

## ANTICIPATORY ACTION LEARNING FOR CAPACITY ENHANCING

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Anticipatory action learning has the advantage of enhancing the capacity for people to better prepare for the future. Anticipatory action learning is embedded in futures studies and is the collective search for meaning and purpose through articulating a preferred future and doing *now* what is required to create your preferred future.

Anticipatory action learning is immersed in understanding the impact of emerging issues and trends to enhance our capacity for change by helping us become more comfortable with being uncomfortable, in macrohistory the study of the maps of civilization to enhance our learning of lessons from the past, philosophy to enhance our sense of perception and behaviour, and psychodynamics, particularly the post-structural disciplines such as existential and post-structural narrative work, to enhance our sense of self. In this way anticipatory action learning can also play a significant role in the search for meaning and purpose which for many people, organisations and nations could result in a potential 'healing' journey. Anticipatory action learning, as I am proposing, refers to conscience, the primordial part of our consciousness that reminds us of our potential for living 'authentically'. The two worlds, the world of action learning (responding to the present) and the world of anticipatory action learning (creating the future), I describe as having a dialectical tension and is the fundamental building block for effective change. This approach brings the context of futures studies that covers an empirical approach of predictions, an interpretive approach of understanding different ways of knowing and perspectives, a critical approach based on a philosophical and psychoanalytic platform and an action research approach through doing now what is meaningful and of purpose for the future. Anticipatory action learning and anticipatory action research as a basis of futures studies provide an appropriate framework from which to implement a more meaningful organisational outcome by thinking beyond just strategy for the short term.

Existential factors focuses on freedom of choice in shaping one's own life and teaches that one is responsible to shape his/her own life and a need for self-determination and self-awareness. The uniqueness of each individual forms his/her own unique personality, starting from infancy. The many discourses necessary in human interactions in organisational life are determinant on power relating between one or many individuals on multiple levels of communication all happening at the same time be it in past, present or future time. Existentialism focuses on the present and on the future. The outcome is to help people to see the possibilities for their future. The challenge is to recognize that they themselves were responsible for the events in their life and is well suited in helping them to make good choices in dealing with life. Similarly, anticipatory action learning is always looking into what is possible in the future and is based on the substance of a predetermined concept of one's own existing in the future.

Using futures methodologies with psychodynamics and the power of the two disciplines together I have found, both as a CEO and as a facilitator/teacher, is a powerful method for providing organisations with a new framework in which to view their concept of time (past, present and future) as both are concerned about an assertion of meaning and '*truth*' through different ways of knowing. Anticipatory action learning has the potential to be a powerful methodology because it accepts that there are many ways of knowing beyond the western developed Judaic-Christian way of knowing which western government and western business is based on. In a globalised world this is advantageous.

The educational methodology of anticipatory action learning is centered on post structural leadership psychodynamics and futures tools and methodologies. I define transformation as the leadership that is needed to materialise and to mobilise a way forward for organisations, governments, and nations. What we set out to achieve is an effective methodology for creating transformation, to materialise it, and to make any tacit knowledge gained transferable to others in an explicit way through visioning and backcasting in order to mobilise this into action.

For example, we challenge organisations that the many different worldviews all need to be taken into account and respected. We start by changing the conversation around leadership and preferred futures. In both leadership and futures programs I normally begin with a group exercise around stages of learning. This exercise is designed to prepare participants for the challenges to their worldview which is the essence of change and future opportunities. The idea behind this exercise is that our fourth learning stage, unconscious competency or 'we don't know we know', is imbedded in our automatic thoughts, our core schema, and is fundamental to our own personal worldview, our own personal way of knowing. As our unconscious competency is non-rational, i.e. beyond rational cognition, being capable of working at millions of connections per second, it is a 'machine of judgment' of 'what is', according to us, and is formed through our programmed knowledge, experiential knowledge and our beliefs, and is often not even amenable to cognitive analysis as you can't be rational without experiencing emotions first. Our unconscious competency is that quick.

The next stage is to look at emerging issues and trends as a way of broadening participant's perspective and their challenges. The intent of focussing on these challenges is creating an awareness of their own leadership potential and the possibilities arising from that for them. This involves multi layered conversations about purpose and meaning, leading to individual action in a collaborative way for better and more sustainable results for the organisation.

Often traditional planning is based on a belief fantasy that we can control the future, a myth we call being strategic. Traditionally strategic planning is a logical abstraction reached through linear processing based on the "problem" (problem in the sense that the outcome or future being planned is uncertain) leading to 'solutions' planned through actions of cause and effect within the existing 'systems' paradigm. Going 'Beyond Strategy' are conversations about the recognisable but unknowable future where thinking, choosing, and deciding is realised also as a result of our private behaviours helping us become more comfortable with being uncomfortable. This reflects on how we feel towards our work and asks the question who am I, and how have I come to be who I am? What do I wish to be?

I teach futures studies with executives in the corporate and public world centered on the concept of futures thinking in a leadership context together with the principles of psychodynamics noticing that the present moment is really all we have to work with effectively so that the future is something we need to create – to also have, within ourselves, in the present moment – as something that is preferred, obtainable and meaningful – a hope, a vision, an inspiration. It is my belief and experience that through futures studies, anticipatory action learning, action research and human psychology we can move towards a better future which is inclusive for all and all the many different ways of knowing.