



you a leader?

a perspective on leadership

by Henna Draaibaar, correspondent in Surinam, film and tv producer

You're right, there is no clear-cut definition for a leader. Leadership is a given. It's a combination of qualities and in my opinion intelligence is not at the top of that list. No, it has everything to do with motivation, drive, self confidence, and social skills. Cognitive intelligence is helpful to get ahead, but to be a really successful leader we're talking about a totally different ball game.

Leadership qualities can often be detected from an early age on. A little kid that reaches for the stars. One who can rally the other toddlers and consistently sticks to its goals. When you zoom in on this child, you'll find it to steadily develop leadership skills. He or she will be the driving force behind school events, become president of the student body, and later on become the leader of...

The young people I've met in the Surinam Future Leaders program were blessed with the aforementioned characteristics. I became part of the group because of my assignment to make a promotional film for the Future Leaders program. I listened, observed, and my camera followed the entire learning process.

What struck me the most is that they all want to make a difference in our world. And they surely have it in them to become that future leader. All that is needed for their talent to mature is constant nourishment and a little direction. "That must be the whole idea of this Future Leader project", I thought to myself when I just met the twenty youngsters from Surinam and the Netherlands. They're all potential leaders, very strong personalities, know exactly what they want. They just don't know how to make it happen, yet. They were like the colorful paint on an artist's palette.

I must say, I was very impressed. "What is going on here?", I wondered while trying to make myself invisible. Not easy at all being right in the middle of the circle with a camera and a six

feet tall sound technician on my side. Nevertheless, it was as if we were not there. Silently the camera zooms in on the tears that are shed when they share their personal stories. The lens catches a gesture, a hand touching a neighboring shoulder for some comfort. Worlds so far apart. They just met twenty four hours ago. No barriers to show their emotions whatsoever. For two weeks they will dry each other's tears and give their unconditional support.

The passionate discussions, the careful maneuvering in negotiations, and the compromises they found to reach their goals as one team. These skills were developed when working on the projects. In the meantime they were coached on their presentation skills, their posture and articulation. I witnessed their growth through my camera.

When after the first week a group of ten Business Leaders arrived, a warm welcome follows. They are the icing on the cake. Their experience is the most important instrument for the follow-through on the projects. Without imposing their opinions, they make the students take responsibility for the consequences of their decisions. Together with members of Powakka village the most wonderful and tangible business plans are made.

The young leaders become more visible as the days go by. They learn to make tough decisions, deal with disappointments, and pull themselves up by the bootstraps. It makes a big impression on me. Though not everybody's personal growth follows the same high pace, one of the Business Leaders tells me that most of them hold a big promise for the future. The paint on the palette is turning into a work of art.

After long days of shooting way too much footage, I realize that all this material can turn into gold one day. Through my camera I captured the first steps of tomorrow's world leaders.

