberate action without learning¹.

What is an IGUANA Action Learning Set?

- A small group of people working initially with a facilitator bringing practical issues and concerns arising from the IGUANA activities
- Meeting regularly for an agreed period of time (we recommend four meetings over the period of the pilot)
- Sharing real school/organisational issues, problems or opportunities arising from the IGUANA activities
- Questioning and challenging in relation to learning from the IGUANA online programme
- Making action points in order to bring about innovation and change in your school.
- Reporting back on progress to subsequent meetings and developing further plans as a result
- Obtaining feedback and evaluating progress.

¹ Pedler, M. (1997) *Action Learning in Practice*, 3rd edn. Aldershot, Gower

What are the IGUANA activities?

The IGUANA online platform provides governors, head teachers and teachers with a self directed programme aimed to help their schools to innovate and change. It does this through:

- 1) Giving explanations and an initial self-assessment exercise to help map the Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Organisational intelligence (OI) of the participants and their schools.
- 2) Providing access at three levels to related learning and development content to develop in each of the key EI and OI competencies:
 - a. Discovery- simple explanations and resources to introduce each of the concepts.
 - b. Development – research questions to apply the learning in practice and real life situations
 - c. Detail – articles and content to deepen understanding and apply to continued practice.
- 3) Emphasising practice through a set of activities: the Theory of Change/Innovation workshop will engage participants in applying their learning in their own schools and will provide practice and cases for the Action Learning Sets.
- 4) A Peer Review programme which involves a number of schools working and learning together on specific themes in relation to the change work they are undertaking as part of the IGUANA programme.

Objectives of the IGUANA Action learning groups:

We envisage four action learning sets over the duration of participation in the programme. Each time a group of the same people should be convened to work through one of more issues or problems raised by ongoing work that will benefit from a wider range of perspectives. The Action Learning Set might consist of membership groups – Governors, Senior Leaders, Middle Managers, frontline teacher and where appropriate students. These sets will be held at different points in the programme:

- i) A first meeting following the assessment phase
- ii) A second meeting following the Theory of Change work
- iii) A third meeting to coincide with the programme of work activities
- iv) A fourth meeting towards the end of the pilot.

The purpose of the Action Learning Sets is:

- to identify programmes of work that will bring about organisational change in your school; these might emerge from some of the IGUANA activities e.g the development of a Theory of Change/Innovation Plan.
- to share and learn from dilemmas and challenges being encountered in these programmes of work
- to share learning from the IGUANA learning programme and develop practice,
- to reflect and learn from the data emerging from the IGUANA activities

Some suggested steps for setting up your Action Learning Set

1. Establishing the Action Learning Set

In developing a Theory of Change/Innovation Plan for your school you will have begun to bring together different aspects of the IGUANA programme in relation to a particular goal or vision for the school. For example you might have identified that you want your school to be more involved or have greater impact in the local community along with a set of activities to achieve this change. You could run a short session as part of your Theory of Change workshop to establish your Action Learning Set, work out how to recruit participants, plan when the ALS should take place.

The task at this stage would be to:

- Agree on a membership that reflects the diversity of your school community – governors, head teacher, teachers, students, community representatives, parents.
- Establish the Action Learning Set and link it to your Theory of Change plan.
- Begin to explore what might be the long term objectives of the Action Learning Set, what do you want to achieve in terms of learning, doing and change.
- Agree the date and venue of the first meeting of the Action Learning Set.

2. Running your first Action Learning Set

The first meeting of your Action Learning Set will very likely be devoted to further clarification and planning. What issues do you anticipate you will have to agree in order to make progress? Are you all clear on how you will run the Action Learning Sets?

There are a number of detailed and comprehensive guides available that you can refer to when running your ALS.

<http://www.intrac.org/data/files/resources/733/Action-Learning-Sets-An-INTRAC-guide.pdf>

<http://ifal.org.uk/action-learning/origins-of-action-learning/>

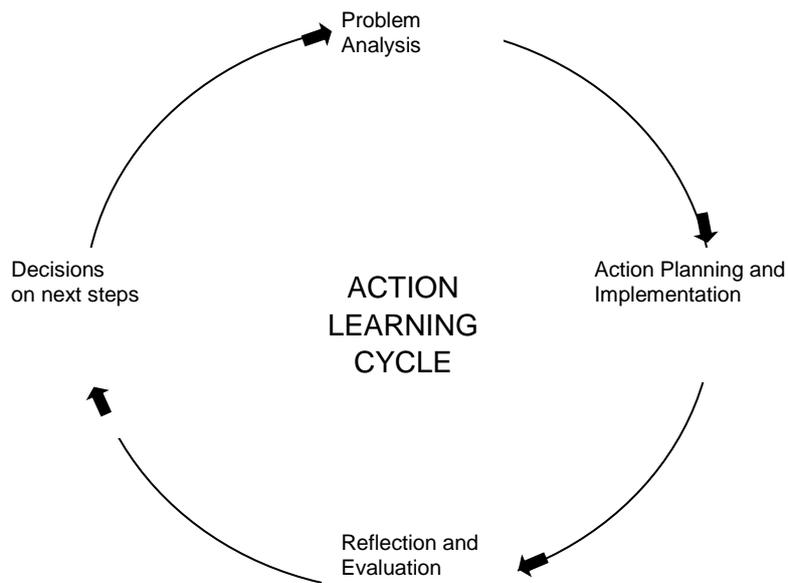
<http://www.actionlearningassociates.co.uk/>

A practice based article on using action learning sets

Action Learning – Improving Organizational Performance through Team Learning

http://www.cfar.com/sites/default/files/resources/BN_AL_Improve_Org_Performance.pdf

Fig 1: Action Learning Cycle



3. Reviewing the learning from the Action Learning Sets

Once you've run the first cycle Action Learning Sets in your school you may want to validate or test your learning with peers from further afield in the school community. The Action Learning Set sits within the IGUANA peer learning programme which will bring together a number of schools to work on common issues