

The Practice of Collaborative Dialogue in Education – The Case of Kai-Ping

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Abstract: *In Taiwan, a traditional Chinese society under capitalist western influence, when children are not doing well performing academically, they often are viewed as "bad students", in contrast with "good students" who perform well academically. Knowing the cultural context of education in Taiwan, the founder of the Taipei Kai-Ping Culinary School Principal Hsia Whei Wun is committed to creating a different kind of school that will allow both students and parents to get a life-transforming experience. In this article, Principal Hsia introduces the history of how collaborative practice has played a significant role in the school and how it is designed and applied in multiple ways in relationships with the staff and in projects in the school system. An important factor is that learning resources are co-constructed by students and teachers; there are no formal textbooks. Principal Hsia is committed to creating dialogical spaces in the school context, so the teachers and students can both be conversational partners in a collaborative way in all projects, with students' participation.*

Key words: *Collaborative practices, dialogical spaces, culinary schools, Taiwan education, transformative education.*

Preface

“A sharp and ear-piercing microphone feedback sound resounded through the silence of the wide hall. The host quickly reversed the direction of the microphone and silence was restored. With dozens of people gathered in a spiral seating arrangement, a student continued to express himself to his audience undisturbed by the ear-piercing feedback of the microphone. He spoke with logic and reason, without any unpleasant emotions or accusation or motivation to solve the problem. His words expressed pure emotions evoked by an event. His audience quietly listened; some were taking notes on paper, mobile phones, or notebooks; some were in a daze with their eyes out of focus, and some looked tired and bored. When the speaker started to show signs of becoming emotional, the supervisors on site began to intervene skillfully to bring the words back to reason and at the same time point out the intention behind the words which transformed into an opportunity to enhance an understanding of differences between people and to provide motivation for conversation to continue. Those in the observer position

looked on intently, making careful records to prepare for the report, “Observing Group Dynamics,” after the end of the session. The words of the student were accompanied by the note taking sound from other members. . .”

Described above is a scene from the *Teacher-Student Dialogue Platform* from the Kai-Ping Culinary School that I founded. What occurred during that dialogue platform was very interesting; all participants including supervisors, host, and observers seemed be still except for the member (teacher or student) who was speaking, and yet each was busy conducting his or own internal monologue.

We have borrowed the spirally arranged seating that we use in the Kai-Ping Teacher-Student Platform Dialogue from the “Taffy Stark Large Group Dynamics Experimental Courses” (Lin-Ching Hsia, 2010) founded in the UK. The seating arrangement makes it possible for each person to see all others. The philosophy behind the seating arrangement is to allow each participant to feel the group that is present and to allow each member to have an effect on the group’s dynamics. When each group participant can see and hear all of the other participants there are more opportunities for clarification which helps to relieve and eliminate possible harm created from friction and misunderstanding between individuals thus preventing individuals from leaving the group with negative emotional reactions that they may carry forward.

Introducing various types of collaborative dialogues to Kai-Ping was in part derived from my own painful experiences as a student. There was a time in my life during which it seemed no one was willing to listen to me or believe in me, so I created a story about myself that would evoke pity. This story then became life-like and real as a guide for my life, creating a vicious cycle as my life experiences continued to support the story that I created, which intensified the story as guidance for my life. I spent my university days in this vicious cycle.

This cycle was disrupted after I moved to Australia where I found that respect for life supersedes everything else. All aspects of life, from laws and regulations to everyday details, coincided with the Taoist philosophers, Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu’s, “Follow one’s natural development” and “Going with the flow” thinking. While I was learning and struggling to break out of my old cycle, I came to realize that each person has many stories. I also realized that ...people who are not in the mainstream do not get heard. For example, in Taiwan, people pay much less attention to what children with poor grades have to say. Unfortunately, this practice of social values still persists in Taiwan’s educational environment and families today. When I had a chance to participate in educational work, I tried to break through such a framework to allow for different and diverse perspectives. I tried to listen to and respect non-mainstream voices and build a cooperative relationship with everyone. Through dialogues, we gain understanding and knowledge of

each other and create the unlimited possibilities of future cooperation and collaboration! Ah! Isn't this what postmodern thinking is all about!

In the past, I had been concerned about being the “black sheep” in the education field, as I opted for methods that do not conform to mainstream educational culture. After getting in touch with Xi Xuen’s “Narrative Dialogue” and Harlene’s “Collaborative Dialogue,” my confidence and peace of mind greatly increased; I realized the approach taken by Kai-Ping was a postmodern educational approach. Such a realization also helped me feel a sense of synchronicity and deepened my passion for learning more about collaborative dialogue.

Collaborative Dialogue

Trying to describe the exquisite details of Collaborative Dialogue simply is not easy, though I will try. I will try to write about it so that readers can read my interpretation and derive their views and/or create their own dialogues. From my words and interpretations, readers can of course come to their own understandings from their own perspectives.

Collaborative dialogue was created by Harlene Anderson, Ph.D., one of the founders of the Houston Galveston Institute (HGI). She said, “My inclination is generally called collaborative language systems approach. . . .People participate in linguistic events within relationships and dialogues, to jointly proceed towards possibilities.” She first used collaborative language systems in family therapy and then gradually expanded her approach to education, society, and academic settings (translated by Ho-Jun Chow, 2008)

I was introduced to collaborative dialogue in the summer of 2008. One of our teachers, Dr. Shi-Juan Wu, recommended that I attend a 3-day workshop led by Harlene. During the workshop demonstration of her “as if” process I could see how she created a dialogue space. Though she had ideas about the content of the conversation, she seemed to “empty herself” to receive all responding voices allowing the uncertain to take center stage. During this process, the listener developed a collaborative relationship with the speaker to allow the dialogue to continue leaving room for new discoveries, learning, and possibilities to emerge. Harlene then requested a pause to turn to the larger group of witnesses and outsiders who had been listening. She asked them to share their heartfelt perspectives and reflections, so that many different types of voices were heard on the same situation. Learning from the many types of self-dialogue made public, we realized that there are other versions of interpretations that increase available ways to think about situations. All participants could recognize, adopt, or select new understandings regarding the original dilemma. In the workshop, what was originally shown to be an insufferable dilemma was transformed into an opportunity with the change of one’s views and thoughts!

After leaving the position of principal, I hosted the “Searching for Successful and Happiness Genes Workshop” to help people break out of their relationship slumps such as that between mothers and daughters-in-law or parents and their children. One of the especially pertinent topics was that of children playing videogames so much that they were sacrificing their sleep. In the workshop, participants shared their methods of handling such situations, and from this I developed insights into finding methods that could lead to the possibilities of resolving the issues instead of creating more tension and opposition.

Influenced by the concept of collaborative practice I decided that I would no longer apply my academic theories to conceptualize people’s dilemmas of people, nor would I position myself as an expert (I am not an expert either) to inform them of what should be done. Instead, I take a not knowing position and listen to their stories and ask questions out of care and curiosity. During the dialogue, a collaborative relationship is created, and many find inspiration to solve their problems or develop the knowledge and understanding required to do so. A realization is developed that we live in the stories that we tell. Once the story is re-written and retold, our attitudes towards life also change.

I have learned that the practice of collaborative dialogue is based on respecting the voices of each member of the group. When the different voices with different perspectives are given space to be heard and received, people may develop approval or doubt. They might become curious to know why

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similar perspectives lead to similar or different thoughts. Where does the difference lie? Any particular discourse may not receive the approval from all, as each member may have his/her own perspective.

However, this is the spirit of postmodernism: different dialogues, whether supportive or critical, are allowed. Through dialogues, knowledge and meaning can be created. Each person can even engage in a monologue with oneself and develop new perspectives and thoughts.

The ways in which collaborative dialogue is applied at Kai-Ping are very broad. We have a proud understanding of its effectiveness and continuity. What appears to be an endpoint in a conversation because of time limits is only temporary and not final. The dialogues will continue to happen, allowing us to see the possibility of changing ourselves in both our family and school.

With that said, I would like to briefly explain the curriculum, then introduce my educational and philosophical platform at Kai-Ping Culinary School and then illustrate how the collaborative dialogue atmosphere expanded from the teacher-student interaction on campus to all other relationships.

*Using a Trans-Disciplinary Integrated Curriculum to Create an Education Based on
Professionalism and the Humanities*

Diversified Learning Styles

When parents, teachers, and students engage in dialogue, there is an energy that begins to flow throughout the learning environment. We attempt to bring a post modern approach to our teaching of academics and professionalism so that students can develop in body, mind, and spirit; maximize their learning; and add express creativity in their professional skills (both soft and hard skills) .

In Taiwan, a typical high school student studies by listening to teacher's lectures in the classroom and studies the textbooks. However, the typical learning experience at Kai-Ping does not involve textbooks and is complex and diversified as illustrated below.

Learning Methods

Materials used are created by teachers and students spend learning time in group discussions, searching on the internet for pertinent information, engaging in group projects focused on a specific topic or case, and planning and implementing special events and exhibitions implementation. Lectures in classrooms and note-taking are only a small part of the Kai-Ping learning experience.

Time

In principle, one class session is 3 hours. However, there is no bell to signal the beginning or ending of class, so the teacher will designate the recess time based on the unit and the group's need. Thus, different classes may have recess at different times.

Space and Peer Groups

Sometimes students can choose to select different groups or classes and move to different classrooms based on the topics of their interests. In this way, a student has the opportunity to meet the entire student group of over 400 classmates. In addition, there is a dialogue class for the entire school in which everyone participates.

Teacher-Student Interaction

The teacher of each assigned peer group knows every student well and can easily and fully comment on the student's progress and strengths. In addition, students are exposed to a variety of teachers who teach different segments of the class. Outside the classroom, any teacher may become a counselor to any student. Therefore, there are many combinations for students and teachers to come to know and work with each other.

Assignments

At the completion of almost every unit there is a learning sheet used for an assignment. Learning sheets are designed for students to write their reflections about their learning for teachers to read. They are also used by teachers to write something for students to know, reflect on, or do. At times teachers might write in the learning sheet what they notice has been most impressive for the student during the school day. The learning sheet can be used very creatively for student-teacher communication.

Sometimes teachers might ask students to cook something for the parents and ask the parents to write feedback about the cooking on the learning sheet. It could even be that these assignments are completed jointly by a small group.

The Content of Learning

The students and their learning remain at the heart of our educational endeavors. Throughout each semester, they must complete three or four thematic food and beverage related projects. These plans involved trans-disciplinary academic domains including literature, arts, computer technology, science, human interaction, oral expression, and culinary professionalism. Learning content is accomplished by the different types of events and activities that we plan.

Kai-Ping does not use the traditional learning-by-subject education, but links and integrates all subjects into a thematic style events design. The curriculum consists of 12-13 culinary related real life scenario thematic projects, where students learn to use field surveys, reports, and discussions in the process of implementation. These abilities and skills can be used in their future careers and in life, unlike knowledge that may be forgotten or become obsolete with time. During Grade 10, the classes are mainly exploratory courses within the required curriculum that consists of Chinese cuisine, Western cuisine, baking/pastry preparation, and food services. Theory and practice are equally emphasized through simulations of the operational conditions of purchasing, preparation, cooking, and service. To bring theory and practice together in real settings, internships are done at Chinese restaurants, Western restaurants, and bakeries, providing students with hands-on practice. During the second semester of Grade 11 and first semester of Grade 12, students apply to serve as interns at major hotels, restaurants, and bakeries. In the second semester of Grade 12, students return to school to integrate their experiences and proceed with a thematic project to exhibit what they have learned by presenting their learning publicly to parents and the community.

We hope that all Kai-Ping students can learn to manage themselves, have integrity, diligence, dedicated work attitudes, and become capable and well-respected people and professionals. We provide an environment that allows for learning professional culinary skills for students who like the

We hope they can learn and grow in an environment that allows mistakes without punishment, provide opportunities to fulfill their dreams, to help them understand the boundaries and responsibilities that come with freedom, and to find a balance between reality and the ideal.

culinary arts. Besides our dedication to skill and professional development,” Kai-Ping classes also incorporate learning and the development of relationship capabilities. Kai-Ping differs from other vocational schools by fully committing itself to the development of humanistic education, emphasizing a “Follow One’s Natural

Development” philosophy, viewing this as the key foundation of professional skills training. We help students to accept themselves, understand the interpersonal connections, learn to work with others, encourage students to develop their culinary dream, be considerate of the needs of the customer, and then pursue the ultimate dining professional services. The joint vision of the entire staff and faculty is to develop Kai-Ping into a globally known culinary professional school with its foundation based on solid understanding of humanities. Its primary objectives are to develop culinary talents and raise the quality of culinary culture. Our core values are to provide a supporting and caring environment, to let our partners honestly face themselves, and to encourage them to face challenges directly. We hope they can learn and grow in an environment that allows mistakes without punishment, provide opportunities to fulfill their dreams, to help them understand the boundaries and responsibilities that come with freedom, and to find a balance between reality and the ideal.

For the last 20 years, Kai-Ping students have achieved excellence in all types of global and domestic culinary competitions. They are constant winners in national level competitions and have won the triple championships of baking, service, and Western food for many years in a row in the Northern District Competitions. Kai-Ping is the most famous culinary school in Northern Taiwan, with excellent professional accomplishments in the industry after graduation. Kai-Ping students are welcomed by the culinary sectors both domestically and internationally. In recent years, Kai-Ping has received the “excellence in teaching” award from the Ministry of Education, the Taipei City Government, and excellent accreditation award for the culinary arts. For Kai-Ping, the culinary art is an interface where students, parents, and teachers can learn and interactive together. Of course we hope that our children can develop a lifelong career direction; however, if they can learn to clarify their goals in life and the direction they want to take, we would be happy and give them our blessings even if their future is not certain.

The Current Status of Taiwanese Education and the Kai-Ping Culinary School

With the sunlight shining through the clouds, with copies of special topic reports under the shadows of the Teaching Building, there are all types of ingredients being displayed. In the lively atrium walls where all types of posters are on display, with people coming and going, some students are almost screaming at the top of their lungs to explain in detail their projects to visiting students, parents, and teachers. On the other side of the room, students from the Chinese Culinary Group and Home Baking Group are demonstrating live how to make shrimp tofu cuisine and decorate a cake. The youthful vitality and creativity are on full display.

This is a scene from the “Creative Theme Exhibition” by teachers and students as part of “Thematic Activity Teaching” from a class at Kai-Ping Culinary School. It is an introductory teaching activity designed to serve as a catalyst for students in their preliminary exploration into the culinary domains to help them form a general understanding and to develop interests in particular themes/topics. As part of a culinary curriculum we emphasize the development of “Tool Capabilities” and “Professional Capabilities.” Our uniqueness is that we also focus on “Relationship Capabilities” which may not sound as if it is relevant to the culinary arts. Different from other professional vocational schools, Kai-Ping offers a culinary humanistic education by emphasizing that students “Follow One’s Natural Development.” This strong humanistic quality serves as solid foundation for professional techniques.

In traditional Taiwanese society, where the system is based on an “academic and degree come first” philosophy, a lot of students are classified into either “low academic accomplishment groups” or “dislike studying groups.” These students have been hurt by the education system that operates from a “grades first, studies come first” educational philosophy. As a result, these students become less and less confident in themselves and parents send their children to Kai-Ping with the key expectation that they can develop a particular vocational skill so they can earn a living in the future. However, there are also other groups of children who come to Kai-Ping. There are some children with an excellent academic performance who also choose Kai-Ping to either fulfill their culinary dreams or to experience Kai-Ping’s *open-minded education*. These students tend to go through all types of family revolutions or conflicts before receiving support to attend our school. Despite the differences in their backgrounds, what is common amongst all students and their families is a desire for change. With this desire, these people seem to be more open to accepting challenges and inclined to let their children *develop their own nature* and pursue their own dreams and goals for their future.

Kai-Ping is a high school with nearly 60 years of history. Since creating the culinary department in 1991, it has fully transformed into Taiwan’s first and only 3-year Culinary Art Professional School (Senior Vocational High School). Its graduates serve in world-renowned hotels and restaurants worldwide, and it is one of the most famous culinary schools in Taiwan according to the media. The

number of applications received every year is increasing, with about 1500 junior high school graduates with interest in the culinary arts applying for approximately 450 available positions in the only Culinary Sacred Haven nationwide.

In addition to its uniqueness and professionalism, I will discuss how “Relationship Capabilities” are developed, and how the philosophy of *Follow Your Nature Development* is emphasized.

Simplicity in School Rules: Three Rules and Two Habits

In areas ruled by civil laws, all activities (large or small) must conform to written codes. Therefore, in life, many codes are written that are used to restrict the lifestyle and behavior of children in their school lives. However, with the growing diversity and complexity of everyday life, new situations which cannot be foreseen occur every day. Thus, Kai-Ping breaks the codes used to clamp down on students and replaces them with basic principles that protect living and life choices. In terms of lifestyle management, simple, clear, and stringent rules replace the many mundane school rules.

First, the Three Rules are (1) no violation of another’s body, (2) no drug-use or peddling of drugs, and (3) no violation of another’s property and privacy. Second, the Two Habits that are not accepted are (1) smoking and (2) missing 42 classes or more.

The three rules are meant to protect lives and to help students learn respect towards others through the understanding of boundaries and privacy. The disallowance of two habits are related to the respect staff in the culinary business should show towards customers, and the respect toward others as part of living in a school context.

No Disciplinary Office and No Homeroom Teacher: Openness and Freedom through Respect for each Other

Most schools in the early days of Taiwanese education were set up according to a military management, with the Disciplinary Office of the Office of Student Affairs leading and commanding all homeroom teachers. Each class had a homeroom teacher, who was fully authorized to handle student emotions or conflicts and affairs of that class. All judgments and processing of conflict or emotional events were subjectively conducted by the homeroom teacher based on his/her previous experiences. Even though the event may have appeared to have been resolved, the residual emotions in the students’ minds may not have been resolved. I believe that such intervention by a teacher weakens the strength of students and their learning processes that could be developed by reflecting on one’s part of the interaction and by being responsible to interact with others to resolve conflict. At Kai-Ping, I developed and promoted an open and free school environment in which we respect each

individual and have eliminated the Disciplinary Office and homeroom teachers. Instead, a Care Counselor became the companion and caregiver in students' campus lives, replacing the homeroom teacher who acted more like a campus nanny. Students choose teachers they trust and discuss solutions to problems with these trusted teachers. This process helps develop strength and ability in students to face difficulties and challenges. Care counselors have no jurisdiction over school grades, so that students can share freely with counselors in a stress free environment.

Letting Go, with Great Love Behind Follow One's Natural Development to Let Love Flow

Kai-Ping emphasizes the equal importance of professional expertise and civility of humanity. I have emphasized to school colleagues the importance of *letting go*, saying that *there is great love behind letting go*. Respect for life comes from letting go because we believe that the life of each being is abundant, and that every person is the master of his or her life. Thus, for each student, we let go to let him or her develop freely. Ironically, when a teacher lets go, he or she must spend even more time accompanying the students by paying attention to all details, but without interfering with the natural process. This means that the teacher must be even more patient and loving in the process.

Letting go is not being indulgent, as what lies behind is a greater amount of love. Through our coaching, students must learn to take responsibilities for themselves so that they can see the value and meaning of life. If we do not believe that students can be their own masters, adults (including teachers and parents) will assume the responsibility for leading students' lives. The stricter the adults get, the more exhausting it is for both adults and students. What Kai-Ping strives to achieve is to create a place with great love and boundaries, fully trusting students to take responsibilities for themselves within acceptable boundaries, and to let the life energy and love flow freely without being exhausting.

I believe that most people can see that the effort exerted by teachers at Kai-Ping using our postmodern educational philosophy is far greater than that in traditional educational settings. How are postmodern thinking and the ability to respond developed? To answer these questions, I will share how we use the spirit and practice of collaborative dialogue to build this dialogic space and educational environment between teachers and students as well as expanding these practices with parents. Teachers become the first to learn to work from a postmodern perspective and develop trusting relationships with students and then help to develop *cooperative relationships*. This process requires constant dialogue and exchanges in order to increase mutual understanding. When the trusting and cooperative relationship is established, teaching and learning can proceed more smoothly.

To strengthen and raise the dialogic capabilities of teachers, we invite Dr. Shi-Jiuan Wu to meet with teachers two to three times a month to consult with them about handling challenging situations with students and parents. In addition, teachers are invited to participate in the "What? - Network," an

internal electronic platform for reflecting upon one's own experience using a particular writing method we call the "Six Steps Reflection Note" (see Appendix A).

Developing Teacher's Dialogue and Reflection Capabilities

I believe that we must face the life experiences that we create through experiencing. Therefore, we do not use the standard textbooks; instead, we ask our teachers and students to face the real world, using our senses to experience, develop, and accumulate understanding. By constantly breaking old habits and making ourselves more flexible, we steadily lead our teachers and students to understand the difference in their roles in this postmodern education model. Based on our accumulated experienced, we created a table comparing the "Modern Teacher" and "Postmodern Teacher" in an educational forum in 2008 to analyze how Kai-Ping develops and implements postmodern teaching. The roles are compared in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Changes in the role of teachers in the past (Modernism) and role of teachers in the future (Postmodernism) — From (past) . . . to (future)

| Item | Role of teachers in the past (Modernism) | Role of Teachers in the future (Postmodernism) |
|------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | A hierarchical organizational structure, with roles clearly defined in the educational system. | A system and environment with practices that allow for dialogue as equals. |
| 2 | A system created by authorities defined by special rights and responsibilities. Decisions made by such authority figures. | A system co-created by all people using dialogue to jointly discuss class affairs and make decisions. |
| 3 | In the teacher-student power structure, teachers have the authority and can decide on the the arrangement and method of teaching. | A teacher's philosophical stance is to encourage joint learning based on collaborative relationships and processes. |
| 4 | Relationship with parents is defined by the duality and opposition of experts versus non-experts. | Partnership is developed with parents, through an exchange of different perspectives and expertise, seeing differences and creating differences. |
| 5 | The teacher is the one who knows the answer, discovers problems, and collects information. | The teacher does not know all answers, but develops knowledge through dialogues with others. |

| | | |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 6 | The teacher is the prophet and the expert on how others should live their lives. | The teacher opens up a space for dialogue and is an expert in helping develop the dialogue. |
| 7 | Teaching focuses on passing on knowledge in a top- down manner, and a clear cause-effect relationship. | Teaching focuses on creating all types of learning possibilities, depending on all participants to co-create and co-develop. |
| 8 | The teacher has absolute faith in his or her knowledge, believing that it is definitively helpful to the student in the future. | The teacher is uncertain whether his or her knowledge can handle future needs, believing in the gradual change and evolution of knowledge itself. |
| 9 | The teacher uses his or her personal knowledge, assumptions, or perspectives to think and intervene to solve students' confusion. | The teacher is willing to openly share his or her knowledge, assumptions, or perspectives, as well as limitations and inadequacies. |
| 10 | The teacher is an educational expert with professional knowledge, who utilizes comprehensive techniques and methods, and can intervene in students' dilemmas at any time. | The teacher and student are in a co-learning relationship jointly discussing topics or dilemmas and finding knowledge and methods to solve the dilemma through dialogue. |
| 11 | The teacher tries to change the perspective of students or colleagues. | The teacher does not try to change anyone, but only cares about joining when a blockage arises. Through dialogue with related parties, the teacher tries to create methods for a breakthrough. |
| 12 | Teaching is the activity led by the teacher for the students' future needs. | Teaching is a joint effort by teachers and students who engage in dialogue to create and discover future needs, to learn new knowledge and skills, to enrich oneself, and to satisfy the future needs that have yet to be discovered. |

(Organized by a teacher/researcher, 2008)

Since 2006, we have had the good fortune of inviting Dr. Shi-Jiuan Wu, the Director of the Center for Creative Dialogue in Taipei, the leader of an International Collaborative Practice Certificate, and the Director for Postmodern Dialogue in China, to accompany Kai-Ping teachers and chefs as they develop the professional capabilities of dialogue. The warm companionship of Professor Wu helped colleagues in our school gradually develop the ability to use dialogic practices to converse with

themselves and with each other, as well as reflect and observe themselves internally and in dialogue with students and parents.

Action Research

Since 2010, training courses focusing on narrative companionship have transformed into research courses focusing on teacher action research. We have instructed teachers and staff partners in our school in writing 29 action research papers as of 2013. Teachers have written about the challenges and issues of onsite teaching in action research papers. Using processes of self-dialogue and dialogues with students and parents in their projects, they have won all types of awards in thesis competitions held by the Ministry of Education of Taiwan. In addition, we have received support to have the works published and printed. Also, since September 2012, all staff and teachers campus-wide have participated in the process developing a comprehensive reflective action research activity.

Training of New Teachers

Every new teacher undergoes a 2-month internship training to get to know Kai-Ping. During the training period, new teachers study the assigned periodicals and papers and intern at all administrative and teaching units. They develop basic listening abilities through verbatim transcriptions from

Every new teacher undergoes a 2-month internship training to get to know Kai-Ping.

Principal Hsia's regular workshop for parents in the community, or an interview conducted by Principal Hsia or Dr. Shi-Jiuan Wu and present their learning in front of the whole school. By presenting to the whole school, other teachers gain a better understanding of his or her personal strengths and limitations. "Project Adventure" (PA) is another way to promote to dialogue. Partners dialogue during the process and engage in reflecting on an evaluating their performance after the exercise. Through this experience everyone begins to know each other better and understand how to cooperate with partners and teams with different characteristics.

Intensive Teacher/Staff Study Programs

We also conduct intensive teacher/staff training programs during the winter and summer holidays; we call them the 9-11 classes since they are held from 9am to 11am every day. Through the use of dialogue, the administrative partners, professional chefs, teaching staff, Principal Lo, and I discuss and clarify each teaching objective and the related topics.

A Real Dialogue in Virtual Space - Reflections and Actions for the "Six Steps Reflection Note"

Writing is not only a means of communicating to oneself or others but it is also a form of inquiry. It fits very well with the collaborative, dialogical approach to systemic inquiry (Simon, 2012).

Since Kai-Ping initiated action research in September 2005, all the teachers throughout the school, including the professional teaching chefs, write reports to reflect upon the discoveries and difficulties

during their teaching or administrative work. These are then converted into four sections of field notes which are “events,” “feelings,” “judgments,” and “recommendations” respectively. The purpose of using field notes to compose observation reports is to help establish systematic thinking and encourage them to observe events that make a great impression, and record it in a clear and systematic way. The key emphasis during this stage is training for multi-dimensional thinking. Importance is placed on the systematic format of recording and not on the theme or topic. School personnel engage in this activity for 3 years.

To help everyone reflect and connect with his or her life experiences, a strong foundation is built in creating one’s own belief and value system at the conceptual level. This helps one grasp the spirit of the practice we are trying to develop. Since November 11, 2008, the approach we use is the Six-Step-Reflection- Model, which includes the following writing format.

- I. Event (reflecting on the phenomena): Using the senses, the events and phenomena are reflected in the consciousness through the brain. This is a type of sensual perception.
- II. I believe (comparison and summary): A similar picture or video is drawn from memory. This is then compared with the current event to understand how one sees and event and makes sense of the event.
- III. Feelings (Feelings are generated): Based on this conclusion, feelings are generated.
- IV. From now on (decision made): After the feelings are generated, a decision is made.
- V. Generating an Action: After a decision is made, the brain commands the body to generate an action.
- VI. The TOTE Principle: Testing the action, observation, more action, and more observations are made. If the outcome is satisfactory, then it ends. If not, then further testing with more actions will be done.

Using the writing format described above, the teachers can organize their own experiences to review and reflect, with the hope of conceptualizing in new ways. Through the processes of reflection and contemplation, each can clarify his or her own position to start a dialogue. Dialogue helps to bring about collaboration, which helps to raise the overall teaching quality of the entire team. These have helped us create postmodern teacher. In Appendix A, I provide some examples of the reflection notes.

An Omnipresent Platform for Dialogue

At Kai-Ping we believe that one becomes the master of one’s life and that one must also respect others as their own master at the same time. One way that we implement this belief is through creating

dialogue opportunities constantly. The Kai-Ping “Dialogue Platform” (simply called “The Platform”)

No matter what position a person holds within the school, all are treated with equal respect.

allows all participants to be equals. No matter what position a person holds within the school, all are treated with equal respect. Teachers can request direct dialogue with the principal to express uncomfortable emotions and differences in opinions.

The platform is divided into several other platforms: a *Campus Wide Platform*, a *Teachers’ Platform*, and a *Learning Group Platform*. Any group or class can also initiate a platform at any given time to say what they want to say without holding back. The key rule of the platform is that anyone can say anything, raise any questions, and express any emotions. Other can either respond or choose not to respond. All dialogues are subjected to speech immunity, so that no one can seek any retribution afterwards.

The platforms are designed not to solve actual problems, but merely to provide a safe place to express one’s emotions about a specific person or incident. Everyone who has something to say must address his/her issues during this time. No one is allowed to follow up with the conversation taking place on the platform in a private setting. This design effectively overcomes the fear one may have expressing opinions in traditional schools, where one may get in trouble after expressing honest opinions. Thus, this design helps to establish a *mutual trust mechanism*. This inclusion and use of these platforms is a key element to Kai-Ping’s successful transformation. Only with mutual trust can different sides collaborate (see Appendix B for more details on the platform rules).

The Platform also allows “role reversal or switching.” No matter what the actual role is played in school, each is treated as equal.

At Kai-Ping, we encourage bringing conflicts to the open on the platform. We also hope to achieve safety with the rules. To have an effective team collaboration, the first step is to learn to truly overcome the differences on the team by having the courage to face conflicts upfront. Such a design allows for a learning organization that is full of vitality. For details of Kai-Ping’s operational methods, please see Appendix B.

Campus Wide Teacher Student Platform (Campus Wide Teacher Student Collaborative Dialogue)

To cultivate students to have the courage to speak, to have the ability to speak coherently, and to become effective communicators, Kai-Ping hosts a campus wide “Dialogue Platform” session every Wednesday morning. Any teacher or student who has any opinions regarding campus affairs can openly express his/her views during the platform dialogue period. This design helps students to care

more about school issues, and helps provide an outlet for students to express their emotions. Instead of using irrational verbal abuse, this leads them to learn to use rational and constructive ways to express their thoughts. Students also learn to reflect and actively think about ways to solve problems.

I often remind parents who want to send their children to Kai-Ping to be mentally prepared because Kai-Ping students usually are very responsive (with each phrase spoken to them, they will respond with 9 phrases). We want to cultivate students who can treat customers wholeheartedly, who are capable, and who are welcomed by the industry. In addition, we hope that their learning processes are healthy, balanced, and pleasant. If parents do not identify with such an educational philosophy, the future may be a “process full of pain and suffering” for both the parents and students.

The learning begins from the moment they step into the school. Life-experience oriented, the school returns the responsibility to learn back to the students, letting them learn to deal with conflict and relationships in real life settings. In different types of settings, students must also be responsible for

The learning begins from the moment they step into the school.

choosing different learning options. By meeting and resolving different challenges, they learn their own limitations and strengths, as well as how to interact with others, work together in a team, develop confidence and passion, and solve problems. All these are key abilities that are highly valued in the work

place and will be helpful in their future professional lives.

Recruiting and Parents: A Seminar on Our Philosophy and Vision (Collaborative Dialogue with Parents)

In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the number of applications to Kai-Ping. Every year there are over 1200 to 1500 junior high school graduates nationwide who apply to Kai-Ping, with only about 450 applicants admitted into the only professional culinary school in the country. Even though student recruitment has become more competitive due to the low birth rate in Taiwan and a large number of newly opened culinary schools and departments, we still insist on finding educational partners (teachers and students) who have the same vision as we do. Therefore, we spend a lot of time and effort in clarifying our approach to education with prospective Kai-Ping students and their parents right from the beginning.

In addition to evaluating school performance and the scores from the Basic Competence Test for Junior High School Students, the most important criterion of admission is the passion demonstrated by the applicant towards culinary arts. Because it takes real passion to work long term in the food and beverage industry, we recruit our students on an independent basis, as opposed to recruiting based on specific entrance examination rankings. Students who are interested in applying must first attend a

seminar on our philosophy and vision, so that students and parents have a clear understanding of our philosophy and how teaching is conducted. The bilateral discussion after the seminar allows for plenty of communication. The level of support that parents provide to their children is another key factor to a student's acceptance into the school.

The Establishment of Parent-Teacher-Student Relationship: "Parent-Child Refueling Station"

More and more parents are willing to be involved in their children's education, and we consider this a most valuable educational resource. However, due to differences in professional backgrounds and expectations regarding student learning, parents and teachers may have conflicting opinions regarding the teaching methods, performance indicators used, or the content of teaching. To promote teacher-parent collaboration, we created a dialogue platform where both sides can speak as equals. Only with a foundation based on trust can teachers and parents collaborate and form a solid education foundation for our next generation.

Many studies show that teenagers' moods and behaviors are strongly correlated with their family relationships. For example, parents' teaching attitudes are directly linked with teenage depression (Li, 2003); a positive atmosphere at home has positive effects on the adaptability of high school students (Chen, 2003).

Often, students in disadvantaged positions can become the scapegoat in a dysfunctional family. In a rigid system, counseling and guidance can reinforce the problem. In the past, children who could not adapt to the environment or who exhibited problems conforming became scapegoats in the system. These children were labeled as problematic, or worse, as mentally ill. The counselor's goal was usually to help these "misfits" conform to the system and get back to the mainstream. From a systems perspective, this approach only strengthens the unexamined weaknesses in the original system operation (i.e., the problem may be the malfunctioning of the system instead).

When parents spend their energy blaming the school for not teaching their children well and the school blames parents for not putting more effort into their children's development, both sides miss opportunities to help the family. Thus, from a systemic perspective, a key function of school is to guide and strengthen parents' roles and functions.

Kai-Ping attempts to accompany parents and to let parental participation become a key mechanism towards re-education. Parenting courses are planned so that parents become a key supporting factor in education reform. Our hope is for parents to be aware of the impact that their actions, words, and behaviors have on their children. When parents achieve this awareness, children can then reach a higher level of empathy through their interaction with teachers by the process of mirroring and

reflection. It is our strong belief that the family is a system and children mirror their parents. Only when the energy of love starts to flow in a family is it possible for effective learning to take place in school.

Kai-Ping provides parents with entry level and advanced child development workshops and volunteer counseling training, so that Kai-Ping parents can provide support for each other. We also invite parents to participate in the student court system by jointly upholding the boundaries established in order to protect the freedom in this environment. Through these activities, parents develop an appreciation of the individual talents and strengths of children and become invaluable resources in our teaching and school affairs.

In addition to the usual activities each semester such as meetings between parents and teachers, midterm review, and end of term review, Kai-Ping parents must receive 64 hours of “parent-child refueling station” parental educational classes. In the first semester, before the official commencement of the school year, parents must participate in a 3-day (24 hour) class, in which parents come to understand how the school operates and learn their children’s learning method by participating in group discussions, creative drawing and painting, and group activities such as a cooking competitions.

Collaborative dialogues are frequently used in this class. Parents volunteer to go on stage and accept my interviewing them about their creative processes. Many times this leads to follow-up dialogues and group discussions about this individual’s family. Volunteer parents from the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) play the role of small group leaders. They help by participating and guiding new parents in establishing relationships. The role of a teacher in these activities is to observe. By observing the dialogues and level of participation of the new parents, teachers gather information about the family background, parental attributes, and parental expectations for their children as reference information for future teaching. There are dialogue sessions in the morning and afternoon and I lead all participating teachers and volunteer parents in sharing new learnings.

We also welcome new students to participate in this 3-day class. Most activities involve everyone in a large group setting. For some activities, such as discussion of new students’ expectations for the future, people are divided up into small groups first before joining the large group for dialogue. By inviting parents to share their thoughts on stage, I would once again use in-depth interviews to start a dialogue with the new student and his/her parents. Other parents and children then listen and learn as audience members. At the end of each day, we would proceed with a collaborative dialogue to close out the day. I invite all parents, students, teachers, and volunteer parents who are interested in going on stage to discuss any topic (e.g., the class process or more on the topics that were discussed).

At the end of the semester, we invite parents and upper classmates from Grades 11 and 12, alumni,

volunteer parents, and teachers to participate in an advanced parenting class. Contents of this class include lectures, questions and answers, and collaborative dialogues to discuss the challenges and obstacles faced during different stages of learning and development. Even though some parents may not feel like participating in this process, most parents are very happy and look forward to understanding more about how to communicate with their children, the school, and teachers in an effort to educate their children together!

In the beginning of the 3-day class, we often hear from parents saying that they have not hugged their children in many years. We especially hear fathers who say they have not hugged their children since their children started walking! Some parents say it is the first time he or she participated in any school activities! Some parents are angry at being “forced” into attending a parent-child class that would keep them from their busy schedules, just because their children want to go to Kai-Ping. However, by the end of the 3 days of classes, many of these parents are changed and are filled with laughter, tears, emotions, gratitude, and inner peace. Of course, being able to bring about a flow of love amongst future students, their parents, and family members is the main purpose of this. Principal Lo, our previous principal, frequently said before the class: “Give Kai-Ping 3 days, and we will give you 30 years of happiness in your family!”

Integration of Kai-Ping’s Dialogue Platform with Collaborative Dialogue

After participating in the 3 day-collaborative dialogue workshop led by Harlene in 2008, we realized what was lacking in our platform: guided questions and interactions. Harlene showed us different ways of posing questions that can help others articulate better, and more fully express their intentions and meanings. She also allowed different people to speak their mind at a time she saw fit. This interaction within a multi-party dialogue helped to open up the scope for us. During the 3-day workshop, we received inspiration and feedback that allowed us to introduce and implement these new approaches into our dialogue platform. This allowed the Kai-Ping platform to increase in vitality and energy. We also integrated collaborative dialogue into the communications of the entire campus, among staff members and among teacher and students. We also implemented the collaborative dialogue to inspire the platform to a suitable degree, so that the energy of dialogue can continue to serve as the foundation of our education.

Extending the Dialogue to Off Campus

In addition to dialogues within the school, I have expanded the collaborative dialogue approach to community parental classes, corporate consultation, and have been invited as a guest speaker at different universities/colleges and government institutions. My hope is through dialogue with people outside of the Kai-Ping system, we can continue to expand this form of educational approach and our

educational vision to others.

Educational Forum and Parent-Teacher-Student Triple Win Workshop

Since 2007, Kai-Ping has worked with Commonwealth Magazine and other educational groups to jointly hold collaborative dialogue workshops. We explore topics related to education with teachers from other schools, staff at educational administrative agencies, parents in communities, and those who care about educational issues. Some of the topics discussed to date have included independence and teenage exploration of their worlds, science education, bullying, and civics education. In the *Parent-Teacher-Student Triple Win Workshop*, Kai-Ping students have consistently been able to speak and dialogue freely and confidently with university professors and senior officials from the Ministry of Education. Kai-Ping parents are always happy to share their opinions and experiences with parents in different communities and others who are interested.

During these occasions ...participants and teachers from other schools are always surprised by the confidence, vitality, and sophistication of the communication skills shown by Kai-Ping students. They are also touched by the school that listens to and responds to the different voices. The purpose of

...participants and teachers from other schools are always surprised by the confidence, vitality, and sophistication of the communication skills shown by Kai-Ping students.

hosting these events is to let Kai-Ping teachers and students have dialogues with different members of our society. Through these connections, our students and teachers help present our approach to society and it also helps to broaden the views and thinking of Kai-Ping students and teachers.

Relationship Workshop

Since March 2008, I have expanded the book reading group designed for Kai-Ping parents to the community, by holding sessions at the nearby Taipei Public Main Library Learning Classroom every Wednesday, from 9:30am to 12:00pm. Kai-Ping parents, parents of alumni, teaching staff, students, parents in the community, and teachers from neighboring schools, and volunteer parents learn about handling relationships through this dialogue workshop. In 4 years, the group has grown from less than 20 volunteer Kai-Ping parents to over 100 community members. All types of challenges faced and obstacles encountered within different relationships, such as parent-child relationships, husband-wife relationships, employee-employer relationships, mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationships, and even pet relationships are presented. Thanks to all the diversity of cases, examples, and illustrations presented, there is always something new to learn.

Conclusion: The Purpose of Dialogue is in Respecting Life, which Starts from Letting Go

Respecting life starts from our letting go. We believe that each individual's life is perfect and abundant, and that each person is the master of his or her life. Therefore, regarding any student, we let go of control and let him or her freely develop. When a teacher lets go, the teacher must spend more effort to accompany the student, by being attentive without interference. This requires a greater amount of love and patience from the teacher.

Letting go is not being indulgent. Behind the process of letting go is an even greater amount of love. When students want to become free and independent individuals, they must learn to become accountable and responsible for their lives. They learn to see the value and meaning in life. If we do not believe or trust that each student can become his or her own master, adults (including parents and teachers) will exert many demands on children. However, the tighter the management and control, the more exhausting it becomes for teachers and students.

In the past, the love of parents and teachers was very exhausting for all. The reason is that we used to believe that using only one method would lead us to the objective we were striving for and so we demanded that others use the same method and standard of doing things. If we want to love in a non-exhausting manner, we need to create a learning stage or platform where the students can find their potential and solve their problems. Not having a standard answer is most unsettling for some as it demonstrates one's inability to predict or control the future. One is forced to live in the present, interact with the real environment, and find order again. If one chooses not to insist that one has the only solution and open up to different possibilities, the flow of energy will lead to a natural flow of interaction between oneself and others. In repeating this natural flow of interaction over and over, parents, teachers, and students can all learn and prosper together and love in a way that is not exhausting for any of the parties involved!

When a person becomes the master of his/her life, he/she must also respect the same in others. Having respect towards life requires more than thinking; it also requires a way of demonstrating and showing respect. The method that Kai-Ping implements is to constantly create dialogic opportunities, by creating an open space, with the expectation that everyone opens up his/her heart and allows diverse

When a person becomes the master of his/her life, he/she must also respect the same in others.

voices to be spoken and heard. In the process of hearing and seeing differences, uniqueness can be created. Overall, the specific mode of operation that Kai-Ping uses to realize the humanistic spirit is through continuous dialogues: teacher-student platforms, the overall school platform, class platform, dialogue platforms that occur anywhere and anytime, and the electronic platform of writing the "Six Steps Reflection Note." Collaborative dialogue

flourishes new and fresh dialogues that are meaningful. When there is a problem, those involved in a collaborative dialogue can see the source of the problem or issue. Those who are in dialogue can reorganize the relationships and entanglements; unpleasant events can become an opportunity to get to know each other deeper for further collaboration. By deconstructing teaching methods, student management style, and performance evaluation methods, constant dialogue we hope to create new approaches to education that better serve the students and society's needs.

I would like to end by sharing a posting by a father of a Kai-Ping graduate, Mr. Hou, on the internal-electronic-discussion-collaboration-platform.

Finding Happiness

I have never dreamed that my family would become more harmonious, warm, and fulfilling just because my child attended a vocational high school.

Kai-Ping has this magic. My wife, Rei-Ling, describes it as a school of magic.

My first impressions of Kai-Ping:

- 1. It has an excellent reputation because of its culinary arts department (many positive news in the media).*
- 2. The tuition is very expensive, as the tuition per semester is NT\$100,000 (note: US \$1 is about NT \$30, April 2013) (I heard this from my child when he was in junior high. Later, I realized that the tuition was indeed not cheap, but not as expensive as I thought. This erroneous rumor was due to the different ways of payment.)*
- 3. Before the student formally enrolls, parents must attend a 3-day class at the school (what a strange rule, I had never heard of any school that require parents to take classes.)*

On the first day, I arrived at Kai-Ping with great suspicion. What type of school requires three days for an orientation? (Typically, orientation for parents take at most 1 day). However, what surprised me was that the founder, Dr. Hui-Wen Hsia (we call him Hsia Pei which meaning Uncle Hsia in Chinese) not only wanted the school to teach, but also wanted to let

our parent-child relationship become more harmonious, and well-rounded. This approach is unheard of in Taiwan.

Uncle Hsia, with his white hair and his uniform of Chinese tunic suit, would speak softly, like a baby in the warmth of the mother's cuddle. It was so soothing and comforting. During class, Uncle Hsia would invite any parent facing difficulties to volunteer so that he can help with the case. With this as the teaching material, he would remind others that this is a challenge that everyone may face.

Uncle Hsia does not have any profound theories nor does he teach you how to solve problems. What he does is to help you develop the strength to solve your problems yourself.

After attending these classes, the number and magnitude of quarrels in my family reduced. What we learned was « Dialogue » means say what one wants to say, but at the same time listen to what others want to say. We also learned the most important thing for parents is to accompany the child and ask good questions. We also learned to judge less, criticize less, and praise more . These rules allow the parental-child relationship to become better and better.

Because of Uncle Hsia, not only did Rei-Ling enjoy the benefits of this class, she also passionately shares this gift with friends and families around her. She would bring her own mother, customers at the breakfast store, and neighbors to the Wednesday "Parent-Child Workshop." Even the employees at the breakfast store were influenced by this change. One day she overheard her employee said: "Boss says we should praise children more and scold less." So when she saw her 18-month-old son taking the broom and learning to sweep the floor like an adult, she said, "Great job! Let's do this later!" instead of doing what she would have done before, taking the broom away and scolding the child for messing things up, which would have surely lead to hysterical crying. "Do you know how magical it was?" she reports. "The child actually happily allowed me to take away the broom!" Upon hearing this, I realized Rei-Ling's change has had a profound influence on others around her.

Recently, when I met my friends, they would ask where my child attends

school. I would answer: Kai-Ping. They would say that being a culinary student has good prospects in the future and Kai-Ping is a good school; however, the tuition is very expensive! My reply is: If we pay for one person's tuition and the whole family gets to attend classes at Kai-Ping, then the tuition is well worth it.

I am most grateful to Mr. and Mrs. Hou for always finding the time to help and lead other parents despite their busy schedules. Also, I like to thank Mr. Hou for his willingness to share publicly on the internet the greater amount of happiness and warmth that occurred in his family because of his son's attending Kai-Ping. His warm messages encourage the entire staff at Kai-Ping by letting them realize the fruits that have been borne from all the struggles and challenges are so sweet. This is the best case study of how Kai-Ping uses dialogue as a foundation to create a better educational environment.

I would like to thank Harlene for her invitation to submit this paper and the encouragement from Dr. Shi-Jiuan Wu. I would love to share the Kai-Ping experience with all the education workers around the world who have dedicated their lives to educate our future.

Appendix A

Samples of the *Six Steps Reflection Note*

In this virtual network space of *Internal-Electronic-Collaboration-Platform* (IEDCP), teachers and staff have many real and valuable dialogues through using the *Six Step Reflection Note*, with energy flow that is full of vitality. Below are some sample explanations of these dialogues (Note: Our school colleagues have the habit of calling me, the founder of the school's culinary section, Uncle Hsia. Mr. Chun-Yen Lo is the former school principal. The rest are teaching staff of the school.)

Below is a conversational exchange that illustrates the *Six Step Reflection Note over the course of 4 days*. It begins with Teacher Pei-Chi Wu's note and is followed by exchanges with Uncle Hsai and Teacher Chia-Ting Ma.

Step 1: Reflection of the Reality.

I followed Ya-Wen into the "stay in school class" (this class is for students who are not selected for an out of school internship, students who were injured during the out of school internship, or other students who have to stay at school for various reasons). It was around 11am and with only a few students in class, Ya-Wen's teacher clearly stated the agenda of the day and during roll call she drew out the boundaries for the students. The students are not very used to this type of teaching since it was never done by the other teachers. The students seemed intent to follow the boundaries she has drawn

so I really admire her style.

But as I spent more time with the students, I noticed that the teacher didn't really understand the students. My thinking is for the teacher to understand the students we have to first accept their thoughts and then listen to them. Perhaps the students are testing me.

Step 2: Comparison Conclusion

It's a really relaxing atmosphere spending time with the students. Unlike internship, I am under intense pressure preparing material for the student.

Step 3: Developing Emotions

Very relaxed and happy. I am slowly letting go of my traditional self.

Step 4: Decision Making

I try to develop trust with the students. I really put in effort when changing their thoughts, talking, or observing, but at the same time also realizing the differences between the students and accepting them.

Step 5: Take Action

Follow the decision and execute it.

Step 6: TOTE Principal

My results are not bad since the student does not reject me.

Uncle Hsia: *That's great.*

When you can have a relaxed conversation with the student with the attitude of "not knowing," that's the way to conduct a class. All you need to prepare for class is to be ready to listen and chat. Sounds like you have some great experiences.

Teacher Wu: *Now I understand, just being relax and ready to understand the student is also a way to teach. But my fears and concerns right now is that we are only clarifying our goals right now but not actually coming up with any solid course design.*

I am still worried and concerned!

Uncle Hsia: *As long as you have a direction, then you can have a discussion with your students*

regarding the course design. The course should be designed with consensus, and not a one-way street.

Teacher Wu: *Oh, so this is the way to approach this. So what should a teacher discuss with the students? I still do not understand, if a teacher designs a course with the input from the students and come up with the goals, strategies, and competence indicators, can this count as direction? Or should the teacher have a backup plan. If the students cannot come up with any inputs, then should I come up with a direction? Is this different than the method of task oriented and result oriented that we use today? Or should I spend more time with the student to really understand what they want and what they can do? I still have so many questions that I don't understand. My fear is that I might fall into traditional teaching method so I really need to make sure.*

Uncle Hsia and Teacher Wu have a conversational exchange through a "live" chat format.

Teacher Wu: *Oh, I see. If the teacher wants to discuss the course design with the students, what should be discussed?*

Uncle Hsia: *Discuss the outline of the course. Any discussion other than the outline is pointless.*

Teacher Wu: *I still do not understand; if this is the case, then once we have target, strategies and competence indicators, does that mean we are in the right direction?*

Uncle Hsia: *I don't really know anything about your discussion. But my guess would be about the outline and the direction.*

Teacher Wu: *Do you think the teacher should have a backup plan? If the students cannot come up with any inputs, should I give them some clues and guidance?*

Uncle Hsia: *Once there is an outline, then the teacher can give the students some clues or come up with some challenging questions to let them think. As long as the process makes the students think, then the purpose of teaching has been implemented.*

Teacher Wu: *What is the difference between this type of teaching and the one we used today which is task oriented and result oriented?*

Uncle Hsia: *Participating but not directing the discussion, this is the hardest part. Even when the teacher knows the answer, he/she has to pretend not knowing, only coming up with questions yet not providing answers. Even if you have the answer, you have to believe that the student might have a better answer. So with this in mind, the teacher and the student can have a discussion together and*

come up with a solution. If the solution is better than the teacher's, then the teacher should embrace the solution; if the answer is impractical and unrealistic then the teacher should challenge them and get them to think and come up with better answers. Although this process can be a hassle, it has to go on because the whole purpose of this teaching method is to get them to think. This is the meaning of "education."

Teacher Wu: *I still don't understand.*

Uncle Hsia: *To make this process work, it takes time. So don't rush.*

Teacher Wu: *So Shun Xin Development means spending time with the students to find out what they want and what they are capable to do?*

Uncle Hsia: *Yes, you should understand that in the beginning it takes time for student and teacher to bond and develop trust. Even when the teacher has the answer, the teacher has to pretend to not have the answer. So keep asking them questions; even if the answer is not very mature, don't discount the answer. The whole purpose is to let them think. As time goes by, the students will come up with better answers. This process takes time but once the students understand and can think, they are unstoppable.*

Teacher Wu: *I am still afraid that I will fall into traditional thinking, so I have to constantly remind myself not to fall into that thinking.*

Uncle Hsia: *As long as you don't fall into anxieties or have any remorse or frustration, you are fine. These emotions will make you fail. Take your time to experience the process.*

Basically, no matter what you do, as long as the students are learning, then it is the right way of teaching. You have to realize that you cannot help all the students, so you try to help the most students. Once the students learn the process, they can manage to learn by themselves. Then you can spend more time to help the student that is behind in learning and make them stronger.

Precisely speaking, if you allow the student to follow the "unsuitable" development process, it seems to be a connivance. But if we use the trust as a means, then it seems to be a very appropriate method to be used.

If we use the traditional method of teaching, teachers will not allow certain actions from the student such as cursing. Teacher will verbally say it is OK, but when it happens, it will drive them crazy. So my suggestion would be for teachers to give up some of their values. Let the student break through the

traditional framework and redevelop the trust between teacher and students. These are tools that the teacher should look at as a stop gap measure. This is the hardest part for the teacher in the tug-of-war relationship between students and teacher. If the school does not support the teacher and parents do not understand why the teacher would allow these anti-traditional actions to go on with students, they may throw insults at the teacher as they think that he/she is a really irresponsible teacher to let it happen. However, by going forward not caring about the insults, this is how a teacher really shows his/her responsibility, therefore gaining the trust of the adults.

This is not the work that should be taken on by the high school teachers. According to Erikson's Eight Major Development Stages in a human being, if the first step is not being satisfied, then it will move on to the next step. Teachers are the last step for the students before they go into the adult step. Thus, the teachers have to bear the responsibilities of the educational system, and do whatever we think is good for the students. This is the hardship that faces educational professionals. Because once the students leave the educational system, then the responsibilities shift to the society. Since most people do not understand this and that we as teachers do, so let us help our students create brighter future.

Once the students put their trust in the teacher, then they will not waste their energy into the battles with them. They can then use this energy into thinking about their own future and the teacher can help guide them in the right direction. Once that has happen, it is called "the integration period" and it gets easier for the teacher. In that period, the teacher can slowly guide the student toward what they are really interested at. Then teacher and student together can discuss how to establish structure and implement their planning. The teacher can then sit back and watch how the students flourish in this environment.

This is really hard to explain clearly. However, I thank you for giving me a chance to really think about this theory and sort the details out. If you don't understand, just ask more questions and I will try to give you the answer. This is my homework.

The next day they have another exchange.

Uncle Hsia: Find the direction first. Don't fall into anxiety and don't get distracted by the setbacks, since these will make it impossible to complete the mission. Then slowly experience the results.

Teacher Wu: I understand. Right now I will incorporate what I have learned during the summer course and implement the theory of finding the direction and understanding my main mission is to help the student find their own power. To accomplish this, I have to be more determined and trust myself and the students more. Thank you.

Uncle Hsia: *As long as the students are thinking, then you are on the right track.*

Teacher Wu: *The premise is to really love the students and wish they develop well. I am starting to understand what Hsia meant by loving the students.*

Uncle Hsia: *Precisely speaking, if you allow the student to follow the “unsuitable” development process, it seems to be a connivance. However, if we use the trust as a means, then it seems to be a very appropriate method to be used.*

Teacher Wu: *To build trust with the students is like building the bond between mother and child. By not getting upset when the students are not performing as well, instead try to understand the reasons why they are not performing.*

Uncle Hsia: *I think we understand the concept now. Let us go help the students create a new chapter in their lives.*

Teacher Wu: *I am attracted by this Kai-Ping Educational Vision. I totally agreed with its concepts.*

Uncle Hsia: *If you have more questions, just ask. I will try to come up with answers. This is my homework.*

Teacher Wu: *Thank you so much with coming up with answers and editing my responses. I want to also thank the school for all the support in changing the learning environment. I will work hard to achieve the goal.*

I am beginning to understand the Kai-Ping Educational Vision. These platforms are the basis to set the students onto developing their own learning abilities. The main point is not what type of platform needs to be used, but as long it helps the students find the right direction and the motivation to reach the target. Then it is all worth the effort. Now I have more expectations and less worries to develop trust with the students. Thank you very much.

Teacher Ma adds her thoughts to the conversation and has an exchange with Teacher Wu

Teacher Ma: *I have to thank Wu for coming up with her experiences.*

This reflects the trust that has been established in this environment and it also shown the care and thinking of Teacher Wu.

Let me share some of my thoughts.

1. *Time factor: I have heard a lot of terms and theories. I need to compare these terms and theories with my own personal values and practice it in the real life environment. Also I have to apply these theories with time so I can really understand it such as humanity. Then I can come up with my solutions to this theory.*

2. *Level Factor: Too many terms that have different meanings in different situations. Sometimes during different occasions, a term can have a different explanation even in the same context. For example, on Specific Activities teaching, my understanding is that it is activities yet it is also teaching. If the activity has rich content and is well-developed, then naturally it will be a program that is well-rounded. So the process has been factored in, so the final result is successful. Lastly, maybe in a timely manner, simultaneously the course design has been taken into account.*

So during group discussion, we have to develop clear guidelines of the direction, target, and the spirit or the strategy performance indicator. All of these have to be taken into consideration in order to develop a successful program.

3. *Flexibility factors: Shun Xin Development is a direction and spirit. But these four words can be interpreted differently by different people. Maybe to student A in that situation and Student B in a different situation, this term might have a different meaning. However, the key is that it will help a student grow. For example: smoking. A chain smoker getting caught compared to someone smoking out of curiosity, or buying cigarettes for someone else yet not smoking, or joining other in a smoke, all of these have different consequences.*

I want to thank Wu for sharing her feelings with us.

Teacher Wu: I want to thank Ma for his efforts for the consensus from the meeting. Also the care you have shown for me. Thank you.

Teacher Ma: This shows that this is a comfortable and trustworthy environment.

Teacher Wu writes: This is a really comfortable environment for me. I can take my time to slowly find myself without suffering any grievances. Although I am not familiar with every teacher in every department, I will do my best effort to contribute and be part of the teaching team. Although my fears are that my ignorance may bring distress to everybody, I also understand that it takes time to build experience.

Let me share some of my experiences.

1. *Time factor: I heard a lot of terms and theory*

.....

In the end, you have to develop your own method.

Wu writes: I still need time to find my own method. Before that can happen please let me find the uniqueness of the other teachers.

2. *Level Factor: Too many terms that has different meaning in different situations*

.....

3. *Flexibility factors: Shun Xin Development is a direction and spirit.*

.....

Every situation is different.

Teacher Wu: Exactly, in time flexibility can cover a lot of inexperience. Even detail planning sometime cannot compare with the speed of change. So I am still searching for my own flexibility so I can better deal with changes.

I really want to thank you for your response. I will work hard learning and digesting all the experiences in order to find my own style. I hope I can practice it during the school year. And I sincerely hope that I can share my experiences with everybody so we can all grow together. Thank you.

An ignorant and newcomer Wu

Uncle Hsia replies to Teacher Ma

Uncle Hsia: I really want to thank you for your response. I will work hard learning and digesting all the experiences in order to find my own style. I hope I can practice it during the school year. And I sincerely hope that I can share my experiences with everybody so we can all grow together. Thank you.

At Kai-Ping, the most important factor to understand is "breathing."

It's very natural for humans to survive by breathing in and out. Facing the environment, it's almost like life, if you are able to breathe, then you can survive. It's complicated, yet simple and natural.

Facing challenge, treat it like breathing so that you can find the easy yet natural way to face it. You do not need to be upset unless you have a pre-determined scenario. You do not need to be anxious unless your ego makes you want to prove something.

If you do not do well this time, take your time to reflect and do better next time.

Kai-Ping allows you to make mistakes.

Even if you don't know how to do something, just take the risk and do it. The worst scenario that can happen is that you are wrong. But if you try, at least you have a 50% chance of doing it right.

Even senior teachers make changes every day. Everyone is different so they conduct their classes differently. You can only use that as a reference but not copy it. You have to develop your own style.

As long as you have love and are willing to take a risk, you can learn from the past failures and grow from the past mistakes. You can create a bright future.

Finally, Teacher Wu replies to Uncle Hsia

Teacher Wu: Thank you for the constant reminder. I can feel your care in the responses. I have learned a lot today. Hopefully I can thank you in person someday. Thank you.

Appendix B

The Operation of “Dialogues Platform”

I. Types of Platforms and When They Are Held

There are two types of platforms—the teacher platform and teacher-student platform. The teacher-student platform is held every Wednesday, between 8am and 9am, with all students, teachers, and staff participating. The teacher platform is held every Monday, between 4:30pm and 5:30pm, with all teachers and staff participating. The entire process is video recorded and transcribed into words.

II. Platform Rules

1. The platform is where one expresses his or her emotions, not to solve problems.
2. The platform seating is spirally arranged. The center seats must first be filled up before additional seats are added at the end of the spirals.
3. One speaks only for oneself, not others, and no personal attacks are allowed.
4. Only one person can speak at a time.

5. When speaking, there must be a well-defined person (named person) to whom one speaks. The named person can choose to either respond or not. One cannot leave immediately after speaking. When others speak, one must listen with respect and attention.
6. One cannot leave before the platform ends in the middle. If there is a need to leave before the end, all partners must agree to it first.
7. For those who attend the platform for the first time, at the end of the platform, they are to share their thoughts.

III. Platform Workers

1. Monitoring role: Under the assistance of trained professionals, participants learn to transform the conflict under the table into a way to understand their individual differences and as a way to move forward through effective communication training. In addition, the functions of a public forum and mutual negotiations also exist.
2. Observers: Need to present observation reports at the end of the platform, focusing on the group dynamics.
3. Host:
 - a) Keep to the schedule and procedures,
 - b) Time control and management.
4. Teacher's role:
 - a) Phase locking, forced synchronization,
 - b) Attention, companionship, listening, guiding (expression),
 - c) Paying attention to the status of those speaking and not speaking, maintaining order,
 - d) Accompany the students when they speak, and guide them to speak more clearly if needed,
5. Students' roles: Each person has speaking rights, with one person speaking at one time, with a target to speak to, speak for oneself only, not speaking for anyone else, no personal attacks, a place to release one's emotions, but not necessarily to solve the problems.

IV. Design Principles

The spirally arranged seating used in the Kai-Ping Platform Dialogue is sourced from an operation method from the UK "Taffy Stark Large Group Dynamics Experimental Courses." According to its research, when the number in a group exceeds 30 people, and each other are not easily seen, members in the group find it easy to express themselves in a typical manner when in a large group. For example, a teacher that usually complains constantly about school policies and measures in private may become very quiet in a

routine school affairs meeting because he or she believes that it is useless to say anything or is afraid of retribution afterwards. He or she may also think that there is no need to break the dynamics of group silence, so will just stay as passive observer. When many in the group behave in such manner, the entire group loses its dynamic force, so the meeting outcome becomes a further source of complaint for that teacher. A platform dialogue spiral seating arrangement will give some measure of privacy and sense of security to participants, so some people will not be seen, so that the tension of the group will be deliberately strengthened. This way, the entire teaching and administrative staff can observe how each person's habitual patterns create a group consensus. In this democratic era, each person must develop his/her personal strength if one expects any changes in a group setting. One should not wait for a brilliant savior and leader to remedy the entire situation.

V. Platform Seating Arrangement

The Teacher Platform seating arrangement is a spiral arrangement from inside to out, with the seats before and after being interlaced, with distance to the left and right of about 30 cm. In principle, the design is to allow each seat to see all other seats in the platform. After the seats are filled, no additional seats can be added. This seating arrangement was inspired when I attended a large group dynamics experimental course given by Professor Lin Ching Hsia held at Fu Jen University. The student platform is a large group that surrounds the sports field, with seating on the floor. The two host teachers stand in the middle of the group, and speakers stand up on his or her position to speak so that the entire teaching staff and all students can see the speaker.

VI. Philosophical Foundation

The spiral group seating arrangement is to allow members to feel that the group is common to all. The feeling of any one individual can influence others in the group. If issues cannot be presented in the group, then it will appear in private occasions, where the related parties are not there, affecting the listener's emotions and judgments, and creating a dilemma for the target. If presented in a group, then the issues can be clarified in front of a group. The key lesson to learn is that human beings do not exist alone and that work is not completed by one individual. Even simple tasks involve others. Any work activity exists to satisfy human needs. Our education only teaches individual superiority, which leads to competitive comparisons and discriminations. We all know that we should not discriminate against differences, but our behaviors are exactly opposite of that. This is what is known as the non-unification of the cognition theory vs. behavior theory. All these must be explored in solitude and depth before the intent of the Heavens are known.

Respecting life starts from respecting people. People can not live alone, so they must care about the group. To understand a group means that one has to understand people. This is built on the foundation of understanding oneself. The spiral seating arrangement is to provide a real platform for learning these lessons. Sitting in the platform, one appears to be still. However, everyone is sensing the group atmosphere, with constant inner monologue with oneself. Even if one is bored, the inner dialogue continues. Next, one needs to consider how to act, decide what action to take, present one's actions, and wait to see how the group responds to one's actions. Even if there is no action, there is still action within this non-action. The cycle repeats, with inner thoughts flowing constantly. If an individual can behave the way he or she thinks inside, then that person is becoming mature. When most group members become mature, the group becomes a mature group, leading to a civil group and civil society. In the process of realizing humanitarian thinking and developing a wholesome individual, a supporting platform environment must be created, so that one can learn from experience, the unification of cognition theory and behavior theory, the unification and interaction of inner voices and external environment, so that there is mutual interaction, communication, and sensations to display an atmosphere of energy and vitality. The spiral arrangement is an excellent tool that can be used to breakdown the bureaucratic organization and transform it into a learning type of organization.

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Endnotes

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