

Appendix G

**Interpersonal Influences on Self-Regulation Empowerment:
A Reflection on a QEF¹ Project of “Student-Led Conferences”**

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Abstract

This article examines the process of a QEF project, which aims to promote students' motivation and self-efficacy in learning and development. The project invites students to tell their stories in student-led conferences after a series of intra and inter school training. Results indicate that the students gain improvement in three self-efficacy inventories, but only one found significant. Qualitative feedback is positive from students, parents, and teachers. The unstable students' involvement made teachers experience up and down during the process. It was clearly observed that the interpersonal influences have produced a big impact since the halfway of the project. Advances were reflected in progress in providing students with more interacting environments for better engagement. Design strategies and challenges for intrapersonal self-regulation are discussed.

Keywords Interpersonal influences, Self-regulation, Story telling, Student-led conferences

Introduction

For accountability purpose, reporting is a way to communicate the outcomes of assessments to the people concerned, such as parents, teachers, students, as well as potential employers. Different from subject assessment, reporting is focusing on evaluating students' learning and development by providing information of students' overall performance. It is an umbrella term of assessments and gives a higher and broader perspective to overview the learning outcomes of a student as a whole (Brookhart, 2004). In terms of learning and development, a reporting system facilitates students with feedback to monitor the progress to achieve the goal of whole person development. Like the effect of the formative assessment (Black & Wiliam, 1998), the progressive feedback flow in reporting can also improve and accelerate learning, but it attracted only little attention.

While much research has been conducted into improving student learning through formative assessments, reporting systems mainly remain in their traditional practices, which carry only weak links to improve student's learning. This is the reason why there are many criticisms by scholars that this administration oriented reporting system nowadays is not in line with the pace of the worldwide educational reform (Guskey & Bailey, 2001; Hogan, 1995; Stiggins, 2001).

In Hong Kong, under the senior secondary curriculum reform, every student is encouraged to develop a Student Learning Profile (SLP) before the end of secondary education to achieve the goal of whole person development (CDC, bk5, 2009). Other than the academic performances in the school, the profile records the learning experiences and achievements of a student during the senior secondary years. Being one of the components of the reporting system in a school, a SLP provides supplementary information and serves as a reference document to tertiary institutions and potential employers.

The new senior secondary curriculum guide claims the possibility to encourage student's self-regulated learning through a particular route of SLP implementation (CDC, bk5B, 2009). Schools are advised to adopt the "student-led and reflection-oriented" approach to treat the SLP as a meaningful tool for students' self-regulated learning. However, the guide does not illustrate in detail how and why the desirable outcomes would be obtained.

This is an appropriate moment for us to reconsider the current reporting system. On the top of its administrative function, could the reporting practice be more educational? A project is therefore initiated to address the learning function of SLP. By incorporating the concept and practice of "Student-led Conferences", the project aims to provide schools with a supporting model for the school-based implementation

of SLP that may practically facilitate students' self-regulation in learning and development as it is expected in the curriculum guide.

“Student-led Conferences” simply mean having students to conduct conferences with their parents and teachers. It is a way of reporting that shifts the traditional reporting role from teachers to students. In student-led conferences, students tell their stories by displaying their schoolwork or portfolio collection. They will also discuss the strategies that lead to achieve the learning and career goals (Bailey & Guskey, 2001; Benson & Barnett, 2005). Referring to the literatures overseas, student-led conferences brought a lot of benefits to our students in many aspects, including significant improvement in students' academic learning (Hackmann, 1996; Stiggins, 1994; Babar & Tolensky, 1996).

This article is not going to evaluate the outcomes of the project. Instead, it tries to discuss how and why students were empowered to exert greater control over their learning and engage in more self-regulatory processes of learning by reflecting on the whole course of intervention.

The Rationale of the Project

The idea of the project originates from the learning to learn portfolio model proposed by Fox (2003). The model consists of three inter-related components. They are:

- Metacognitive development,
- Assessment to improve learning, and
- Development of home-school link.

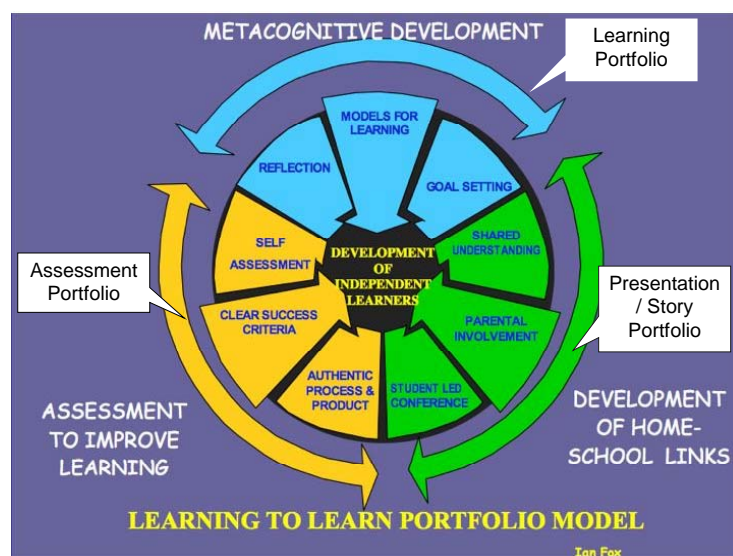


Fig. 1: Learning to learn portfolio model (Fox, 2003)

The model emphasizes the process from portfolio to profile, through which students are facilitated to set attainable but challenging goals for enhancing their learning.

Undergoing the processes of the three components, it will lead students to develop internal metacognitive skills and enable them to become independent learners.

For the parts of “Metacognitive development” and “Assessment to improve learning” in the training programme, students are requested to go through the self-regulatory processes of learning, such as goal setting, self-monitoring, and self-reflection. They are in line with some famous self-regulation models

(Zimmerman & Campillo, 2003; Pintrich, 2000; Winne & Hadwin, 1998; Nicol &

Macfarlane-Dick, 2006; Bangert-Drowns et al., 1991). The process of regulation consists of three major common phases. They are goal setting, process monitoring (including choice and adoption of strategies), and outcomes evaluation. Although different theories and models of self-regulation have been developed over the past two decades, they more or less share many similar features and characteristics (Cleary & Zimmerman 2004). Self-regulated learners proactively direct their behaviours or strategies to achieve their goals. They rely on different sources of feedback for self-evaluation to adjust their strategies to attain their goals. Self-evaluation is one of the strategies and key processes to develop metacognition (Blakey & Spence, 1990; Zimmerman, 2002), by which students judge how well they perform by comparing one's performance with specific mastery criteria, or against the performance of others. Throughout the course of training, students learn not only how to organize and plan their learning to achieve the pre-set goals according to their self-understanding. In turn, they will also build up the habit of reflection.

Infusing the concept of *Individual Student Planning* (ISP) (Gysbers & Henderson, 2006) into the practice is one of the key features of the project. The three strategies for implementing ISP are included. They are:

- Individual appraisal,
- Individual advisement, and

- Transition planning

With the support by the teachers and peers in the group, students are facilitated to assess and interpret their abilities, interests, skills, and achievements so that they could plan for their goals, in terms of personal, social, academic, and career development. Zimmerman (2002) claimed that, “students who set specific and proximal goals for themselves displayed superior achievement and perceptions of personal efficacy”. (p.65). The concept of ISP is interpreted into different terms but they share similar meaning in the field of education, such as the process-folio in Multiple Intelligence perspective (Gardner, 1990), Personal Development Plan using in Britain (Jackson & Ward, 2004), or Guidance portfolio in Guidance literature (Magnuson, 1997; Mittendorff, et al., 2008). An important and common element shared among those concepts is the students’ significant role in planning and goal setting for their learning and development with the facilitation by teachers. It is proved as a critical factor for student success in school (Gysbers, 2008).

For the part of “Development of home-school link”, *student-led conferences* are conducted at the last phase of the project. Before the conference, students will have undergone the journey of their life story formation by using techniques of scaffolding (See appendix A). Storytelling is a way to make meaning on what the students have experienced (Reid, 2005; Peavy, 1996; McMahon, et al., 2005; Amundson, 2006).

During the conference, students are requested to tell their life and learning stories to their parents and teachers, through which their ownerships of learning will be enhanced (Winslade & Monk, 2007).

Metacognition and self-regulated learning are highly associated (Veenman, et al., 2005). Dinsmore et al., (2008) distinguish their difference in nature that self-regulated learning emphasizes mainly on how the environment stimulates the individual's awareness and regulatory response, whereas metacognition focuses on the mind of the individual that is the trigger for subsequent judgments and evaluations. This project therefore, tries to build on the theoretical foundation of self-regulation and create an appropriate environment, such as using ISP and student-led conferences, to foster the students' development of metacognition.

Methods

The title of the project is "School-based Implementation Model of Student Learning Profile: I Tell You My Story". It is sponsored by the Quality Education Fund (QEF Ref. 2009/0900). The objectives of the project are as below:

- Students are able to summarize their learning experiences and develop a SLP that they can share with others;
- Students are able to build up the habit of reflection throughout the learning process and set up learning goals at different stages;

- Students' learning motivation and self-efficacy will be enhanced;
- Students are able to make progress plans for their future;
- Schools are willing to modify their school-based reporting system so that the communication among students, parents, and teachers is improved.

Three local Christian co-educational secondary schools with history of more than thirty years were involved. They have been famous for their guidance supports to students. Two of them are band-one schools (elite schools). Another band-two school has established a good foundation on using portfolios to collect students' learning outcomes. The teachers of the three schools shared that they had an urge to motivate their students to learn more actively during the age of the new senior secondary education reform. They would also like to improve their existing reporting systems and make them become more educational.

Each school assigned two teachers to take charge of this pilot project. About twenty students from each school were involved. Most of them were recruited by teachers' recommendations. They were all at S4 level (Grade 10), the first cohort of the new senior secondary curriculum, and their academic performances were average.

The project consisted of 10 –12 training sessions, one-day outdoor training, plus one inter-school residential over-night camp. The sessions and the outdoor training were designed to fit for the needs of individual schools by using the materials from a

preset manual². The sessions were constructed by a series of group works. Student participants in a school were divided into three groups and the group size is from 5 to 8. The two teachers-in-charge and the project coordinator were responsible to lead the groups throughout the project. Undergoing the cycle of collection, selection, and reflection (Klenowski, 2002), all students in the group were required to review their life history, reflect on their learning experiences, and plan for their future step by step. An art therapist was invited in one session to demonstrate the skills of story telling. Her career journey was expected to open up the minds of the students in the areas of helping profession. Within the group, the students were encouraged to keep positive dialogues in a trustworthy environment so that they could obtain immediate feedback from the teacher and peers. At the same time, a framework for story formation (Appendix A) and the 4 Fs approach (Greenway, 1993) were used developed to enable the students to create their own stories.

The one-day outdoor training was conducted at the halfway of the project. Students undertook a series of adventure-based games and they knew more about themselves through the comments by other peers in the moment of debriefing. During the inter-school residential over-night camp, students were provided chances to tell their stories to the students from other schools. Different professionals were also

² The contents of the manual are mainly extracted from the “Progress File: Moving On”, which was published by the DfES of UK. Retrieved on 16 Jan 2008, from <http://www.dfes.gov.hk/progressfile>.

invited to play games and share their career stories in the camp. Coming to the last part of the training, every student was challenged to host a student-led conference, in which they shared their learning experiences and achievements in front of their class teachers and parents.

Qualitative and quantitative tools were both applied to reveal the outcomes of the project. For quantitative measurement, the three localized Self-Efficacy Inventories (Academic development, Personal & Social Development, and Career Development, Yuen et al., 2004a, 2004b, 2004c) were employed. It is because self-efficacy and self-regulated learning are strongly interrelated and exerting reciprocal effect on learning and development (Schunk & Ertmer, 2000). Self-efficacy is also a precursor, mediator, and exclusive outcome of self-regulated learning (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2008). It has already been confirmed that the combination of self-efficacy and goals can lead to subsequent academic attainments (Zimmerman et al., 1992).

Student participants of the three schools were invited to fill in the inventories at the beginning and the end of the project. However, in order not to make disturbances of the three schools, no control groups were administered. For the relevance of the project, the study only selected 10 categories out of the 15 from the inventory of Personal & Social Development (PSD-SEI), whereas the full scale of the other two

inventories was applied. The ten categories of the PSD-SEI are: Understanding Self, Understanding Others, Handling Setbacks, Cooperation & Team Spirit, Leadership Skills, Management Stress & Emotion, Self-Evaluation, Thinking & Expression Skills, Leisure Time Management, and Personal Goals Setting.

Other than the three inventories, a general survey was conducted by using a questionnaire to collect students' feedback and their perceptions of the whole project. A 6-point ordinal Likert-scale was used to measure the degree of agreement on the statement (6: totally agree; 1: totally disagree).

For the qualitative measures, the feedback from students, teachers, and parents was collected regularly during the progress of the project, especially after the two events of the project (i.e. the inter-school residential camp and the student-led conference). This formative information played the role to improve and adjust the practice of the project. After the end of the project, an evaluation meeting was conducted to collect the feedback from the teachers-in-charge of the three schools. This summative information could help to reflect on what have been experienced in this project.

Findings

Individual category mean score and total mean score of the three inventories

(AD-SEI, PSD-SEI, and CD-SEI) were calculated according to the instruction of the three respective users' manuals. The independent samples tests were conducted to compare the mean differences of the pre-tests and post-tests. The results show that students' self-efficacy in two areas (Academic and Career Development) has mildly enhanced after the project. Particularly, the enhancement of Personal & Social Development (PSD) is statistically significant. The effect sizes of the tests are from small to medium. Among those individual categories in the three inventories, only the score of "Self-evaluation" in the PSD has enhanced significantly.

For the general survey conducted after the project, the averages of students' perceptions of some statements regarding students' learning and development are as below:

	School		
	A	B	C
1. The training could build up my <i>self-confidence</i>	4.5	5.1	4.9
2. The training allowed me to learn how to <i>get along with others</i>	4.9	5.1	5.1
3. The training could improve my <i>learning skills</i>	4.3	4.5	5.1
4. A chance to <i>reflect</i> on what I have learned	4.6	4.9	4.7

Table 1: The averages of students' perceptions of some statements regarding students' learning and development. Schools A & B are band-one schools, and School C is a band-two school.

All averages are more than 4. Among the above four statements, it seems that students have learned better in getting along with others. Although the minor variations of the school-based practices may cause the differences of the outcomes,

the results could clearly confirm the benefits obtained by the students after the project.

In the evaluation meeting with the teachers-in-charge after the project, although they shared both up and down experiences throughout the whole process, they all agreed that nearly all the feedback collected from parents and students was positive. The first stage was down and the stage after halfway was gradually going up.

All student participants, except one³, have successfully led the conferences before the end of the project. They were all delighted to share their stories in front of their class teachers and parents, though beforehand they were worried about the reactions by their parents or teachers during the conference. 74% of the student participants wrote up their life stories in different formats after the end of the project.

The follow section tries to discuss how interpersonal influences made impacts on students' learning and development throughout the process and empower them to achieve the goal of self-regulation in this project.

Discussions

Students' motivation is always a problem in learning. In this project, most student participants were recruited by teachers' recommendations, and a small number of students were attracted by the theme of the project because they thought that the

³ Only one student participant was not able to lead the student-led conference due to the unavailability of her parents.

training could provide them with advantages (e.g. interview experiences) for future academic and career development. Since all student participants did not have motivation of enhancing self-regulation, it was found they were disengaged in the training at the beginning of the project. Although the goals and objectives of the project were well informed, students might not see the relevance.

“Students may not be interested in the learning contents because they are not mature enough to see the relevance of the contents to their lives.” (Teacher’s feedback)

“Although the goals and objectives are clear, students do not think that they are important!” (Teacher’s feedback)

In addition, since the project was conducted as an extra-curricular activity and the attendance was in voluntary basis, students were easily engaged by other ad hoc activities or after-school classes. There were also other reasons, such as lack of commitment and limited space after school. These probably affected the smoothness of the project. At the beginning stage of the project, the project coordinator and the teachers were all aware that the most difficult challenge was to motivate the students to engage in doing reflection.

Tailor-made measures and interventions were rolled out to make improvements during the process, such as conducting some informal gatherings, moving the training

sessions from after-school to lunch time in one school, collecting feedback from some students through individual dialogues. At the middle phase of the training, since the project started to involve more personnel, the situation shifted to become more positive immediately. It was easily observed that students became more eager to share in the group. Harmony relationships among students, as well as students and teachers had been built progressively. The interpersonal influences included:

- An arts therapist was invited to demonstrate sharing her life and career story
- Students could approach and get along with the students in other groups on the one-day outdoor training
- Students shared their stories and made friends with the students in other two schools in the inter-school residential camp
- Different professionals were invited to share their life and career stories in the inter-school residential camp
- Class teachers and parents were invited to attend the student-led conferences

“The involvement of the students were not good until the preparation of the inter-school camp and the student-led conferences. The project was progressively improving when it comes to the last phase.” (Teacher’s feedback)

“Coming to the end, students enjoyed sharing in the group and their dialogues were becoming sincere.” (Teacher’s feedback)

Moreover, in order to let students be covered under the atmosphere of story telling, some local and worldwide story telling competitions and programmes⁴ were introduced. When the project came to the last phase, teachers found that students started to have more engagement in self-reflection, and the process of self-regulation was found being empowered.

The project was originally designed to enable individual students to build up the habit of reflection through the training of self-regulated learning processes with the support by using some preset learning materials. It was unexpected to discover that the interpersonal influences had made more impacts on this engagement. Story telling is more than an intrapersonal activity. It needs audience. The reflection on the project may help us understand how interpersonal activities mediate the process of individual internal cognitive activities. Below are the knowledge obtained through this project in relation to the empowerment of self-regulation.

Self-regulation empowerment

It may be still early to say that the students have already engaged in the process of self-regulation. Rather than this, teachers-in-charge agreed that the students were empowered to exert greater control over their learning and they are going to engage in

⁴ e.g. BBC My Story Competition < <http://www.bbc.co.uk/my-story/>>, TVB My Story in Songs <<http://mytv.tvb.com/variety/mystoryinsongs/>>

more positive, self-motivating cycles of learning. They will be more likely and progressively become independent learners. By cultivating positive self-motivated beliefs, and helping students apply learning strategies in a self-regulated manner, the training of story telling provided students with a process by which individuals gain the sense of control over their lives. Not only the teachers, but also the peers in the project were playing as self-regulated learning coaches, who were the change agents providing explicit training and feedback in the three cyclical phases of self-regulation (i.e. Forethought, Performance or Volitional Control, and Self-Reflection) (Zimmerman, 2000). The findings reveal that some students are able to build up the habit of reflection. The social influences help the empowerment of self-regulation come to light.

“My child could find a new direction in learning through self-reflection.” (Parent’s feedback)

“I appreciate that the student-led conference could enable my child to reflect by his own.” (Parent’s feedback)

Motivation of learning

Self-efficacy is the key of the motivational process (Cleary & Zimmerman 2004). The positive outcomes of self-efficacy inventories clearly confirmed that students’

motivation in learning is enhancing. Qualitative feedback from teachers and students validated that the interpersonal influence was being one of the crucial factors motivating the students to engage in doing reflection by their own.

“By the information from others, the students know more about themselves. They are more independent than before.” (Teacher’s feedback)

“I appreciate that we could share our stories in the camp. I am also happy to know more stories from other people.” (Student’s feedback)

“I want to have more inter-school activities. I could have better understanding about myself and other” (Student’s feedback)

“I feel that my learning attitude is improving and I work harder than before.” (Student’s feedback)

“Recent motivation and cognitive research has sought to identify ways in which pursuit of empowerment is embedded in the larger context of self-stories or autobiographical identities.” (Yowell & Smylie, 1999, p.482). We may see how close the relationship is among the three elements, story telling, motivation, and identities. Their links could probably be revealed through social mediation in this project.

Identity as a learner

Identity is based on what we do, why, and our own and others' beliefs about what that means, both now and for the future. It emerges in the context of personal, social, and cultural influences (McCaslin, 2009). The identity of an active learner gradually emerged during the process of training.

**“It helps me understand my responsibility in learning. The learning outcomes do not belong to teachers and parents, but belong to me!”
(Student’s feedback)**

“I clearly understand my own problems in learning.” (Student’s feedback)

“The training inspired me to write up my story.” (Student’s feedback)

Within the co-regulation model proposed by McCaslin (2009), social influence is one of the sources that challenge, shape, and guide identity. This may explain why students perceived that they occupied more ownership of what they experienced in learning. One of the goals of co-regulation is the development of self-regulation. Through the engagement of activities and the process of “Emergent interaction”, individual mediates and internalizes social and cultural influences. Integration of self and other will also be evolved. However, McCaslin did not clearly shared what kind

of identity that it will be enhanced. In this project, the identity of a learner was clearly highlighted. I was also impressed by what McCaslin (2009) shared in the relationship among co-regulation, story telling, and identity, “Evolving personal beliefs, or ‘life stories’, represent as well what individuals believe about their role in their time and place and their potential to contribute to their community and culture, each of which is subject to sociocultural validation. Ideally, life stories are realistic and optimistic. That is, my life story supports the belief that I have (and I do have) the potential and the opportunity to become the person that I desire and you value.” (p.144).

Self-regulation behaviours in a community of learners

This project unintentionally contains the four crucial ideas underlying Fostering Communities of Learners (FCL), proposed by Brown (1997). They are Agency, Reflection, Collaboration, and Culture. It is believed that the FCL could help students develop metacognition. For agency, the process of story telling is emphasizing the active strategic nature of learning and taking more control of individual mental activity. Reflection is a compulsory element of this project. At the same time, students were advised not only to do the reflection by their own but also collaboratively with their peers in the group.

“I could analyse my learning from different perspectives.” (Student’s feedback)

The culture of the community was gradually developed. Students formed a group in “Facebook” after the inter-school training camp. They identified themselves as a group of “MyStory”. Some of the students shared that they prefer to use the approach of story telling on their report distribution day every year. The means by which a metacognitive culture of learning is set up is attributed to the three elements, “Research”, “Share Information”, and “Consequential Task”. They are subsumed under the overarching concept of “Reflection” within the basic system of activities underlying FCL practices (Brown, 1997). Regarding the “Deep disciplinary content” under the system, learning about the self is something deep and meaningful. Self-understanding is more important than subject knowledge as it was claimed that knowing “who am I?” is a continuous lifelong task (McCaslin, 2009).

Conclusion

“Mind is inside the head, but it is also with others.” (Bruner, 1996, cited in Brown, 1997, p.399). Since the past ten years, more research has started to be aware of the interpersonal influences on the people’s self-regulation. By reviewing research, it was suggested that individual regulations, in terms of initiation, operation, and monitoring

of goals, are influenced by interpersonal processes (Fitzsimons & Finkel, 2010).

This article is a reflection after a training programme, which aims to promote students' self-regulatory process of learning. Evidences to confirm the intended outcomes achieved are not strong, though they are positive to what are expected. However, the favorable turn of the project from down to up experience attracted teachers' attention. The improvement of the project was profound after more interpersonal interventions had been involved since the halfway. We may then understand how interpersonal influences mediate the intrapersonal self-regulation by using a new approach of reporting, student-led conferences. Students are empowered to tell their stories after the self-reflection on their past learning experiences. Building on those prior knowledge about themselves, they learn how to set short-term and long-term goals for their future.

For using assessment in the process of learning, "dynamic assessment" is proposed to fit the new paradigm shift (Shepard, 2000). Through the interactive process, we are informed of what a student is able to do independently and what can be done with teacher guidance. To empower students' learning by social mediation, it is advised to extend the assessment from working with one child to groups. To change the traditional assessment culture, it is advised to first change the communication pattern in reporting from unilateral to mutual. The strategy of talking in a community

of practice proposed by Shepard (2000) is exactly the idea of this QEF story telling project. Students will become accustomed to explaining their reasoning, offering and receiving feedback about their developing competence as part of a social group.

“Articulation and learning go hand in hand, in a mutually reinforcing feedback loop.”

(Sawyer, 2006, p.12). Since articulation could make possible reflection or metacognition (Sawyer, 2006), school professionals are recommended to adopt the principles of this project for empowering students to engage in more self-regulatory learning processes in their own contexts.

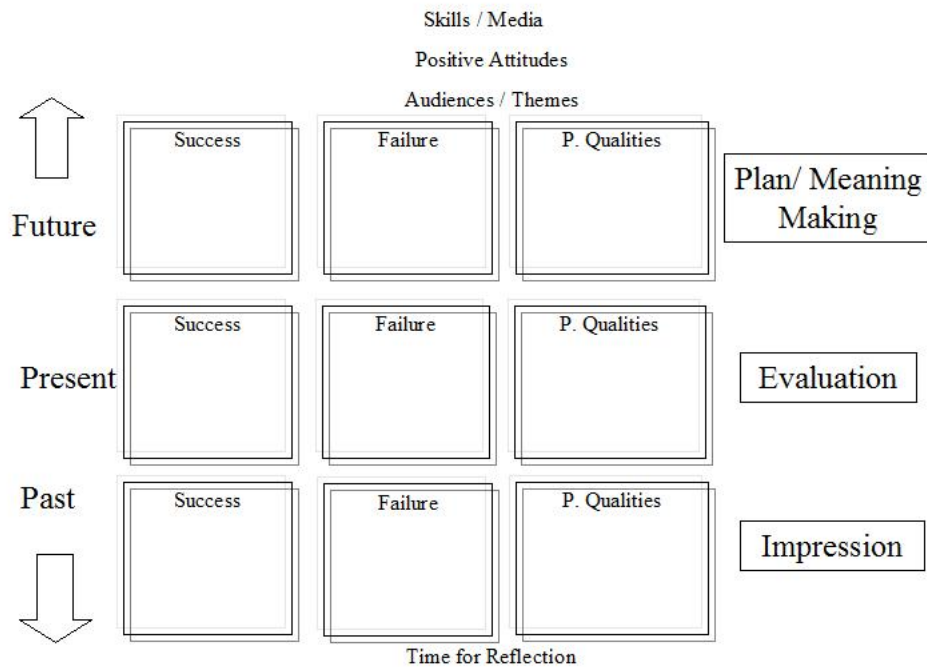
Despite having the potential to be an effective reporting strategy, this project has its own limitations that should be considered. The practice of the project should never be a separate body within a school system. It needs tight and close links with other systems in the school, such as curriculum, administration, career guidance, home-school associations, and etc. Without the understanding and agreement from other teachers and parents, the impact of interpersonal influences will be minimized. In addition, it never comes to very successful outcomes if this is just a one-off project. The habit of self-reflection is hardly built unless there are continuous incentives. In fact, class-teachers involved agreed that it could help the students, as it was a very good communication platform for teachers and parents. Some students and parents requested this practice in future. However, the practice could not be sustained in the

three schools, though the feedback from all parties in the project was very positive. A teacher-in-charge raised out that the resource implication of this project was large, particular the matters of time and space. It is difficult to be conducted for all students. By adapting the practices, three schools proposed different possibilities that could be run in future. Unpredictably, a teacher from another school shared that she was inspired by the ideas of this project. The practice was transformed from student-led conferences into story telling in front of the class in her school. The impact of interpersonal influences on self-regulation empowerment could also be observed.

There was an old African proverb saying, “It takes a village to raise a child.” Both personal development and learning are primarily social processes (Shepard, 2000). This article tries to illustrate that internal cognitive thinking skills are developed not only by some separate school-based initiative practices but also through an environment with strong socially supported interactions. This is of course one of the school challenges.

Appendix A

Storytelling framework for scaffolding learning



P. Qualities: Personal Qualities

Student is required to fill their life episodes or evidence into the boxes and create his/her story with the assistance by his/her teachers and peers

The Principles of using the framework

- Clear purpose (Audience specific / Theme based)
- Flexible (with evidence based/ Linear time line is not necessary)
- Positive attitude (True and sincere)
- Skillful in presentation (Rehearse regularly)
- Sufficient time for reflection (Reflective habit)

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