Reg Revans Speaks About Action Learning

A video program produced and presented by Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt

Reg Revans, born in 1907, died in January 2003. In this video program, he is introduced by Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt and interviewed by Denis Loaney and John Mahoney at the First World Congress on *Action Learning, Action Research and Process Management* in Brisbane, 1990, at the age of 83. He discusses the following points:

- L=P+Q (Learning = Programmed knowledge + Questioning insight).

- Expert knowledge is necessary but not sufficient.

- True learning takes place through the exchange of ideas.

- We learn from talking about things that are **not** going well with our work.

- How do I ask myself fresh questions? The first emphasis is on what it is I don't know. Revans quotes Rutherford: "What impresses me most is my ignorance. What does yours look like to you?"

- Revans quotes Newton: "From time to time I was like a little boy on a beach picking up a shell...giving it some attention, but before me was the whole ocean of my ignorance."

- Collaborative learning is about getting together to explore the beach, learning with and from others in the same mess. (Comrades in adversity)

- Action Learning is about people taking charge of their learning; experienced people discussing here and now problems; people who carry the final responsibility and bringing their values, motivation and experiences to the task.

- Action learning does not have a definite structure. It cannot be imprisoned. There is a wide range of action learning applications.

- Action learning is about behaviour. If you have immediate personal responsibility, you need never to pretend to be someone you are not. Revans asks a group of top managers to tell him the most important question that they have learned to ask themselves. He chooses this question: "What is an honest man and what need I do to become one?" Quoting the bible: "What is the Kingdom of Heaven?...The Kingdom of Heaven is within you." Revans notes "You also have to ask yourself a few questions. Ask who you are." This, to Revans, is the final value of action learning.