

# A PARADIGM SHIFT OF INTEGRATIVE LEARNING SYTTLES IN TRAINING AND EDUCATION

by

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## ***Abstracts***

*The paper focuses on Integrative Learning System (ILS) and philosophy with an intention to highlight the bases of this paradigm shift. It is hoped that an understanding of the system through examples of its employment in schools and other public and private sectors will be gained. The use of ILS is widespread and throughout the world, however, my main modelling thrusts are Malaysian-based. IL interest individuals may find that IL has discovered the 'unknown' side of human potentials which can be nurtured and developed in many different ways.*

## **Introduction**

A particular leadership behaviour or style that a leader demonstrates on his or her members can either motivate them to improve their performance or impede them from excel. The members will respond positively to a style that nurtures their talents and abilities to excel in the area that they perform best. When members are given encouragement and rewarded for any contribution to solve organizational matters, they will often improve quality, productivity and commitment. This is an empowering process that the management of Federal Express uses on her people (Robbins, 1993).

Likewise, a trainer or a facilitator needs to demonstrate certain mastery in transferring the knowledge or skills to their learners to induce them to learn their best and effectively. Whatever objectives set for the course or lesson, the trainer will normally invest in time and effort indulging on deliberate designing, researching and familiarising the contents and context to ensure that learners not only learn but practice what they have learnt. Dr. Perry Scott, the President of Training House, U.S.A. has contributed significant findings on learners' entry values and terminal results (New Straits Time, Malaysia: Feb. 20, 1993). He advocates that knowledge, attitude and skills are integral in achieving competence. His numerous and international competency - based training workshops are designed for new and seasoned trainers or facilitators who need to understand and assess their trainees' level of interests, knowledge and attitude brought into the workshop.

Then, the methodology used must consider these individual's differences and motivation to enable them to learn effectively so as to achieve the terminal results.

The paper intends to share alternative training and teaching methodologies, the focus being on integrative learning styles through citations and excerpts on integrative learning systems and tools, plus highlights on its employment and effectiveness. It is hoped that administrators, teachers, trainers and other implementators will gain an insight on how to appreciate and apply integrative learning techniques as examples cited are meant for them.

### **Integrative Learning Philosophy**

It is a system operationalizes a paradigm shift in the field of education and learning based on the twentieth century discoveries in physics and neuroscience indicating that human capacity is virtually limitless (Jerry Perez de Tagle, 1992). Jerry in his article, A "genius" in every child: the paradigms shift of integrative learning further elaborates that IL system embodies three comprehensive components (i) a change in the attitude, values and culture of a given environment (philosophy); (ii) a teaching approach based on research on the brain (methodology); and (iii) a technology transfer model of professional teacher training and a flexible structure for school-based management (training model). The components are applicable to a diversity of target audience with different learning objectives and end results. The IL system assumes that people have a limitless capacity of learning. In a school environment, IL infuses a change in the culture of the school where a different understanding of difficult student behaviour is projected. IL works on the assumption that not only every child can learn but that every child possesses intelligence and is gifted with unique strengths and experiences.

These assumptions are based on a framework that differentiates IL from any other traditional learning methodology. IL within this framework views that (i) each person is gifted with limitless EXPECTANCY; (ii) the unique DIVERSITY of each individual is perceived as a capacity instead of as a deficit; and (iii) the INTEGRITY of learning as a holistic process is consistent with the learner's standpoint (Jerry Perez de Tagle, 1992).

### **Employment of Integrative Learning for Adults and Children of Different Cultures**

In Malaysia, IL has been used by a number of trainers, teachers and facilitators who train, coach and teach working adults and children respectively. Trainer Asma Abdullah, a specialist in intercultural education uses IL techniques in her workshops and courses (public and in house) since 1991 (Innotech journal, 92). She introduces the course at the start of the workshop with an affirmative and value-sharing objectives. Participants are asked to stand in a closed circle and take turn to identify as well as explain a symbol to the rest of the members. She also employs visualisation activity to allow learners to recall the ethnic - cultural values that they have assimilated since childhood from their parents. This activity serves to identify and orientate personal values and belief. For learners who are mainly left brain analytics including top managers, specialists, engineers etc, Asma puts on a variety of lively musical pieces throughout the entire workshop. According to Herrmann brain model, these people have strong dominance for being rational, analytic, problem solver, neat, tidy, punctual and detailed-minded known as the left brain quadrants (Peter Shephard, 1994). Asma has observed that these group

responds positively to the musical background as music creates in them different moods and different learning pace. Their receptiveness can be linked to the findings that individuals can now assess their brain dominance through Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument or HBDI (Shephard, 1994). HBDI is based on Herrmann four quadrant brain dominance model, a blending of the left brain/right brain and triune concepts into a physiologically based metaphor of how the brain works. Asma succeeds to blend the left brain dominance with some right brain values - music appreciation.

When participants at her workshops need to identify and visualise their corporate vision as one of the efforts to enhance performance, Asma will prompt them to use guided imagery, an attempt to search for new ideas at the work place relating to corporate vision. The participants will then translate their mind visuals into artistic or bright sketches followed by action steps to achieve their visions.

A university lecturer, Rohana Zubir uses IL tools in a one-day workshop on the teaching and learning of history (Innotech journal, 92). Rohana introduces a guided imagery technique by asking participants the elements they think can contribute to the ideal classroom. This is to reinforce an awareness that there are a great variety of things that history teachers can practise to make history learning fun and effective. On personal value sharing and interpretation, Rohana employs resource based learning where participants in the groups are given selected pictures for which they have to discuss, interpret and infer them. Later, the group will take turn to present them to the rest of the class. Rohana is rewarded with active participation, smiling faces and warm handshakes from the participants at the end of the day.

Another trainer cum managing director of her own training consultancy firm, Nor Azian Mohd. Ali designs "The Seven Steps to Success" program for participants to self-discover their talents, ambitions, interests, strengths and weaknesses - discovering self (New Straits Times, Malaysia, Sept. 93). Nor Azian employs IL by asking participants at her workshop to first of all free their minds from preconceived ideas, notions and fears and leave it open to new thoughts before they actually go through the seven steps to success process. One of the comments from the writer after attending the workshop was that she openly agreed that all inhibitions must be left behind as well as the willingness to shed the rigidity of boardroom behaviour in order to discover self. Nor Azian and the participants sit on the floor and share hurtful past experiences to discover what really counts in life for each individual. Young executives aiming for direction in life and career and those who have great enthusiasm to match Nor Azian's will probably benefit from and enjoy the workshop the most.

Yet another profile, Shahreen Kamaluddin who is an executive chairman of Personal Empowerment Training and Consulting Sdn. Bhd. and an executive director of her public relations company, Shahreen Communications regularly conducts a seminar on "Programming your Mind for Success" (New Straits Times: Malaysia Jan. 94). She advocates IL when she makes the participants to tune to their mind and what they are capable of. Through positive self-direction, creative visualization and convincing affirmations, participants are taught that they can change themselves to whatever they believe themselves to be.

Dr. Nate Booth, head corporate trainer of Robbins Research International, San Diego has recently conducted a day workshop on *Awaken the Giant Within* in Penang, Malaysia (Asiavance, Penang, 94). Having participated in the workshop, I have found it intriguing and thought-provoking as well as enjoyable. Nate has an indepth experience in relating to and sharing his good and hurtful experiences with the participants and he has succeeded in bringing the best within them. Advocating a similar philosophy towards a shift in self-identification and beliefs, Nate has prepared a workshop manual for each participant to complete as he relates to the concepts and experiences throughout the workshop. This writing down activity as well as expressing our minds and visualising what we are capable of have significant impact on what we think we are as well as what we intend to achieve at work and life.

In line with Jerry's IL philosophy for the school environment, Prof. Dr. Azman Wan Chik, a former lecturer at a Malaysian university has opened a motivational and development centre where he and his associate conduct motivation, development and leadership courses for individuals, adults, children and corporations (New Straits Times, Malaysia: Nov. 93). According to Azman, out of 370 students in one Malaysian school who sat for their Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia examinations (equivalent to year 5 secondary examinations) 73 per cent received aggregates between six to ten. These students were exposed to the techniques to enhance learning capability that he has designed. Azman encourages students to use stories to understand and memorise key words in their lessons. As for mathematical and scientific equations, he and his associate teach students to transpose a certain formula into images and making it into a strange story in order to remember an equation the best. The team encourages individual creativity and imagination and the more weird the story is, the better will be student's retention of the subject or formula.

An article on "Everyone can learn mathematics", advocates IL philosophy. It points out that remedial mathematics teacher or tutor must first identify the child's level of cognitive development and consider this information in planning a remedial instructional problem (Innotech journal, 92). There are two approaches to consider when teaching mathematics. They are quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative approach is effective for students who are sequentially oriented, i.e. those who focus on procedures or deductive reasoning, process information from components to whole. These students do better in arithmetic, some quantitative aspects of algebra, and other similar types of mathematical concepts. They are generally very good in language and verbal expression, good in solving problems in components, their approach is to break down the given problem into pieces, solve them and then recompose the solution to generate the solution to the given problem. These students have quantitative mathematical learning personalities (Sharma, 1992).

In contrast, students who pay attention to the visual/spatial, wholistic, and inductive aspects of mathematical information generally demonstrate better on geometrical concepts and the application aspects of mathematics. These students, generally find much of the elementary mathematics difficult if the instructional approach is heavily sequential. They have qualitative mathematical learning personalities. They learn mathematics better if they are taught using inductive, visual/spatial, and pattern recognition methods or the qualitative approach.

## Conclusion

So far we have seen that IL has made significant marks on individual learning capability and self fulfilment. To achieve learning effectiveness as well as a challenging and transforming status in education, trainers and educators must first of all assess and respect the differences each individual brings to a learning experience as well as address those differences in practice (Joanne Ingham: Innotech journal, Jan.-June 92). Joanna elaborates that in reality, there is no "one" right or best way to teach everything to everybody of all the time. Hence, individual learning preference must be accounted for.

Personally, I have sat through Asma, Nate and Scott's workshops and I found them very wholesome and refreshing. Having trained working adults on public as well as in house courses and workshops; and university students locally and in Scotland, I have always make attempts to do away with traditional classroom structures. I encourage free wheeling and face to face seating. This arrangement helps participants to open up and share their personal beliefs and values. I also use self-reflection activities at the start and after each content to encourage them to be actively involved kinesthetically. The use of group process such as team building activities encourages the participants to use their creativity and decision-making skills. At the end of the course, participants will normally evaluate the contents and context including my effectiveness as a trainer for which I am normally rated as above average. For me, I believe in person-centered learning and practice. I will continue to learn and unlearn my training styles to enable my learners to assimilate in them the real value of education and knowledge.

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