

Strengthening Collaborative Leadership for Thai Primary School Administrators

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Abstract

The objectives of this research were: 1) to investigate the elements and indicators of collaborative leadership of primary school administrators, 2) to explore the existing situation and required situation of collaborative leadership of primary school administrators, 3) to develop a program to enhance collaborative leadership of primary school administrators, and 4) to investigate the effect of development for collaborative leadership of primary school administrators, from the usage of developed program. Research and Development (R&D) was employed which designed 4 stages, a sample group of 753 primary school administrators and teachers, chosen by multi-stage sampling, gave quantitative data; and experts purposively chosen were asked to provide qualitative input. The statistics used in this research included the percentage, mean, standard deviation, the Priority Need Indicator (PNI_{Modified}), and Dependent t-test. The results found that 7 elements 65 indicators. The training program which was developed and reviewed consists of four modules: Module 1, Characteristics of trust and commitment; Module 2, Paradigms of shared vision and collective decision making; Module 3, Skills in transforming change, risk taking and conflict management; Module 4, Assessment and reflection on collaborative leadership influences in fulfilling duties. In the implementation of the training program for 12 weeks employing 8 training kits, the 30 primary school administrators who volunteered to join significantly improved their test scores after the training and felt very highly satisfied with the program. In addition, the collaborative leadership of primary school administrators posttest was at higher level than the pretest at .01 level.

Keywords: collaborative leadership, collaborative leadership development program, primary school administrators

1. Introduction

Primary school education, in Thailand and elsewhere, lays the foundation for a community, a society, a nation and even the world. A good and just society needs a good foundation created by a good primary education, which is possible only when it is administered by good leadership. Leadership is key success factor in bringing an organization to successful fulfillment of its goals. For leadership is a process of convincing others to follow the leader to act and achieve the goal envisioned by the leader.

1.1 Explore Importance of the Problem

Considering the problem challenges within leadership for Thai primary school administrators under jurisdiction of the Office of Basic Education Commission, it is showed that most school administrators give precedence to low academic standards in work (Office of Basic Education Commission, 2013). The quality assessment of primary school administrators showed that “leadership” and “ability” in the administration and management school was suggested in the second round of external assessment. The majority assessment remained at Moderate level (Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment, 2010). Besides, a recent national research (Rooncharoen, 2007) reported that most school administrators lack necessary leadership characteristics. This is according to a report of The Ministry of Education (2009), the following in Thai education system showed that some primary school administrators lacked complete comprehension in appraisal system and absence of quality in efficient administration and management. Changming (2002) reported that most

primary school administrators used low leadership efficiency. Furthermore, Tuntiyamas (2007) found that the problems of Thai primary schools in network were caused by personnel problems such as: the leadership of the network coordinator, a member lacking in cooperation, administrators lacking technique, participation, and skills such as “conflict”, and “building cooperation”. Since the 2009 Thai education reform, the poor performance of primary school administrators did not change (Sakunsathaputa, 2009). In the 21st century paradigms of Thai education system will change, Traditional style is not effective. The leadership style is specified for primary school administrators and is also a driving force for educational development. Teachers have to be able to adjust themselves to the changes as a matter of professional competency, and in interest of the efficiency and effectiveness of the school (The Office of Secretary the Education Council, 2010).

Therefore, and in view of the above problems, it is highly necessary to foster development of collaborative leadership enhancement programs for Thai primary school administrators.

1.2 Thai Primary School Administrators

Thai primary school administrators play an important role in work management as well as enhancement of educational management for schools to be successful and to accomplish their goals effectively. In order to achieve goals, to improve quality in standards, and to use techniques that can lead to problem solving and accomplishment, the school administrators and professional leaders need to obtain knowledge, competency, ethics, morality, creativity, systematic thinking, and good professional code of ethics so they can provide good, efficient, and effective school administration and management. If a school administrator has a high degree of leadership, he can use his ability in school administration, achieving orderliness, objectives and effecting change via competency, vision, good decision making, communication skills, ethics and morality, and good manners. In addition, Thai primary school administrators have to be competent in staff management, have good relationship with their colleagues, and build staffs' collaboration in the work place. These are all challenges for the leadership style of school administrators who must play their role in educational administration and management. (Kaewdang, 2003; Jummeang, 2005; Rooncharoen, 2007; Tesaputa, 2011; Chiangkul, 2010; The Office of Secretary the Education Council, 2010; Yukl, 2002). The current situation of primary school administrators in Thailand shows that most school administrators lack necessary leadership characteristics. So, the Ministry of Education tried to develop a leadership-enhancement program for Thai primary school administrators.

In the course of more recent decades, discussions on leadership for the 21st century have gained currency. The world situations have been so rapidly changing that new styles of leadership have been called for. World leaders and academics in various continents put forward what they thought were the appropriate answer. New or renewed concepts or theories of leadership have been discussed, debated, studied and practiced. Among the more often noted concepts are autocratic leadership, VIS-À-VIS democratic leadership, transactional leadership, transformational leadership, servant leadership, charismatic leadership, participatory leadership and collaborative leadership. This research focuses on the last mentioned, in the context of educational concerns. Hinrichs' (2007) study suggests that leadership for the 21st century has achievement for all students as collaborative model and as “collaborative leadership”.

1.3 School Leader as Collaborative Leadership

There are various research studies on collaborative leadership. Considering collaborative leadership stated at the beginning by Chrislip and Larson (1994) suggested it is “a mutually beneficial relationship between two or more parties who work toward common goals by sharing, authority, responsibility, and accountability for achieving goals. The purpose of collaborative leadership is to create a shared vision and joint strategies to concerns that go beyond the purview of any particular party.” Stagich (2001) describes collaborative leadership as: “The transformative leadership, which occurs through the facilitation or participation in collaborative learning groups. The collaborative ability to lead a group or organization through the active participation in sharing knowledge and experience and the high order social learning, thinking, and communicating process.” Collaborative leadership is much like a learning organization, relying on guides and facilitators with different areas of expertise (Ferdman, 2010). Collaborative leadership helped members recognize the strength in the power of the membership and its interdependence. To solve complex citizen problems, we needed to go back and revisit new ways of working together. When members opened up to each other they began to hold the whole through dialogue, mystery and creative problem solving (Kofman, Senge, Moth-Kanter, & Handy, 1995). Collaborative management is a concept that describes the process of facilitating and operating in a multi organizational milieu, in order to solve problems that cannot be solved, or solved easily, by organizations (McGuire, 2006). Collaborative leadership is a product of the reciprocal interactions and relationships between leaders, followers, the situations, school-level factors of their work and environment in the school. The relationships within

dimensions of leadership with teachers and students are an incremental part of a leader's success with innovation and leadership. The importance of leaders' roles, studies have been minimal concerning how school leaders obtain and encourage the knowledge and skills for leading successful school improvement and school-level factors that influence the success of the leader (Spillane, 2009). Leadership is not simply a function of what a school administers, or indeed any each other or group of leaders, knows or does. Rather, it is the activities involved in by leaders, in interaction with others in participate contexts around specific tasks (Spillane et al., 2004). Collaborative partnerships among multi-sector and multidisciplinary community stakeholders were needed to address the complex workforce challenges of the 21st century (Koehn, 2010). Furthermore, collaborative leaders empower the gifts of all the baptized while working together toward a shared vision and mission. They respect the Spirit that is present and active in the community and in its members (Brown, 2011).

Collaborative leadership in this research means the process of thought and action of primary school administrators in effecting broad-based cooperation, forming both person-to-person and network relationships based on mutual trust, shared vision and commitment in order to mobilize existing skills and values to achieve the common goals of their schools which stakeholders share the feeling of common ownership (Rubin, 2002; Chiangkul, 2010; Saratna, 2014).

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this research were: 1) to investigate the elements and indicators of collaborative leadership of primary school administrators, 2) to explore the existing situation and required situation of collaborative leadership of primary school administrators, 3) to develop a program to enhance collaborative leadership of primary school administrators, and 4) to investigate the effect of development for collaborative leadership of primary school administrators, from the usage of a developed program.

2. Methods

Research and Development (R&D) approach was employed for this study. Mixed methods research techniques were used in collecting data through quantitative and qualitative technique. The research was conducted in 4 stages as follows:

Stage 1: Review of related literature, documents and researches. Study and formulation of elements and indicators on collaborative leadership, integrating information from literature and from in-depth interviews with 7 experts.

Stage 2: Study of the current practice and the desired conditions of collaborative leadership, as well as the needs for a collaborative leadership development program by way of opinion survey of 753 samples, administrators and teachers whose number was determined by the Krejcie & Morgan table and whose identification was obtained by multi-stage random sampling. Five-level rating scale questionnaires were used to collect the data.

Stage 3: Results from Stages 1 to 2 were organized and used to draft a training program to enhance collaborative leadership of primary school administrators in Thailand. Review and improvement of the draft training program was further affected by a focus group discussion of 9 experts.

Stage 4: A trial application of the revised collaborative leadership training program was undertaken by a group of 30 volunteer primary school administrators and their schools from Khonkaen Office of Primary Educational Service Area 1. There took place evaluation and reflection of collaborative leadership training program for the fulfillment of administrative duties.

2.1 Population and Samples

The population of this study was 28,566 primary school administrators, and teachers, under jurisdiction of the Office of Basic Education Commission. The samples were 758 primary school administrators, and teachers, selected by using multi-stage random sampling technique; the cluster random sampling was used for classifying into groups for 4 regions: 17 Provinces in the North region, 20 provinces in the North eastern region, 25 provinces in the central region, and 14 provinces in the Southern region. The sample size was determined by using Krejcie and Morgan's table. The Simple Random Sampling was administered. Fifteen provinces were obtained. Using Simple Random Sampling, the Office of Primary Educational Service Area of each province was sampled. Simple Random Sampling was used by taking lots; they were 758 primary School Administrators, and teachers as the education commission of primary school. The samples which used the program included 30 primary school administrators, under jurisdiction of the Khon Kaen Primary Educational Service Area Office 1. They were selected by sampling from those who volunteered to participate in development.

3. Results

Stage 1. The research yielded 7 elements and 65 indicators of collaborative leadership of primary school administrators as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Elements and indicators of primary school administrators' collaborative leadership

Elements	Indicators
1. Trust	1) Competence
	2) Knowledge
	3) Skills
	4) Strive
	5) Integrity
	6) Fairness
	7) Transparency
	8) Benevolence
	9) Empathy
	10) Reliability
	11) Diligence
	12) Responsibility
2. Shared Vision	1) Shared analysis data
	2) Change knowledge
	3) Formulating shared vision
	4) Articulating shared vision
	5) Communicated vision
	6) Acceptance and willingness to share vision
	7) Implementing shared vision
	8) Monitoring
3. Commitment	1) Willingness as agent of organization member
	2) Effective commitment
	3) Continuance commitment
	4) Willingness toward job performance
	5) Attitudinal commitment
	6) Enthusiasm
	7) Loyalty
	8) Normative commitment
	9) Organization Goal Attainment

	1) Choice specification
	2) Choice assessment
	3) Decision- making of best alternatives
	4) Information clarity
	5) Information timeliness
4. Collective Decision Making	6) Information accuracy
	7) Information relevancy, necessity usefulness
	8) Information verifiability
	9) Goals
	10) Consequences and decision quality
	11) General usefulness
	1) Willingness to take risks
	2) Ability to take risks
	3) Risk analysis
	4) Risk assessment
5. Risk Taking	5) Risk avoidance
	6) Risk control
	7) Risks' hand book
	8) Risk transfer
	9) Insurance
	1) Understanding change
	2) Motivate to change
	3) Acceptance and support to change
6. Transforming Change	4) Build motivation
	5) Inspirational motivation
	6) Intellectual stimulation
	7) Originality/creativity
	1) Problem solving
	2) Shared purpose
	3) Fact-based decision making
	4) Build empathy
7. Conflict Management	5) Build Goal
	6) Build mutual trust
	7) Compromising
	8) Building relationship
	9) Accommodation

Stage 2. The current situation of collaborative leadership of primary school administrators, under jurisdiction of the Office of Basic Education Commission, in overall, was at “High” level. The need for developing collaborative leadership of primary school administrators, in overall, was at “High” level, and each aspect, namely trust and shared vision, attained “the Highest” level. Commitment was at “Lowest” level. The techniques for development consisted of: 1) orientation, 2) self-study, 3) searching, 4) grouping, 5) training, 6) actual practice.

Stage 3.

3.1 PNI_{Modified} of Primary School Administrators' Collaborative Leadership as Shown in Table 2

Table 2. PNI_{Modified} of primary school administrators' collaborative leadership of current situation and need for development based on the samples' opinion

Elements of primary school administrators collaborative leadership	D	I	PNI	Priority need order
Trust	3.61	4.70	0.30	2
Shared Vision	3.53	4.61	0.31	1
Commitment	3.56	4.13	0.16	7
Collective decision making	3.49	4.19	0.21	6
Risk taking	3.45	4.42	0.28	3
Transforming change	3.55	4.40	0.24	5
Conflict management	3.49	4.41	0.26	4

Note. "D" Current situation; "I" need for developing.

3.2 Leadership Enhancement Program

Leadership enhancement/development program refers to carefully and systematically designed plans for activities to increase leadership capacities of individuals and/or groups that would subsequently help in achieving the goals of organization. Sarratna (2014) reports that five basic factors constitute a good leadership-development training program. These factors include: 1) multiple leadership training techniques, 2) holistic view of leadership, 3) link to on-the-job application, 4) respectable length of time and 5) a meaningful conclusion.

These five factors are well-taken in themselves; but there may be other factors to be taken into consideration as well, especially the historical and cultural circumstances. For example, in a Buddhist oriented society like Thailand, the *thambun* (merit making) traditions as well as the *longkhaek* (cooperative-mutual help) modes of mutual assistance in village communities can be seen as major embodiments of collaborative principles. The point here is that traditional genius of local and national context should not be overlooked in designing a leadership enhancement program.

In designing our program to enhance collaborative leadership, we made use of the conclusions and insights from Stages 1, 2 and PNI_{Modified} of primary school administrators' collaborative leadership of this research. The final structure and contents of the program are as follows:

1) Structure and Contents

The contents of enhancement training program consist of 4 parts as follows:

Part 1: Introduction deals with the rationale, goals, objectives, concepts, principles and description of the program components.

Part 2: Details of the program, consisting of 4 modules:

- ✓ Module 1: Characteristics of collaborative leadership—trust and commitment.
- ✓ Module 2: Paradigms of shared vision and collective decision-making.
- ✓ Module 3: Skills in transforming change, risk taking and conflict management.
- ✓ Module 4: Assessment and reflection on collaborative leadership regarding task performance of primary school administrators.

Part 3: Assessment of the program efficiency in enhancing collaborative leadership of primary school administrators.

Part 4: Conditions for the success in the application of the program.

2) Execution of Enhancement in 12 weeks

Focus steps was used in the execution of the program:

- ✓ Step 1: Preparations, building up basic skills prior to the actual development by orientation, self-study, documentary search and group work.
- ✓ Step 2: Intensive training.
- ✓ Step 3: Assessment and reflection towards actual practice.
- ✓ Step 4: Assessment after the training.

* With regard to time management in the 12 weeks training, the following time table was designed:

- ✓ Preparations= 2 weeks (Orientation 1 day; self-study 10 days; intensive training 3 days)
- ✓ The actual training practice = 8 weeks
- ✓ Post-training assessment = 2 weeks.

* Thirty primary school administrators participated in the training program on a voluntary basis, with the approval of the Service Area Office and with the agreement to carry out part of the training with the personnel of their own schools.

3) Learning Kits

A set of 8 elaborate learning kits or handbooks was designed and developed for the collaborative leadership training program:

- Book 1: on Trust
- Book 2: on Commitment
- Book 3: on Shared Vision
- Book 4: on Collective Decision Making
- Book 5: on Transforming Change
- Book 6: on Risk-Taking Management
- Book 7: on Conflict Management
- Book 8: on Evaluation and Reflection.

In addition to these 8 kits, a comprehensive overall handbook, which explained the whole process, was also formulated. This 47-pages handbook described the purpose, structure, contents, media, work sheets, application and evaluation of the 8 learning kits.

These 8 learning kits were used in connection with the respective training modules; that is, Books 1 and 2 with Module 1; Books 3 and 4 with Module 2; Books 5, 6 and 7 with Module 3; and Book 8 (8/1 and 8/2) with Module 4.

Stage 4. The Implementation of the Program

In regard to the above, the program was first applied with 30 participating primary school administrators. A pre-test of 20 items was given before the 3-day intensive training in order to measure the knowledge of collaborative leadership. After the training, the same test was again administered. When the results of the two tests were compared, it was found that the level of collaborative leadership before development or training was rated high, while the post-development level was rated highest as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. The findings of evaluation of primary school administrators' collaborative leadership, before and after development

Item	Elements of Primary School Administrators' Collaborative Leadership	Before Development			After Development		
		\bar{X}	S.D.	Level of Collaborative Leadership	\bar{X}	S.D.	Level of Collaborative Leadership
1.	Trust	4.21	0.62	High	4.69	0.47	Highest
2.	Shared vision	4.04	0.65	High	4.66	0.51	Highest
3.	Commitment	4.21	0.61	High	4.63	0.50	Highest
4.	Collective decision making	3.93	0.64	High	4.62	0.49	Highest
5.	Risk taking	3.83	0.83	High	4.63	0.48	Highest
6.	Transforming change	0.04	0.65	High	4.65	0.47	Highest
7.	Conflict management	3.89	0.66	High	4.65	0.47	Highest
	Total	4.02	0.66	High	4.64	0.49	Highest

The findings as shown in Table 3 proved that the level of collaborative leadership of primary school administrators after development was higher than the level before development. The difference was at the .01 level of statistical significance.

3.3 Actual Practice for 8 Weeks in 30 Schools

After the 3 days intensive training of the 30 participating primary school administrators, all of them put to practice the program to enhance collaborative leadership in their own schools for 8 weeks.

The practice in each case involved the following measures:

1) The administrator called a meeting of teachers, board members, community leaders, parents and Buddhist monk(s) in order to introduce the program. The goal was to design an action plan to improve the school administration by using the collaborative leadership model. The four modules, along with the eight learning kits, were to be the main tools. Appropriate planning and re-organization of the personnel into four groups based on the four basic tasks of school management—academic, personnel, budget and general administration—were undertaken.

2) Educational supervisor (s) from the Area Service Office was invited to participate and render advice.

3) A network of co-operation with other neighboring schools was initiated for mutual sharing and learning.

4) At the end of the 8 weeks, an assessment of the practice was conducted. The findings were synthesized and summarized as follows:

- On the whole, the level of collaborative leadership of the school administrators before the practice was rated high; after the practice the leadership level was rated at highest.
- The level of satisfaction with the program practice of the people who were actively involved was rated at highest.
- The test scores of the administrators' knowledge of collaborative leadership were higher than 80% in all cases and on all components.

3.4 Evaluation and Reflection

In the final stage of our research, the collaborative leadership enhancement program was evaluated and reflected upon, focusing on the eight weeks of actual practice. The findings may be summarized as follows:

1) On academic administration, the outcome of the program was evaluated in terms of the project to uplift the level of learning achievement, the project on learning reform, and the project on coaching supervision. Upon reflection, the end results included participatory style of work, the sense of mutual trust, cooperation of all parties concerned and the responsibility on the part of teachers.

2) On personnel administration, the outcome of the program was evaluated in terms of the role of leaders, shared vision and cooperation, organization commitment, happy working atmosphere, reduction of conflicts, and

empowerment of personnel. With regard to collective decision making, the focus was on exemplary model, building of trust and faith. Upon reflection, the end results included collaborative working style, teamwork and the birth of good working-relationships culture in the schools.

3) On budget administration, the focus was on risk-taking management by creating an internal control system and making an annual official work-performance confirmation report.

4) On general administration the program outcome was evaluated in terms of the project on strong student care system, and the “white” (narcotics-free) school policy. Upon reflection, the end results were the actual success of the above-mentioned projects. Many of the participating schools received outstanding awards at provincial and national levels. More support was given to these schools, especially the small-sized ones.

5) On building a network of cooperation, there has been real sharing and exchanges of information, knowledge and insights in the four basic tasks among these 30 schools and other schools as well. For example, joint program activities on sports, scouts, academic camps and teachers in-service training. All this with the appreciative support of the Educational Service Area Office.

4. Discussion

1) In the literature review our synthesis resulted in 7 elements, 23 sub-elements and 65 indicators of collaborative leadership. In the subsequent verification process, it was found that the elements of trust and shared vision were the most important. These findings correspond to those of Arbsuwan (2013), who found that the component shared vision was the highest weighted; the components of trust ranked second, shared decision-making ranked third, and the component of commitment was the least weighted. But all of them were considered crucial for collaborative leadership. Our findings also corresponded to those of Yodsala (2014) who found that visionary leadership of school administrators was rated high, both on the whole and by aspects. Diehl (2005), Edmondson (2006) found that examining characteristics of collaborative leadership were trust, risk taking, commitment and willingness to change. Coleman (2011) who studied “The significance of trust in school-based collaborative leadership” found that trust and integrity were important components of collaborative leadership. Furthermore, our findings also corresponded with Jameson, Jill and Ferrell (2006) who studied “Building Trust and Shared Knowledge in Communities of Learning Practice” and found that trust and collective learning was important components of collaborative leadership. Their conclusions were similar; good leadership in the style of collaboration is essential for the success of an organization.

2) Techniques for development consisted of: (1) orientation, (2) self-study, (3) searching, (4) grouping, (5) training, (6) actual practice. These findings correspond to those of Spark and Loucks-Horsley (1989) and Severson (2004), who found 7 models: (1) training model, (2) study groups model, (3) search model, (4) self-studying model, (5) assessment model, (6) improvement model, and, (7) mentoring model. Furthermore, our findings also corresponded with Somprach (2012) who found 7 steps (ReSIPPAE): (1) reconnaissance, (2) self-study, (3) intensive seminar/workshop, (4) internship/practice, (5) project approach, (6) practice, (7) evaluation.

3) In the process of designing and actual practice of our enhancement program to enhance collaborative leadership for primary school administrators, we have noticed that the integration of the 8 learning units was very important. This corresponded with the findings of Harvard Business School (cited in Sarratna, 2014) which emphasized the integration of the 5 modules in the training practice, which lasted 18 weeks. Chareiangdate (2012) found that the training program which was developed and reviewed, consists of four modules. Furthermore, our findings also corresponded to those of Phannuek (2011) who studied “Research and Development of Program for Developing the Basic School Administrators’ Competency”. found that there were 4 parts of program developing basic school administrators competency: Part 1: the introduction, Part 2: the details of program for developing basic school administrators’ competency, Part 3: the instrument for evaluating the efficiency of a program developing basic school administrators’ competency in field work study, and Part 4: the guidelines, conditions, and indicators of success in applying the program developing basic school administrators’ competency.

4) In the actual application of the enhancement program in 30 schools, it was found that the level of collaborative leadership, after training or development, was significantly (at the 0.01 level) higher than the level before training. Our findings also corresponded to those of Puangnil (2012) found that the level of visionary leadership after training or development was significant (at the 0.01 level). All this confirms the efficacy of both the concept of collaborative leadership and the enhancement program developed in this research.

5. Conclusions

This study has resulted in a program to enhance collaborative leadership of primary school administrators in Thailand. The training program which was developed and reviewed consists of four modules: Module 1, Characteristics of trust and commitment; Module 2, Paradigms of shared vision and collective decision making; Module 3, Skills in transforming change, risk taking and conflict management; Module 4, Assessment and reflection on collaborative-leadership influences in fulfilling duties. The results of the study indicated the benefits of the implementation of the developed program to enhance collaborative leadership of primary school administrators in Thailand: 1) On academic administration, the outcome of the program was evaluated in terms of the project to uplift the level of learning achievement; 2) On personnel administration, the outcome of the program was evaluated in terms of the role of leaders, shared vision and cooperation, organization commitment, happy working atmosphere, reduction of conflicts, and empowerment of personnel. The end results included collaborative working style, teamwork, and the birth of good working-relationships culture in the school(s); 3) budget administration, the focus was on risk-taking management by creating an internal control system and making an annual official work performance confirmation report; 4) On general administration, the program outcome was evaluated in terms of the project on strong student care system, 5) On building a network of cooperation, there has taken place sharing and exchanging of information, knowledge and insights in the four basic tasks among these 30 schools and other schools as well.

6. Recommendations

The Office of Basic Education Commission and its educational-service areas should make use of the program which was developed here in terms of its usefulness as a guideline in their leadership-development strategies. The 30 primary-school administrators who participated in the program to enhance collaborative leadership should act to multiply the effects of their learning, by working in collaboration with other concerned organizations. Similar research should be undertaken with different target groups or different levels of education.

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