

An Understanding of the past necessary to solve the Present Problems.

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### Abstract

Extensive researches and studies have been conducted on problem solving methods, techniques, assumptions and philosophies, involving both the laboratory experiments and field work analysis. In this essay, however, not everything to do with problem solving is discussed. A few of the written literatures and research findings have been critically observed to help explain a technical theme in this piece of work. Yes, we have heard from writers like Stuart Sorensen (Staurt, 2007), and Carter McNamara, a lawyer and business consultant in problem solving. Also given much attention while writing this essay are the ideas and opinions from individuals and group discussions that were geared towards reaching an amicable agreement on whether an understanding of the past is necessary in solving present problems, or otherwise, as some may opt to criticize.

### Introduction

It is arguable that an understanding of the past problem is necessary in solving the present. Knowledge and ideas that were used to solve a similar problem in the past may be applied to resolve the same in future. Stuart begins by arguing that there is no problem that has no solution, otherwise it is not a problem anymore, but rather a fact. According to this writer, Stuart Sorensen, problems are those things that can be changed or altered in a way, “obstacles and challenges to be overcome in life” (Stuart, 2007).

Sorensen further asserts that there is, however, no point in trying to change the unchangeable, and that this may simply lead an individual to more frustrations in life. Regarding facts as problems, as he emphasizes, is like “asking a poor man how to become a millionaire” (Stuart, 2007). It’s true that a poor man wouldn’t be poor anymore if he can find ways of getting richer. But because he doesn’t know how to get rich, why ask him the way to richness?

The idea is, in trying to find a coherent solution; we need to consider the background information about a problem. Facts should not be mistaken for problems; neither should problems be treated as facts. Suppose you do not like your body height at your grown up age, there is no need stressing up yourself on how to change it, because the solution to your kind of problem is somehow not there. Accepting your height is therefore a bitter pill you must learn how to swallow. Simply put, understanding a problem is as important as solving it.

### The Need for Understanding a Problem

In our day to day livelihoods, we encounter problems, at home, in schools and/or at our work places. From the findings of other researchers like Carter McNamara, “supervisors and managers are most often engaged in solving problems and making decisions”. The new supervisors and managers that take over the responsibilities in future tend to borrow their problem solving techniques from the past ideas that were used to solve particular problems in their organization(s). This is to reduce on things like workload, stress and fatigue. Having to come up with the same solution to the very problem every time it crops up doesn't only sound exasperating, but is indeed very intimidating. We may thus require the past to help in solving the present, faster and more pertinently

There is, however, a likelihood that not all problems that emerge within an organization or an institution can be solved using the ideas that worked before. McNamara, a business consultant, actually had a point to put across at this juncture. According to him, “Problems can be perceived as opportunities to better the future”, by redefining and understanding the problem progressively. Furthermore, one problem could be having more than one suitable solution. In such a case, it is likely that the latest solution is the best, and so, the past may not count much.

Take the case of HIV/AIDS, still no ultimate cure, but ever since its origin, there have been a series of advancement in the modes of managing the deadly disease. In the preliminary trials to get the cure, the use of condoms was introduced to help reduce the spread, as the search for the cure continues. Then the use of ARVs for those already

infected. Suppose the cure could finally be announced today, then the previous temporary solution for those infected, which is the use of ARVs, is likely to be overtaken by the new innovation, the new solution. And so the past solution ceases to count in the new management of the disease. Why should you go for the ARVs when you can simply get a cure!

Some problems may not require knowledge of the past

Problems that seem to pose many solutions may not necessarily need to be solved based on the knowledge of the past. What really matters here is getting the most suitable solution to a problem. Current problems may also come their solutions at hand. For example, when using the Microsoft office word 2003 application, you will not be able to read a file saved in Microsoft office word 2007, not unless converted. On the other hand, office word 2007 will easily read the files saved in Microsoft office word 2003, conversion not needed. In this case, the present comes with a solution to a problem that can not be solved by the past. All these are as a result of individuals' ideas, logically and systematically executed to change the changeable for the better.

### Conclusion

We can conclude that if a suitable solution has to be found, then understanding of a problem is indispensable. As much as the ideas of the past should critically be considered when trying to find a better solution to a present problem, this may not apply to all problems. Some problems have little to do with the past. Whichever of these

situations prevails first, understanding a problem is the most critical, so that we do not perceive facts as problems.

Reference

Stuart, S. *Understanding and Solving Problems*. RMN. Mental Health Sanctuary. 2007