

Case Study

Leadership and lifelong learning: impacts of leadership on development of learning attitude and skills

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This paper was originally presented at the International Conference on the Role of Universities in Hands-On Education, Chiang Mai, Thailand, August, 2009.

Introduction

“Whatever their nature, complex systems evolve with an underlying logic of their own. Evolving our consciousness requires much more than knowing the facts and mastering technological methods, (it)...also calls for feeling and intuition; for sensing the situation in which we find ourselves apprehending its manifold aspects and dimensions and creatively responding to them.” Ervin Laszlo, (1997).

This essay considers the extent to which quality of leadership can contribute to personal and group development in the area of lifelong learning, an area now receiving greater attention in Thai educational reform [1]. The question is formulated within the context of a Workshop on Life-Long Learning and Educational Media for Teachers in 2007, held in Tai-Hmurng District, Phang-Nga Province, Thailand. This workshop involved two local schools; Tab-Lamu High School under the patronage of Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn and Baan Lam-Kaen School. It was organised by King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi (KMUTT). Through the three-day workshop and a further nine-months training, the workshop provides participants with learning methods on the Introduction of Creative thinking, Mindmapping, FILA (fact, idea, learning issue, action plan), Brain-based and Project-based Learning. The workshop's ideology is best expressed by its Thai acronym — “4๕5๒” reading /see•saw•ha•yaw/ — that stands for ‘Local base and Sustainable impact.’

During the preparation for this workshop, advice was given to the team of organisers to seek a natural leader among the participants and engage the leader(s) as part of the team. The process would reassure that facilitators would be accepted and supported by participants shortly after both parties met. During the identification process, some participants demonstrated different qualities, which could be defined as “leadership”, and they played critical roles in the “45” workshop. It is worth noting that the majority of participants are female whose behavioural character is, mythically, regarded as ‘non-leader-by-nature.’ Workshop facilitators were exposed to distinctive female leaders who were successful in developing their skills. This urges a re-examination of the meaning of leadership as well as signified quality of leadership in developing learning skills.

At the conclusion, the workshop was deemed to have been productive, despite its ambitious goal. This paper relates the facilitators’ self-evaluation and brings an analysis of some outstanding participants in order to understand the impacts of their behaviour on personal and group development in skills and attitude towards lifelong learning. The result sheds light into better understanding of learning behaviour, learning issues and effective teaching methods.

Shifting the Learning Paradigm

As knowledge evolves through time, teachers must maintain the learner’s attitude. The workshop “45” took this as its assumption. Nonetheless, this ideology is irrelevant to the real situation. There was a considerable discrepancy between initial and working goals of the workshop. This section discusses ideology, theory and practical situation.

Theoretically, many agree that thinking is basic to learning, which is an outstanding human ability to adapt to changing environment. It keeps humans from extinction. At present, learning endorses us to maintain our socio-economic status; to reach our goals and give meaning to our life. Ervin Laszlo however raises this issue to another level — as stated in *“The 3rd Millennium, the Challenge and the Vision.”* He pleads for all members of human society to undertake change to the fundamentals of our nature by developing the current ‘thinking’.

“Evolving a new way of thinking calls for a great deal of creativity. To live in the third millennium we shall need more than incremental improvement on our current rationality; we shall need new thinking joined with new ways of perceiving and visioning ourselves, other, nature and the world around us” [2].

This is a call for change in human behaviour. In the beginning of the third millennium, the environment, technology and ideology have already changed human thinking. However, human behaviour and way of life has more or less been similar to that of the medieval period. In *what remains to be done*, Laszlo (1997) plead for conscious evolution, *“...we must evolve our own consciousness.”* In a simple prescription, it is a long development process that would lead next generations to a new paradigm of thinking — to a person, it is lifelong learning.

Lifelong learning is a process that anyone can carry out if they know 'how-to-learn.' Thinking is a brain's natural function but 'to think and to learn' must be nurtured. In the 1960s, a famous thinker – the father of Mindmapping - Tony Buzan, asked a common question amongst thinkers “*How do I learn how to learn?*” The question implies that ‘...people need to be taught not just technique but also how to think.’ [3]. It has been almost 50 years since, still, large number of people are remain uncertain about this learning method, especially at present, when they are learning in a big stream of information and the rapid expansion of knowledge [4]. When Buzan was certain that he could not find any answer from any books, he realised that his problem of learning has led him into ‘*virgin territory of the most staggering importance.*’[3]. This essay is interested in the significance of this incidence which is not his realisation but the attitude by which he was driven to ask the question - “How do I learn how to learn?”

The workshop believes that learner's attitude is critical to success in shifting learning paradigm and that leadership play significant role in the process. Bearing this in mind, the workshop - “45” must, first, establish a common ground — the learner's attitude. It must prepare “teachers” to become “learners.” Theoretically, teachers should be the best learners, however, routine school-tasks usually disengage them from the learning mindset, particularly when dealing with overloaded work and economic difficulty in life. This specific situation generates a context in which a character of leadership can be observed in relation to shifting the learning paradigm.

Natural Leadership: Personality Traits

A leader is defined basically as a person who is in charge or in command of a group. “Person in charge” - “top rank” - “the chief”, may be elected (by democratic majority) or designated (by authority). Neither the elected nor the designated methods guarantee effectiveness or success of a person as the leader. In practice, titles, ranks, positions will be assigned to personnel so that the line of command is maintained. For a good system, if the line of command is maintained, it will function as it should do. Leader in this case is merely a system controller who may be called administrator, supervisor or manager. Amongst learners, leadership should be defined as a person who is 1) superior to others 2) an initiator in an action 3) an example for others to follow. This ‘intellectual’ leader, thereby, is a person who can inspire others to learn - adjust their mindset and attitude.

In the Eastern way of thinking, the realm of wisdom is reached when one is aware of one's own intellectual boundaries. The boundary is invisible and can be seen once one opens his/her mind so as to see through this illusive boundary. Opening one's mind is an inner-self action. External factors may trigger such action insofar as the person ponders them with his/her mind. This is a transformation of personal intellectual capacity. It converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents [5].

It is debatable whether the quality of such intellectual leaders is natural or nurtured. This is an on-going dialogue, for example, the famous work of Thomas Hobbes "*Leviathan*" (1651), and John Locke, "*An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*" (1690). With recent research, the debate has now developed to involve an analysis of human genetic composition such as the work of Judith Harris's "*The Nurture Assumption*" [6] and Alison Gopnik *et.al*,

"*Scientists in the Crib; what early learning tells us about the mind*" [7]. Final conclusions of the debate are not significant to this essay however it is much more critical to understand how these scholars define quality of the mind. One method is behavioural theory — personality traits of the leader.

Management and marketing research put forwards a number of ideas about certain behaviours of leadership, which could be learnt and practiced. However, recent theories in social science and humanity tend to appear in terms of relativism such as Situational Theory of leadership. This theory assumes that "*different situations call for different characteristics.*" According to this group of theories, "*no single optimal psychographic profile of a leader exists. What an individual actually does when acting as a leader is in large part dependent upon characteristics of the situation in which he functions.*" [8]. The theory tends to focus on the characteristics and behaviours of successful leaders. In a situation wherein the role of leaders is obscure, some begin to consider the role of followers and the contextual nature of leadership. By identifying the context, the method eventually filters out followers' characters and focuses on the leader's.

A common personality trait is "self confidence." Leaders possess "*a belief that they have the knowledge and ability to be successful...be able to handle unexpected situations well and are not easily discouraged.*" [9]. Confidence is fundamental for both a successful person and leader, either in terms of intellectual or organizational, male or female and regardless to types of task. In the learning process, while others are losing direction, confident members may lend their will power and move on as a group. When a leader demonstrates a strong belief in something, it inspires others to work towards their goal, even a situation that may appear hopeless.

According to the brain-based learning theory, a basic assumption is that everyone, who has a functioning brain, has ability to learn and that everybody has a unique learning style. These assumptions reduce discrepancy in human capacity to learn. It also raises peoples' confidence in their ability and capacity to learn - improve - adapt - and reach objectives. This idea is all about attitude — one of the qualities of a 'beautiful mind.' De Bono defines learning attitude as a mindset of a learner who enters a discussion with a clear intention of learning something [10].

In the third volume of a series “*60 Learning Methods*”, Suwit and Orathai Moolkam (in Thai) describe a collection of 19 learning methods for thinking development. Of all the methods, only Creative thinking and Questioning method mention ‘confidence’ as being a key quality. The former requires a great level of self-assurance to cross the boundary into an unknown area. The latter is a method aiming to teach logic. Most students, with critical thinking, will be able to follow a logical series of questions and reach the answer.

Students thereby learn the logical thinking method. With self confidence, students employ the questioning method with their own logic. Along the dialectic process, confident students — learn teacher’s logic — compare the differences with one of their own — evaluate strength and fallacy — reach new understanding. Weak students would not be able to evaluate teacher’s logic but may develop self-confidence through this process.

The second personality trait is “emotion.” Emotion is an important human quality when dealing with others, animals and surroundings. It is a trait of self-driven force that is necessary to complete any tasks and reach any goals. Male and female, by nature, may interpret the same goal differently, which may be described as *sensitive, sympathetic, sentimental, passionate, aggressive or whiny* [11], therefore, they express different types of emotion when being in the same situation. For example, it is often said that *women take care, men take charge* [11]. It means the priority of the leaders is divergent from one another. A female leader may attempt to deal with the problem at hand first, while the male may try to deal with system that causes the problem. Intellectual leaders tend to deal with mind and thoughts while organizational leaders deal with problems objectively. In fact, this binary opposition of emotion may switch between sexes and can be detected regardless of type of task or nature of group.

The rest of the personality traits fall into a category of “desired characters.” Although Schneider [11], attempts to identify them with female and male characters, they are of uncertainty. These “desired characters” include 6 groups 1) *Good nature, extroverted, friendly, gregarious, congenial*, 2) *brave, courageous, adventurous, assertive, dynamic*, 3) *neighbourly, fulfilled, poised*, 4) *self-reliant, influential, persuasive, headstrong, opinionated* 5) *dominant, controlling, commanding, forceful, directing, authoritative*. Some of these characters can be detected in most normal people however, leaders are those who show strong traits from all 5 groups.

While learning is considered as personal development, the influence of authoritative leaders may be disregarded in this context. Nevertheless, assignments and orders given by the authority are somehow effective. It is evident in the context of working teachers who spared their time to participate in the workshop in order to learn creative techniques for creating teaching media. Permission to spend time at the workshop was crucial to the subsequent state of the teacher’s minds. With some schools, the teacher’s participation depended on whether or not official permission was granted. It means

their investment of time and energy would not be a threat to their career because their boss agreed that the activity would be beneficial to them, their school and the students. Such mindset is an indicator of participants who are ready to learn. It encourages learners to cross a mental threshold that blocks them from learning new difficult subjects. Conversely, those who were unwilling to learn, but were required to join the workshop, might have a certain mindset that produces a negative impact on their learning.

It is evident that natural leaders play their roles positively and negatively throughout the workshop. Facilitators were able to define four types of leaders, categorised by their qualities; 1) Work experience 2) Educational degree 3) Seniority and 4) Natural leadership. These qualities are the driving forces of specific leadership behaviours, which will be examined further.

Leading with “Work Experience”

Learners with experience (already-know-how-to-do-it), are often natural leaders of a group and they have potential to be of assistance to the instructor. The Phang-Nga workshop met with Ms. A, a retired teacher who had been working in Bangkok for forty years. Ms. A. decided that it was time in her life to give back to society and had volunteered to join the school rebuilding program following the tsunami disaster in 2006. Ms. A. had been a mentor to energetic young teachers and a driving force for project-based learning. She had prior experience with all the concepts of the workshop. In fact, Ms. A. had taken the same role as the workshop facilitators in the past year. It should be noted that, all facilitators were young university lecturers and that Ms. A. welcomed these facilitators with a warm heart and a helping hand. Due to her personality and natural leadership qualities, all participants in the workshop were quickly acquainted with one another. Ms. A. joined all the workshop activities, as well as assuming the role as a mentor/facilitators' assistant. To all, she would appear as one of the facilitators, or an assistant, or at least, not at the same level as the rest of the group.

In terms of personal development, Ms. A. probably did not learn as much as the facilitators expected. Nonetheless, the facilitators detected signs of confidence, a passion to learn and openness towards criticism. On the negative side, Ms. A. dominated other participants by giving answers and presenting ideas for the whole group. As a result, inadequate discussion was undertaken within this group. It was evident that she did not participate to learn/re-learn, but to develop the school she is involved with to support the workshop in order to develop the local teachers - her students. Even though facilitators treated Ms. A. as a high potential learner and the leader of a group, it is uncertain, however, that these qualities of leadership contributed to her own development.

A simplistic conclusion is the lack of learner's attitude — the urge to learn new things. This is caused by conflicting assumptions. Ms. A. had taken the role of mentor and continued to do so for this workshop. She was not a student and the workshop interrupted her current project. Rather than reject the workshop she tried to integrate it with her project. Lack of success in this attempted integration was due to 1) the

facilitators assumed that she was one of the participants who needed development; 2) her ideas of creativity and thinking differed from that of the facilitators. Due to these differing viewpoints, both parties failed to work together.

At the level of group learning development, for participants who were eager to learn how to think, Ms. A's leadership and 'experience' was not beneficial for them. Ms. A. thought that her group could skip the conceptual and creative design process and focus on the techniques for making learning tools. She encouraged a group of teachers to learn new thinking techniques and use these on their on-going project that she was supervising. Her focus was on productivity for her on-going project, rather than expanding their creativity. Two stages of the same process were simultaneously presented to them by Ms. A. and the facilitators. It was thus difficult for the facilitators to stimulate other learners to think, resulting in no change to the thinking process. In this particular case, the roles of young facilitators and the learner with 'experience' created conflicting assumptions. This caused confusion and resulted in ineffectual learning.

Leading with "Education Degrees"

Learners, with a higher educational degree, joined the workshop with confidence. Note that confidence based on learnt knowledge differs from that gained from experience. An educational degree is granted by a school or academic institute. It lends authority to its holders, particularly in Thai society. For the workshop, all of the facilitators were young university lecturers with doctoral degrees and some held professorship. The degree is significant in this case because of a specific response to this collective image of the workshop. A doctoral degree is seen as a sign of talent and knowledge. Be that as it may, it means that 1) authority of the facilitators was scholastic rather than empirically based — the information comes from schooling not working experience; 2) this workshop was operated with a scholastic approach. Learners with higher educational degrees or a number of certificates were comfortable to join discussions because they were probably familiar with scholastic tradition (which was unintentionally demonstrated by the facilitators). Consequently, these learners were perceived as being head of the group. For example, Ms. B., who held a Master degree in Education, welcomed facilitators warmly and enjoyed informal discussion. She usually asked questions on behalf of others or acted as a representative of the groups. There were a number of Ms. B's whose learning behaviours conform to this description.

Ms. B. was a hard working teacher who always showed motivation for self improvement. During the workshop, she was also working on her project to gain higher academic status. Even though she had studied the subject matter, Ms. B. assumed her role as a typical Thai student that is, being polite, listening attentively and rarely asking any questions in class. Facilitators recognised her quality immediately after a brief discussion. She disregarded some facilitators who gave ambiguous answers, but never expressed hostility towards anyone. She enjoyed the experience in the workshop and led others into activities eagerly. She guided, suggested and even reprimanded those who seemed to be distracted by other thoughts. However, she had never seen herself in the role of mentor or facilitators' assistant.

Ms. B's overall contribution to group learning was, in fact, moderately low in terms of thinking development. She reserved her personal opinion and described her experiences and ideas that conformed with the facilitators' presentation. It was not until a much later meeting that facilitators found that she also held valuable opinions, gained from long working experience. It would appear that Ms. B. was a 'selfish learner' who did not share knowledge and information. But an observation unveiled that, when facilitators were absent, she did help other participants in exploring the problem and designing the solution.

Effectiveness of her leadership was situational. The participants would like to succeed in this training course and must work hard to complete the projects. In this situation, Ms. B. saw herself offering a helping hand to colleagues so that they would complete the course together. Ms. B. worked with two young teachers in designing teaching media for kindergarten. She suggested solutions while facilitators were not available for consultation. Therefore, the two young teachers did learn how to make teaching media due to Ms. B's support, more so than the facilitators. During their project presentation, the media was reported as satisfactory and Ms. B. was regarded as leader and designer of the project.

Ms. B. truly showed appreciation and gratitude towards the workshop for helping her to gain more confidence in methods of thinking and teaching. Strictly speaking, she did not succeed in improving her thinking ability which was already evaluated as more efficient than others. Her understanding of creativity and learning remained as it was.

Facilitators of her group expected that she would master creative and critical thinking and become a 'facilitator' for others in her neighbouring schools. This did not happen. Speculation suggests a relationship between educational degree, authority and designated responsibility. Without an official order, Ms. B's leadership would not extend beyond her own personal territory and thus contribute to new learning.

Leading with "Seniority"

When the workshop arrived at the school, facilitators were introduced to the Principal of the school and then the senior teachers. Formally greeting the seniors is significant in many Eastern cultures, particularly Thailand. By giving their blessing, senior teachers enabled all participants and facilitators to appreciate the good intentions of both sides. A psychological barrier was broken and everybody was ready to join the workshop. As the workshop took place at the school, it was these senior teachers who decided how to arrange the welcoming session, to ensure that equipment was prepared, as well as rooms, food and drinks. Senior teachers were asked to supervise the event because others trusted their judgement.

Seniority is a sign of long experience and wisdom which is gained through time. At a certain age, it is assumed that a person would learn from his/her experience about better ways in which one deals with situations. Such persons are usually chosen to take a leadership role however, for the purposes of this workshop, it was more the role of managing director. It is the task given by social and cultural conditions. From this perspective, senior teachers, as socio-cultural leaders, are a backup system that drives others to learn and act for a common good.

Senior teachers showed no sign of willingness to change their own thinking but encouraged young participants to do so. A number of reasons may be found but this was not explored further. All would appear to be content with their supporting role that was necessary due to their status, being concerned with form rather than content. The workshop was operated smoothly throughout the nine months. No evidence was found to confirm that these socio-cultural leaders had any other direct impact on the development of thinking.

Natural Leaders

As proposed in the introduction, natural leaders are those whose personality traits show 'self-confidence' and 'passion in what they do.' These leaders are those who can lead others to strive for a goal. From a learning perspective, these characters are necessary for shifting one's learning paradigm. Passion for knowledge drives the thinker to search for the best methodology. Self-confidence thrusts one to go beyond their limits.

Since the beginning of the workshop, it became clear that Ms. C. and Ms. D. were leaders in discussing, asking questions and other activities outside the workshop. Both were of a certain age; held a Master degree and had respectable experience working in this school. These are exemplary learners who showed great development. It is uncertain that seniority, educational degree and experience play no part in their learning development, however, other teachers who had similar personalities did not show as much progress. Comparison between Ms. C. and Ms. D. will help to illustrate that leadership contributes to learning development.

Ms. C. taught 'language class' and had long been working on improving student's learning efficiency. An example of her work was the correction of common spelling-errors, caused by the difference in local dialect and standard Thai pronunciation. It was a trial and error method and it took her two years to understand the problem. Although her work was not carried out methodically, it showed systematic thinking and 'passion for excellence' that the workshop expects. She had no idea of how to transfer her data or findings into academic work. Facilitators told Ms. C. to keep records of her observations and remedial actions used with weaker students. She agreed to do so without clear comprehension of the rationale. Note that her attitude towards the workshop was sincerely positive. After the advisors returned to Bangkok, Ms. C. assigned the task to her team mate and the project was now treated as being group work. Ms. C. herself undertook a training course for teachers who are applying for an academic position. The course offered guidelines on how to do research, writing academic work and the step-by-step process of applying for an academic position. No further communication took place for the next four months, except a short discussion via telephone, during which the facilitators were informed that the work was progressing. After the end of the first term, the facilitators went to visit the school. Ms. C. welcomed the facilitators with warm hospitality and friendship between participants and facilitators seemed to flourish.

Ms. C's team-mate showed the good results she had achieved with her class. In helping students improve their spelling and reading, her team-mate followed the process that facilitators suggested — identify and clarify problems — look for the

causes — design a teaching media or methods to help students overcome the problems. Ms. C. supported her in this work and everyone was pleased with the results. Students with serious spelling problems did not skip class as they used to do. All enjoyed learning and teaching, even though spelling skills had not truly improved. It was a good start for this teacher who now understands that she can create her own methods to deal more effectively with her students.

On the other hand, Ms. C. presented a specific question to her facilitators — whether or not the idea of this workshop can be called ‘action research.’ When the response was positive, it proved to be a changing point for both the facilitators and Ms. C. Both came to realise that they looked at different sides of the same coin. Ms. C. suddenly realised that what they had long been discussing was in fact “academic research” only by informal vocabulary. Initially facilitators intended to bring her to realise that research methodology does not need to be formal terminology nor be carried out in an institutional environment. Facilitators thought that a step-by-step learning process would be easier for Ms. C. to follow. The key idea was that after data gathering and analysis, the knowledge can be later put in a more academic format. This misunderstanding was simply caused by an underestimation of background knowledge.

Facilitators came to realise that Ms. C. was a mature student who needed to know all the objectives and the overall plan so that she could conduct learning by herself in her own time. At the end of the workshop, Ms. C. asked for an honest opinion on the quality of the teacher’s work. The question implies that, by her nature, she always strives for excellence. With all her qualities, it is the leadership — *confidence and passion* — that is obviously beneficial to other learners. For Miss C, the passion for excellence in teaching brought her respect from other teachers. She needs a guarantee that her methods and approach are worthwhile. Therefore, the natural leader requires mental support to consolidate their confidence in pursuit of excellence. The following case study confirmed this hypothesis.

Ms. D. taught a mathematics class. She was self critical of her teaching methods to improve her students. During the workshop, Ms. D. seemed to enjoy all activities in which she participated. During the first meeting with facilitators, Ms. D’s emotions were full of frustration and angst — not to her students or school, but to the situation of education in the country as a whole. Living in a rural area mathematics beyond simple arithmetic was seen as irrelevant to life. Ms. D. strongly believed that the problems must be solved at the level of the national curriculum. She saw the curriculum as unfit for students in rural areas and the students were incapable of understanding the content. The facilitators attempted to persuade her to focus on her project however, all discussion eventually came back to the national curriculum. Although she seemed excited about the workshop, observed from her enthusiasm and expression, she did not follow any of facilitators’ advice. She insisted on continuing to think in her own way and discussions with facilitators came to a halt. Facilitators decided to let her make the decision whether or not to continue this project. Her behaviour caused others to hesitate in committing to their projects.

In the first presentation, Ms. D. showed up with no progress at all. Her reason was insufficient time to do any extra work. Nevertheless, facilitators did not totally give up on her. Effort was made to encourage her to create teaching media for her students. Her reaction was indifferent.

In the second presentation, Ms. D. presented a simple but effective teaching tool for learning geometry. According to her account, her students were having great problems with learning geometry. She designed a lesson 'creating a geometrical animal.' The lesson was successful in that students enjoyed the class and now understood how to calculate an area of a complex shape. All congratulated her on the success. Ms. D. mentioned that she used some of the methods learnt from the workshop.

After the presentation, facilitators noticed that her behaviour changed dramatically. She asked facilitators for more advice and promised to keep on developing her teaching methods. It seems that Ms. D. led herself to learn to solve problems with basic knowledge given by the facilitators. She did what she saw as being necessary and did so successfully. Her confidence did not contribute to group learning development; it even had negative impacts on the workshop. Nevertheless, her leadership - confidence and passion - act as a self-driven force that enabled Ms. D. to make a difference to the students and herself. It is the view of the facilitators that she will continue to learn.

Conclusions

The Phang-Nga workshop represents an ambitious attempt to revolutionise the thinking patterns of local teachers so as to transform them to be the 3rd millennium thinkers. In practice, before the revolution could take place, most teachers actually require first basic know-how of thinking. It is also evident that the participants' commitment was affected by a number of reasons which appear to be a classic problem throughout Thailand. Firstly, some held an attitude of observer rather than that of learner. This attitude prevents learning from occurring. Secondly, most participants were overloaded with routine school-tasks. Thirdly, each and every teacher has to take care of family or personal life. Most of the teachers joined the workshop because of peer-pressure as well as the policy of the school principal. These teachers were particularly sensitive to influence by persons with leadership qualities and this does contribute to personal and group development in the area of lifelong learning.

The presence of four types of leaders, with positive attitude, is of great benefit to the workshop. All types of leaders assisted both facilitators and participants in achieving satisfactory progress. The learning development is evaluated individually by identifying whether or not a participant can cross over the barriers in learning. Some may progress to obtain learner's attitude. Some may gain more confidence in creative thinking. Some may learn how to deal with situations more positively and creatively.

While natural leaders influenced other participants by their innate personality and attitude, other types of leaders seemed to lack such ability. Such persons can inspire and encourage people to face the great unknown that is learning. The personality of

natural leaders is uniquely individual and may appear in either positive or negative forms. As a result, natural leaders may dissuade or persuade participants from/to learning.

Natural leaders are usually self-directed learners, thus, they can eventually shift their thinking paradigm by merely gaining new knowledge and techniques from the workshop. With a positive attitude, the natural leader contributes greatly to group development. An observation shows that natural leaders, with negative attitude, may interrupt progress of learning. It must be noted that when mental support is given at the right time and for a sufficient period of time, true natural leaders will realise the merits of development (provided that the development is truly good). This workshop learnt that self-led learners will continue to develop their learning long after the workshop ended. Therefore, “natural” in the quality of leadership is significant to life-long learning because it generates the self-driven force for learning.

All types of leaders can play a greater role in the development of learning than that of the designated leaders. When working with local communities, facilitators should not underestimate their potential contribution. In learning, “leadership” is not always critical because a non-leadership learner can think as good as the leader. For life-long learning, however, it is critical for the learner to have self-confidence, passion and self-direction to learn. Therefore, lifelong learning could not be sustained without the contribution from “natural leadership.”

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