

Pushing at a Half-open Door

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Abstract This article describes a process of working in Cambodia with a small group of individuals and organisations who identified learning as an essential component of their approach to capacity development. Over a six-month period, group members used the Learning Inquiry Process developed as part of the work of the project 'Facilitating Learning in Action for Social Change' to reflect on and deepen their understanding of both how they learn in their work and effective ways to facilitate the learning of others. The article shows the extent of the gulf between the theory and practices of learning in the context of social change, and the difficulty for practitioners of making space for learning practices. It shows that where there is readiness for learning, the responsive application of an appropriate framework can help guide and identify learning.

1 Introduction

In Cambodia, many people have come to understand that some of the most fundamental blocks to the development of capacity are rooted in attitudes about, and understandings and practices of, learning. Traditional Cambodian culture is strongly hierarchical in nature and most people had, at best, a poor education delivered through a didactic teacher-centred pedagogy. These factors, plus the long-term psychosocial impacts of trauma, have combined to create very powerful blocks to acceptance of anything new that might lead to change.

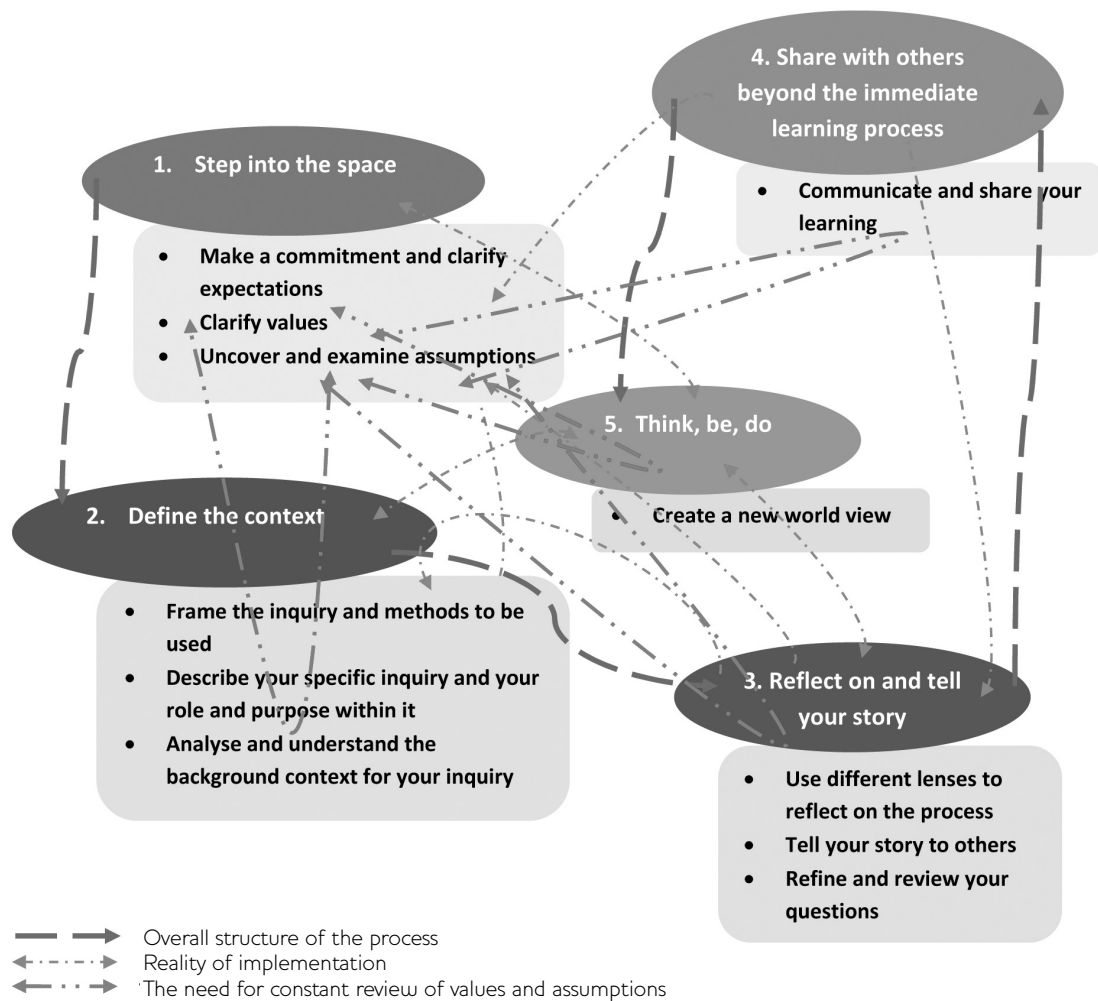
In this article, I describe a process of working with a small group of those individuals and organisations who have identified learning as an essential component of their approach to capacity development. By working responsively with an approach to reflective practice I had experienced in the Facilitating Learning and Action for Social Change (FLASC) initiative convened by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) in 2008 (Box 1; see Clarke and Taylor 2010), I was able to facilitate learning on at least two interlinked levels – the learning of these individuals and my own learning as a facilitator – as well as testing and developing the approach I had previously experienced. What follows attempts to capture this group's diverse and rewarding experience of using reflective practice and group sharing to learn from their activities.

The article shows the extent of the gulf between the theory and practices of learning in the context of social change. Even the most dedicated practitioners convinced of the importance of learning find it difficult to make space for learning practices in the face of routine organisational busyness.

2 Readiness for learning

Something that I have learned in my 15 years of working in Cambodia is that readiness is an important factor in determining the success or failure of any venture. Trying to introduce reflective learning approaches with people or systems who are not ready for it is like banging on a firmly locked door, so, in order to meet openness rather than resistance, it is important to know the community and context well enough to be able to identify both the right people and the right time for a experimental change initiative. I knew a number of people in my network, both Cambodians and expatriates, who had recognised that traditional intervention models, such as community development, are not achieving significant impact on poverty and social injustice. These individuals and their organisations are working to facilitate change in the social development sector, in many different settings of project and programme implementation, or by giving consulting support to various types of organisational change processes. They have come to an understanding that they need to identify and practice effective

Figure 1 The FLASC Learning Inquiry Process (LIP)



approaches to learning as a means of dismantling the blocks to capacity development and change. I considered that they would welcome the opportunity to engage with an experience that had the potential to help them move forward. My former organisation, VBNK,¹ readily agreed to both participate in, and host, the activities.

3 FLASC in Cambodia

The primary aim of the FLASC process with the Cambodia group was to offer a model of analytical and reflective practice that the participants could apply to their current work activities in order to better understand the requirements for the effective facilitation of learning in social change initiatives in the Cambodian context. In particular, this called for a focus on facilitators deepening their

understanding of how they learn and what theories, approaches and models they bring to their practice of facilitation. A key feature of the analysis and reflection was about how to work with learning within different levels of facilitation as identified in the FLASC discussions, namely:

- Directly facilitating a social change process;
- Facilitating learning of those engaged in the social change process;
- Facilitating learning about own role as a facilitator; and,
- Facilitating learning about the learning process as a whole.

The process was structured around three short workshops over a six-month period. The first

Box 1 Facilitating Learning in Action for Social Change (FLASC)

The FLASC project was convened initially by the Participation, Power and Social Change Team in IDS in 2006, with 25 participants from a range of organisations interested in knowledge, communication and learning in social change contexts. A second phase was convened in 2008, with a smaller group of participants known to have a strong focus on the practice of facilitating social change in a variety of contexts. Building on the insights from the first phase e-discussion and workshop (Taylor, Deak, Pettit and Vogel 2006), the members of the group developed personal learning inquiries in which they reflected on their practice in such processes as: participatory monitoring of sustainable agricultural interventions in Brazil, learning in a movement for indigenous self-determination in New Zealand, and the localisation of an international NGO in Cambodia. Working initially through e-communication, and then in a workshop (in June 2008), the group shared their ongoing inquiries, with the goal of examining the outcomes from the first phase against the experiences of their varied practice, in order to test and map some theoretical understandings. Several members of the group later shared their experience more widely in their own countries, notably in Cambodia, Australia and New Zealand.

The reflective inquiries were focused initially around several groups of questions, such as:

- About my specific inquiry and my role and purpose within it:
 - What is the specific change process from which I want to learn?
 - What questions will I hope to answer in my inquiry?
 - Why am I undertaking this learning inquiry, and who am I in this context and process?
 - Who are the key individual or organisational actors involved, their roles and relationships?
 - What are the main contextual opportunities/challenges/obstacles to the specific process?
 - What choices are being made by key actors, when developing strategies for action?

 - About my assumptions (revisited frequently during all phases of the inquiry):
 - Have I put the right person or people at the centre of the learning process?
 - Have I properly explored any cultural differences about learning in this situation?
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workshop introduced the concepts and set up how the group would identify and share their learning inquiry projects. The second, at the mid-way point, was a check in and review, and the third was a reflection on, and sharing of, what had emerged from each person's inquiry.

My own participation in the FLASC group led by IDS during 2008 provided me with a rich mixture of challenges and rewards. The first step was the team at IDS compiling a list of questions for group members to work with as a way of initiating the learning process and framing the issues. The original list of questions (see Box 1) was wide-ranging, prompting analysis of background context, through articulation of the theoretical underpinnings of our practice, to description of the particular change process that was to be the focus of the learning inquiry. Some questions were easily answered, and others much less so. I found

two groups of questions initially challenging. First, the analysis of different layers of background context, and how the multiple points of interconnection between the background and my case study organisation impacted on options for change. Second, pulling together a rational articulation of the theories that informed my analysis, and how that influenced my choice of approach and tools. I soon realised that the questions I could not answer easily represented something important for my learning.

For me, a key aspect of the FLASC journey had been the fact that we were not working with a prescribed framework or detailed step-by-step process. The use of questions to prompt analysis and reflection, combined with wide-ranging discussions when we came together in a workshop, provided a very open space for exploring how I understand and frame learning

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- How have my surprises and confirmations shed new light on my assumptions?
 - Does anything need to be ‘unlearned’? If so, how can the unlearning happen?
 - What is the space for change? What is impeding people from acting even though learning has taken place?
 - About the level/s of facilitation at which I am working, am I:
 - Directly facilitating a social change process?
 - Facilitating learning of those engaged in that process?
 - Facilitating learning about my own role as a facilitator?
 - Facilitating learning about the learning process as a whole?
 - Sharing learning between different contexts to facilitate wider learning?
 - About concepts and methods:
 - What conceptual understanding and frameworks will guide and underpin my work, as facilitator? As learner?
 - What specific methods will I use to pursue my inquiry?
 - What kinds of evidence will I look for?
 - About the background context for my inquiry:
 - What is the broader context of social change within which my specific process sits?
 - How do I understand social change to take place within this broader context?
 - What systemic relationships and interactions link my specific change process to the broader context?
 - How are choices that actors make within this context constrained and/or enabled by issues of power and structure?
 - How can facilitation provoke, influence or enhance helpful forces and overcome blocking forces?
 - On sharing with others beyond the immediate learning process:
 - Can I imagine ways in which some of the knowledge constructed in this context might be useful in other change processes?
 - How can I make it possible for relevant others to learn from my experience?
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within my work practices. What we did could also be described as somewhat messy, as we explored the way forward and decided which questions worked and how to use them. Only at the end of the workshop did we attempt to pull together and write up the various steps we had undertaken, the concepts we had used, and our experiences of reflection, writing and sharing (see Pearson forthcoming). It had never been the intention to develop a new model or framework for learning, only to consolidate our own learning, but for the purposes of sharing, we did need to produce some visual and written representations of the process we had been through. Figure 1 gives a brief overview of the elements in the model, each of which has a number of related questions.

I thought that sharing my experiences with colleagues in Cambodia would provide an

interesting opportunity to explore if the Learning Inquiry Process (LIP) we had developed would be useful for others or if it was something that only worked for that group, for that particular time and purpose.

Of those invited, 13 accepted and attended the first workshop, at which I made it clear that I also saw myself as a learner in the group and would not only be facilitating, but also participating. My purpose was to reflect and learn on two levels of facilitation in particular, that of my own role as a facilitator and about the learning process as a whole. As a group we were an interesting and diverse mix of eight Cambodians and six expatriates, five women and nine men, all from the NGO community. Our roles included: a regional director, a regional learning advisor, country directors, programme managers, project managers and independent

consultants. The range of learning inquiries identified at the start were facilitation of organisational development; learning in an organisation network across the region; a multi-layered knowledge dissemination project; a rural demonstration project to support mother and child health; programme development; and self as a consultant/learner facilitating others, including myself as facilitator/learner. There were four people, including the Director, from VBANK, which added an interesting dimension because of their stated intention to work as a group on the subject of VBANK as a learning organisation.

Given my experience of FLASC, I was faced with a dilemma and several questions when thinking about the design of a process for my colleagues in Cambodia, which I recorded in my journal:

I realised that this is about the age old challenge of what can be learned from others' experiences versus what people have to experience for themselves in order to learn. So what am I trying to do? Take people through a potted version of what I experienced, in the hope that they learn something – but is this going to be the same learning, or something different? Will their learning 'go beyond' mine, because they are starting from a place where my learning emerged? It must depend in large part where each of them is on their own learning journey at the start of this process. I don't at this point know how we can capture any of that.

The challenge was to find a format for sharing something of the FLASC process that I had experienced. My concern about basing the Cambodia process on the framework was that the group would understand it as something they needed to follow in linear segments, which would prove restrictive. One of the FLASC group's conclusions was that our learning processes were anything but linear; over time we had experienced and explored the emergence of many different issues, often cycling back to a step of analysis or action in order to deepen or re-evaluate understanding. I had noted in earlier reflections 'A lot of the elements of FLASC are interlinked in complex ways, and only a very few elements have any obvious sequencing flow'. In the end, I did not see any alternative but to present the framework, but I determined to do it

in ways that emphasised that it was a light structure to be used as and when the participants found it helpful.

4 First workshop: introducing the Learning Inquiry Process

I experienced some anxiety at the start of the first workshop, partly because I was unsure as to whether or not I had found the right way to present and work with the framework, and partly because several people in the group were not only my peers but also personal friends. I had asked them to give time and money to an experimental process, which I thought would be helpful, interesting and enjoyable for them, but until we got started, I had no idea if what I was going to offer would meet any of their needs. We started with introductions among the group and I explained the outline of the three workshops. I wanted the group to reflect on the first element of the framework, '*Stepping into the space with a purposeful intention to learn*', before I introduced the LIP. The first activity was, therefore, journaling on the statement 'I have joined this learning inquiry workshop because I want to ...'. The ensuing discussion allayed all my anxieties as the group shared their reasons for being there in a rich and focused discussion that was the forerunner to many others of the same quality. What struck me most in the opening discussion was the hunger for something that would help people with their learning challenges, and how everyone was ready for an opportunity to stop 'doing' and make a shift into reflective learner mode. A recurring theme was the timeliness of the workshop, interlinked with the recognition that learning needs more attention than it gets.

One of the foundational steps of the workshop was to discuss and agree working definitions of some key terms: learning in action, facilitation, knowledge, social change, and practice. This proved to be time consuming, and probably one of the less interesting activities, but everyone agreed that it had been necessary to ensure that all subsequent communication in the group was based on a common understanding of the basic concepts with which we were working. The remainder of the workshop was spent introducing the framework and looking in detail at various aspects of it, and how it could be used.

Reflecting afterwards, both with the group and by myself, some important learning points

emerged. The first was that when presenting a framework, it is necessary to share real life examples of application. I had previously decided that because my learning from the FLASC project the previous year was just that – my own learning – it would be better simply to present the framework and let others interpret it for themselves and I should not attempt to share my learning with the group. However, it quickly became clear that that approach was too dry, and I needed to talk about my own experiences, especially what I had found challenging and how I had dealt with it. Giving the examples helped the group make connections between what I was presenting and their own realities, and therefore begin to make meaning and sense of what they were hearing about. Subsequent discussion of this point also led to new learning for one participant who commented that as facilitators we need to model our learning through being willing to expose ourselves in the process as we expect others to do, for example if we ask others to share their stories, we must be willing to share our own stories first.

I had originally planned to spend the second day of the workshop doing a group analysis of the background culture but the participants preferred to spend more time exploring different aspects of the framework, associated theories and application. One point of particular interest was the discussion about process versus product, and how task-driven everyone is in a LogFrame dominated world, whereas learning requires a different orientation. Several people made comments about recognising that they would have to make an effort to think and work differently if they were to avoid the task driving the learning agenda. Some noted that this habit was already manifesting in an instantly emerging urge to think of the LIP as a good tool they could use in their work with others, before they had actually experienced their own engagement with it. In this respect, group sharing and discussions in the workshop and the *'space for learning'* were particularly appreciated, participants commented that this was something that they need but rarely get enough of; one said it was a *'delicious luxury'*. It was noted that having the time and space for learning is an important link to having the space for change, and it is difficult to get people to think holistically about learning and change in environments structured by LogFrame thinking.

That so many people welcomed the framework was an interesting insight for me. It seemed that despite the strong desire and commitment to work with learning, few had any concrete ideas to help them structure how they go about it; as one person commented: *'As an intuitive person this gives me a helpful systemisation for the task'*. However, another observed that his life was far from framework free, as he was already holding several different frameworks for various aspects of his work. He would need to do some serious thinking to see if this would fit with the others and if using these ideas would work in harmony or create conflict with what he was already doing. This led to an interesting, but inconclusive, discussion about how to get the right balance in systems, especially when the organisation has different sectoral programmes, to enable staff to think more holistically across issues and activities.

Use of the LIP framework calls for ongoing analysis and reflection at several levels, one of which is about the theoretical basis of the practitioner's work with social change, learning and facilitation. This conceptual aspect seemed to be the most challenging for everyone, and many of the group said that they do not have a theoretical basis for their work. Even as some were challenging the model in different ways, all said they found it useful as a structure to start thinking about learning – *'we have to learn how to learn'*. I noted in my journal that, *'I suspect that they do have some theoretical ideas behind what they are doing, but they haven't ever spent any time bringing them to consciousness or working out how they use them in everyday practice... this might prove to be the biggest area of learning'*. The framework was an ongoing focus of interest and discussion through the life of the group.

Discussion about working with the questions was informative. It was acknowledged by all that being able to formulate good questions is an important part of the facilitation of learning. However, questions can be problematic in Cambodian culture where there is no concept of a question being a tool for exploration or of holding questions that require nothing more, in the first instance, than being posed. In Cambodian culture, questions require a response in order that the questioner is satisfied and the conversation is held in balance, and that the

response is 'right' in order that no one loses face. Another issue was the recognition of the power in and around questions and the need to be aware of our power as facilitator/questioner. There is no guarantee that listeners will experience questions with the same feeling or meaning as that in which they have been asked.

Finally, the group discussed how uncomfortable it can be stepping into the space, but we need to do it because change rarely happens until it becomes too uncomfortable not changing. Similarly, crisis can be a good opportunity for learning if approached in the right way. It is in such disturbances that we break through our comfort zones to find new insights and meaning. The challenges that a facilitator can face when facilitating learning for social change include resistance and messiness, but these can be mitigated by good preparation, for example orientation to the process and clarification of the potential benefits, and also by being flexible and adapting as the process progresses. In deciding on approaches to learning, there is also a need to understand personality and factors such as the different educational experiences of learners. Using the wrong approach can demotivate, for example in Cambodia reading is not a part of the culture and therefore written materials have limited benefit as learning aids.

At the end of the workshop, one of my journal notes was that: 'There seemed to be a gently emerging trend of surfacing existing knowledge in the group ...'.

5 The follow-up workshop

In the follow-up session three months later, the first request from participants was to revisit the framework to clarify queries, the most common one being: 'Who is the learner?' Clarifying that there are multiple learners and layers of learning in any complex change process produced palpable relief in some. All had been using the framework differently as a tool and it was pleasing to hear their varied experiences demonstrate that the framework and questions were flexible enough to suit all their different realities.

Working with the background analysis had proved very challenging in a number of cases. One participant said that he had been '*Overwhelmed by the analysis. It made me disheartened and thinking to withdraw, until I decided I just have to*

focus on what I can deal with now'. This led to an acknowledgement of the need to balance the mass of information that can be produced by analysis. Some still had unresolved issues about how to concretise what has emerged, but others had found it helpful, '*Using the framework really helped when I was documenting my problem – it named the elephant in the room*'.

Working with the questions was again a central theme of the discussions. There were many comments about different experiences. 'A lot emerged from answering the questions'. Surfacing, exploring and, in some cases, discarding assumptions was another common thread, 'Formulating the questions meant I had to unpack my assumptions, which led to more questions – where to stop?' The sequence of working through the questions highlighted a pattern of dealing with the easy questions quickly and returning later to others that did not have readily available answers. '*The headings and questions in the framework were helpful in that I recognised my gaps from the questions I couldn't answer*'. Most of the group found that the questions they could not answer easily were the prompt for exploration of new areas of analysis, thinking and understanding. This echoed my own experience of working with the questions the previous year.

The changes that people experienced were in two main areas. First was an enhanced awareness of self as a manager/practitioner/learner and the second was in re-thinking the original inquiry. In terms of self-awareness, one person had realised her pattern of decision-making as gut instinct made rational by going back to put together a framework to justify her initial response. Others had recognised aspects of how they learn. Another person referred to a comment made in the first workshop about systems thinking, telling us that if a system is stuck it may be because the attempted solution is maintaining the problem. This insight had led her to examine and make changes within some critical professional relationships, and as a result 'enemies have become allies' and some serious resistance had been unblocked. A final telling reflection was from someone who said '*I realised that action-learning is personal and have now internalised a previously understood concept*'.

By doing the analysis, more than one person realised that they had not been working with the

right issue and that they needed to reframe their ideas about the focus and scope of their inquiry. One person had realised his project was too full of activities, some of which were not working and needed to be discarded. These processes were likened to reframing a research question because of the need to keep it fresh and focused as circumstances change and learning is integrated into understanding of the issues, to keep asking ourselves: 'What is it that we need to know that we don't yet know?' Others noted the factors that force a specificity of purpose which can create tensions with an open ended approach that values the emergence of learning in its own right, 'Social change... has a value commitment to making a difference in the conditions within which people live their lives. It uses words such as "results" and "impact" and might regard the "learning" perspective... as self-indulgent and less than rigorous in its claims of transformation, which it might regard as insubstantial and lacking rigour'. Clearly keeping the learning focus sharp and relevant in the face of work demands is a constant challenge for all, and it is difficult to let go of the mindset that develops when one expects to be judged against the delivery of a final output or outcome. A graphic analogy of this tension was the comment, *'It was like trying to fix the car while driving it.'*

For me, one of the most interesting aspects of this session was how the participants viewed what they had, or had not, done since the first workshop. Learning had happened, but not necessarily in the way people had expected. Several made comments along the lines of *'We haven't done the homework'*. Yet the reality was that there had been a lot of shifts in people's perceptions and understandings of their work. For some, this had led to important learning and changes, but they had not recognised or valued their progress until they had the opportunity this session gave them to share and reflect on what they had done in a supportive and focused environment.

6 Wrap up

A number of people were unable to attend the final workshop, but some sent written reflections instead. All of those who were at the last workshop talked about the ongoing deepening of self-awareness. For the VBNK group, working both individually and together on organisational learning, much of this focus was on understanding blocks to learning and how to

dismantle them. There were some deep insights and shifts in terms of recognising that the responsibility for learning and change is with self, which is in direct contrast to beliefs about learning in Cambodian culture. This had led to recognition that motivation, self discipline and responsibility must be in place before one can facilitate others with integrity. Also that some previously held theories were not helpful and needed to be let go to clear the space for new ways of thinking. Especially important were the insights about cultural blocks, for example the power of both the predominant blame culture, and some profoundly unhelpful educational experiences, which are encapsulated in the Cambodian saying, *'the leaf never falls far from the tree'*. These were not new insights but the understanding of them had deepened and been internalised to the extent that one person had made a very deliberate choice to let go of some old habits in order to make way for new.

For the VBNK group, the challenges of working on organisational learning are long term and ongoing, but all felt that the LIP had helped them reach levels of clarity and depth on several relevant issues. For example it was noted that it is hard to find effective ways to facilitate people who are unsure about which way to change and are unwilling to take risks. The impact of such resistance is both limited commitment and limited levels of support for those who are trying to do things differently. In such circumstances, clear and visible organisational commitment is essential to get staff to pay attention. This in turn highlights the responsibility of senior staff to demonstrate their commitment, and to be clear about what they support and reward.

Other points of reflection and learning included the understanding that many social factors shape or constrain capacity development and the main contribution of contextual analysis is to create coherent understanding of the full system by bringing all the relevant factors together. But this is never linear, as Figure 1 about the LIP shows. It can sometimes be necessary for the facilitator to hold the line for a learning approach when powerful actors want the work conducted inside the comfort zone of traditional methodologies. One participant had been working on analysis of activities contributing to social cohesion and social capital and in that particular context, the conclusion was that many of the change agents

had ability, but not confidence. The learning was that in order for community level change agents to be empowered to act, the project facilitators must work in ways that build competence and confidence simultaneously.

The concluding discussion was a review of the framework, especially to see if anything was missing. The group felt that the links between the LIP and actually doing the work were not clear in the visual representation. They had gradually come to understand that the LIP sits within the context of the work and that is how it has to be thought of, not as an appendage. Activities like the LIP need to become integral to all work in order to enhance meaning and purpose, and make conscious the learning inherent in all we do.

7 My learning

Reviewing all the notes and memories of the workshops and many intermediate discussions with different group members, I have been able to identify some very clear areas of learning that have emerged for me as a facilitator. The first is the importance of holding both the model and the process lightly and not having a rigid agenda of results that you expect others to produce. Having preconceived notions about what should emerge, or how, is an imposition on participants and is likely to lead to frustration all round as the individuals will inevitably, and rightly, go their own way. As the facilitator you must let go of self, and trust the process, but be available with knowledge and guidance if requested. If the time and circumstances are right, then the ideas shared will take root and grow. But each person will decide what resonates with her or himself at that point according to their current needs and understandings. What the facilitator must have is both the capacity for deep listening in order to identify and understand all the different responses, and the willingness to value all types of response, which can range from a simple, instant insight to the slow emergence of learning of great complexity.

Towards the end of the workshops, I found that there is a lot to be understood about what is in the subconscious. Many people are doing good work – all the right things – but they do not recognise it, and do not, therefore, give themselves credit for it, which links to theories of implicit–explicit knowledge. The implicit

learning is there but usually latent and unconnected until some form of intervention facilitates the development of meaning. For many, this needs to be a guided process because their environment does not allow them to draw out implicit learning as a matter of routine. Most often, development practitioners are stuck in repetitive patterns of being and doing that rarely, if ever, provide opportunities for their knowledge and wisdom to surface. A final reflection from one participant was that he had found *'my assumptions wrapped up in my theoretical models and presented as a self-reinforcing package which in some ways prevented the learning I was aiming for'*. Another likened working with the model with putting pieces of a jigsaw together. For myself, I saw very clearly that it is only when I take time to stop and write about the work I am doing that I am able to make the connections between different pieces of information and experience that I already have, and turn them into something meaningful that can help me work better in future.

Despite the obvious benefit in the first and second workshops of making connections between change agents, some of whom had previously felt isolated in their role, it proved very hard to hold the group together. One of the less positive learning points was that over time, commitments made at the start fall away as other demands take priority and learning activities fall into second place. These are factors totally beyond the facilitator's control but they create frustration and disappointment on a number of levels, including for the participants who do continue, but I had to let go of that in order to focus on the quality of who was in the room and what they had brought with them. The drop-out rate, all entirely understandable from the perspectives of the individuals involved, raised questions about the scheduling and whether or not more frequent meetings would have served to keep the group more connected and committed.

8 Conclusions

One of my overall conclusions from this experience is how much attention we all need to pay to our own learning; as someone noted, 'We have to learn how to learn'. The fact that no one in this diverse group had experience of a process like the LIP was instructive about the gulf between the theory and the practices of learning

in the context of social change. Even those actively working on learning in their daily routines found it beneficial to have the framework both to guide and to identify their learning. It would seem that it cannot safely be assumed that even dedicated specialists have effective mechanisms to help them draw learning from their work and this is, therefore, a gap that needs to be addressed. Having said that, it is also clear that frameworks must be held lightly and used in flexible ways to serve particular needs at any given time. The FLASC LIP offers the opportunity to explore several dimensions of how we can learn from our working practices, but it is unlikely that anyone would want, or be able to, immerse themselves in all of those dimensions at the same time.

For those who were ready, working with the FLASC model created a welcome disturbance to challenge their current practices, and to help them make a shift from doing to thinking. In a small project designed to stimulate each individual's organic learning through increased

Notes

- * My thanks to group members: Bun Chhoeuth, Em Sorany, Lee Bun Kun, Noel Matthews, Meas Nee, Carol Mortenson, Mot Sana, Mov

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understanding of the theoretical and value base of their own practice, the emergence of enhanced self-awareness proved for many to be both unexpected and one of the most important results of their participation.

A final reflection is that I had originally intended to call this article: 'Pushing at an Open Door', but having written it I realised that would not be fully appropriate. The experience of this small project reiterated the fact that even those with a deep commitment find all too often that the desire to be open to reflective learning practice is frustrated by the ever present demands of operational imperatives. These factors act like a wedge that keeps the door to learning partially closed from behind. Time and energy for learning processes dissipate in the face of other demands such as meetings, donor reporting and so on. Regrettably, this situation seems likely to continue until all actors at all levels of the development system start to understand that learning has to be integral to all that we do, not simply a luxurious add-on.

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