MASTER OF ARTS IN LEARNING AND INNOVATIVE CHANGE

AALBORG UNIVERSITY 2011

**THESIS**

POWER ACTION LEARNING; PAL – *an approach to organizational learning through Team development, Knowledge sharing, Innovation and Virtual Action Learning*

ABSTRACT

**Keywords:** *power action learning, experiential learning, reflection, team development, knowledge sharing, high-involvement and employee-driven innovation, lateral thinking, virtual action learning*

In a column dated January 2011[[1]](#footnote-1) Hildebrandt reflects on the 2010s as the decade for making a change. In the sense that we take a stand regarding the way we live our lives, manage organizations and, at the end of the day, our society. Doing that, a necessary action would be to break loose from usual behavioral habits, ways of thinking, and performing.

While writing this thesis we draw on these reflections in an organizational context. How is it possible for organizations to radically change their behavioral patterns to be able to; on the one hand manage the daily challenges and on the other hand develop new strategies to handle the conditions in a rapidly changing society?

Based on our study of Business Driven Action Learning (BDAL) in Vestas we have previously developed a design which supports learning, reflection, and transfer inspired by traditional action learning theories as well as case study-based theories of BDAL. An approach to organizational learning we define as Power Action Learning (PAL). With these conclusions in mind we are now studying The Maersk Way of Winning pilot (MWoW). The focus of our research is the study of the MWoW case in which we point out and define whether our research-based design was applied and which components from this are evident. Furthermore, we are elaborating on the potential to support knowledge sharing, knowledge management, high-involvement innovation, employee-driven innovation, and virtual action learning through this pedagogy - PAL.

Our study shows that MWoW facilitates a learning environment based on the concept of BDAL and thereby also PAL. In relation to this, our previous research-based study was developed into a design for change processes with the conclusion that the organization has to set a clear agenda whether the objective is to support results or learning. The chosen objective defines the focus on the different elements in the pedagogy, which are: *Knowledge, Questioning Insight, Reflection, Action, Strategy, Sponsor, and Implementation*. Components which we, due to the findings from this case study, have changed into *Knowledge, Questions, Actions, Management, and Implementation* to simplify the theory. On top of that, we added Context and Facilitator as vital elements in facilitating organizational learning through PAL. This results in the development of a new design PAL vol. II.

In the third part of our thesis we find that PAL can support Team Development, Knowledge Sharing and Knowledge Management, Innovation, and Virtual Action Learning (VAL) taking into consideration that these approaches call for customization of PAL to facilitate a positive learning environment.

We discuss the challenges met when organizations engage in Power Action Learning due to the complexity of this pedagogy.

1. http://www.steenhildebrandt.dk/2011/01/ethvert-nyt-ar-har-sine-udfordringer-og-muligheder/ [↑](#footnote-ref-1)