

Action learning as professional development for vocational educators

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On-going professional development of educators is an essential element of maintaining quality in VET. In the Australian VET sector, throughout the 1990s, action learning has been promoted for professional development. It is still named and promoted as a 'work based learning' strategy in more recent staff development material. The wider literature documents a variety of ways that action learning can be used. So how is action learning used by educators in our sector? Based on participation in a number of action learning projects, this paper argues that action learning is used in multiple ways. The evidence suggested that three of these are (1) for professional implementation, (2) for professional assimilation and (3) for professional praxis. Each of these uses takes a different view of knowledge, of the professional vocational educator and desired outcomes of action learning. Therefore, each use promotes a different view of professional learning, the pre-requisites for action learning, the participant role, facilitator role and what is important to evaluate. They each offer a different potential for professional development and are associated with different problems. This paper articulates and discusses these three uses, and how they may effect quality improvement in the VET sector.