



Acknowledgement

A New Architecture for *Writing to Learn*

Daniel Wing Kwong CHAN

Initiating a students' publication project is an exhilarating experience. It is exciting to see how the concepts of learning changed and transformed over the past three years since the inaugural issue was published in September 2005. I wonder if it is a general phenomenon found in Hong Kong schools where many young students, or even parents, may link learning closely with teaching. Some of them cannot think of learning scenarios without a teacher being in the picture. They view learning' as only 'being taught'. On the other hand, as students are constantly and continuously told, either by their parents or teachers, to study hard, to concentrate and be attentive during class, some of them would view learning as an individual process of sense making. As a result, the concept of learning would easily be mistaken as a unilateral process rather than a more complex social network of events where many individuals are involved.

Watkins (2006) argues that human behaviour has also had a social dimension, and that knowledge is constructed both individually and socially. It is more important and more effective to promote learning by facilitating students to be engaged in 'generative' rather than 'passive' learning activities (p.17). Learning becomes very effective when the process of making connections between ideas and between areas of knowledge also operates in contexts where connections between people are rich (p.37).

Bradeen (2003: xv) argues that "creating physical space is the work of architects and contractors; teachers create optimal spaces for teaching and learning in their work". Drawing from the experience of initiating a students' publication project, Dimension, to form a community of learners by encouraging students to explore, think, create and exchange their ideas and areas of knowledge. Our goal is to create a learning community where students can learn from one another as best as they can. We believe that, as far as learning is concerned, 'writing' is one of the best practices of exploring, living, feeling and appreciating where "a new architecture for writing to learn" is thus proposed.

Our 2006 Dimension inaugural issue, focused on an aim to provide valuable room for students to explore, to think of possibilities, to create and exchange ideas. Our second issue in 2008 further encouraged our students to build upon their experiential learning beyond classroom and establish a relationship between writing and

learning across the curriculum, on topics that stimulated their curiosity and imagination. In this third issue, we aim to build a new architecture for 'Writing to Learn', viz. Learning to Explore (學習探知), Learning to Live (學習生活), Learning to Feel (學習感受) and Learning to Appreciate (學習欣賞). (See fig.)

We are happy to note that this new architecture is an ongoing creative process which brings new reality to students' learning. It creates new connections between meanings, experiences, contexts and people. Through sharing of their writings, students talk about their in-depth understanding about their learning experiences for intellectual development, community service, physical and aesthetic development. They make writing an object of conversation through telling and re-telling of stories and learning from others. They make writing an object of reflection which helps raise their immediate experience above a wider range of meaning and expanded horizon. They make writing an object of learning through exploring, living, feeling and appreciating the connections between experience, context and people.

We believe that this new architecture for Writing to Learn, among and beyond classrooms, provides a highly accessible framework for individual sense making. Building knowledge through interactions with others could create new and shared knowledge on a common focus. Moreover, students are nested in the landscape of making connections between ideas and between areas of knowledge. This new architecture also operates in contexts that touch the minds, hearts, and souls of those who love reading and writing.



References

- Bredeson, P. V. (2003):** *Designs for Learning: A New Architecture for Professional Development in Schools*, California, Corwin Press, Inc..
- Watkins, G. (2006):** *Classroom as Learning Communities: what's in it for schools?*, New York, Routledge.