

## THE LOCKDOWN OPPORTUNITY WHAT? SO WHAT? NOW WHAT? PART 1

*The nature of the storm is the same, but it makes thorns grow in the marshes and flower grow in the garden - Arab saying*

### WHAT?

WIAL Malaysia completed our first CALC Certification for 2020 on 22 February. On 18 March 2020, less than a month after our event, Malaysia was placed under a Coronavirus lockdown directive. All public gatherings were ordered stopped and almost all the country's economic activities came to a standstill. This situation was unprecedented and it was a great shock to many.

In February 2020 I recalled clearly that we had proposed a three months coaching consultancy work, with an option of extension for another two months for the sales team of a small and medium size (SME) financial services entity. This was just a week before the lockdown announcement. To match the client's budget, we proposed a two-day face to face training once a month with weekly virtual follow-ups for individual and group coaching. We had little experience on virtual training deliveries as almost all our clients expected us to be physically present during trainings. To accelerate our learning, we decided to conduct the first five virtual action learning weekly series for our coaches and the public. Ever since the lockdown started, we have now completed more than a dozen action learning series virtually, mentored two CALCs for their project paper submission and coached two coachees virtually during the ICF's International Coaching Week (International Coaching Federation) in the month of May.

### SO WHAT?

No one has a crystal ball in this current volatile, unprecedented uncertainty, Covid19 situation until a safe vaccine for humanity is discovered. Whilst I put trust in hands of God, humanity, the good medical sciences, the discovery of a cure in the next six to eighteen month looks positive. For the time being, I also ask myself on what can I do in this new normal?



I am very amateur with technology, devices and software applications. We started with a 'borrowed' Zoom account from WIAL Global to run our Virtual Action Learning (VAL) series until one day, when we 'crossed path' with a WIAL Committee meeting event. This led us to purchase our own Zoom account and looking back, we never thought that we would be using this Zoom account almost every other day.

We are humbled to share some awkward, funny and happy moments while Zooming over the last two months. What action would you take as an action learning coach in the following situations?

- What do you do when a Problem Presenter 'disappeared' halfway in an action learning session?
- The Action Learning Coach went off-line due to a sudden power failure in his residential neighborhood.
- Problem Presenter was not able to speak midway into the action learning due to the malfunctioning of her laptop microphone. The Zoom chat box had to be activated.
- Two team members videos could not function throughout the sixty minutes action learning session.
- Zoom went off-line during an action learning session.

We believe Dr Reg Revans has a strong reason to introduce this tag line, "no learning without action and no action without learning" for all the above situations. Technology is not always perfect and in the above 'moments of challenge', we can panic and easily be stressed. After all, if these are beyond your control, accept imperfections. According to Dr Brene Brown in her book, *The Gifts of Imperfection*, she tells us more about the power of embracing imperfection and vulnerability. Yes, we all struggle with shame and the fear of not being enough...so what?



## NOW WHAT?

In the new norm of action learning, technology creates a new distinction between the face to face (f2f) action learning and VAL. Whilst we may be frowning on VAL, it is not totally a new way of delivery and there have been a number of journals published by researchers (e.g., Dickenson, Burgoyne and Pedler, 2010; Burgoyne, 2011) previously.

We thought that we can optimise almost all our senses in a f2f action learning. Some action learning participants complained that they are only staring at small 'window boxes' in front of them during a VAL session. Most of us think that good visuals are important. The Guardian conducted an experiment in 2007 –

- When do people become better lie detectors?
- When was someone lying, when telling the truth?

The results are: watching television: less than 10 % accuracy and listening to radio: 73 % accuracy. Radio takes concentration and 'the pictures are better on radio,' otherwise radio would have been a Darwinian species today.

I am optimistic that f2f and VAL will move in tandem. With the new virtual skills I have challenged myself to complete my SALC application by conducting a Virtual Certified Action Learning Coach (VCALC) program, as approved by the WIAL Board for 2020.

Written by William Teo PALC  
WIAL Malaysia  
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