

# Virtual Community Participation and Motivation: Cross-Disciplinary Theories

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Published in the United States of America by  
Information Science Reference (an imprint of IGI Global)  
701 E. Chocolate Avenue  
Hershey PA 17033  
Tel: 717-533-8845  
Fax: 717-533-8661  
E-mail: [cust@igi-global.com](mailto:cust@igi-global.com)  
Web site: <http://www.igi-global.com>

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Virtual community participation and motivation: cross-disciplinary theories / Honglei Li, editor.  
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.  
ISBN 978-1-4666-0312-7 (hbk.) -- ISBN 978-1-4666-0313-4 (ebook) -- ISBN 978-1-4666-0314-1 (print & perpetual access) 1. Electronic villages (Computer networks) 2. Internet--Social aspects. 3. Computer networks--Social aspects. I. Li, Honglei, 1976-  
TK5105.83.V575 2012  
004.67--dc23

2012008376

British Cataloguing in Publication Data

A Cataloguing in Publication record for this book is available from the British Library.

All work contributed to this book is new, previously-unpublished material. The views expressed in this book are those of the authors, but not necessarily of the publisher.

## Chapter 13

# Scenario–Planning for Learning in Communities: A Virtual Participation Model to Support Holistic Student Development

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The chapter investigates an actionable model of virtual participation for learning communities, in the context of holistic student development in college education. The framework of analysis is based on scenario-planning, accommodating the dynamics of strategic design, decision making, and prototyping of various organizational scenarios of learning in communities. This conceptualization is extensible in cyberspace in today's World Wide Web, especially promising for today's universities, under the mission of ensuring quality student learning. The premise in this exploration is situated in the design of living and learning programs in residential colleges that must integrate the genuine concerns of holistic development for both teachers and students. What is often argued in this mesh of organizational design is how exactly to connect members of the communities, albeit the very behavior of hoarding personal presence (or knowledge) is what makes people feel secured and successful. The virtual participation model responds to this need by emphasizing the presence of an appreciative form of community sharing that could be facilitated through some innovative electronic channels designed into the daily living and learning experiences. However, the task of identifying what to watch for in building an online community of learning (CoL) is not at all straightforward. The authors' investigation provides a basis to think of the generative potential of appreciative processes for interaction among different CoLs. The emergent challenge is to de-marginalize the concept of appreciative sharing among CoL members, expediting on the effective meaning behind the creation of such an environment through which purposeful individual or organizational learning could be enabled with the elaboration of suitable information technologies.*

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-0312-7.ch013

## **INTRODUCTION**

The context of holistic student development (HSD) could be summarized in the Socratic dictum that “the unexamined life is not worth living.” It is convinced an effective and ideal college education is one that centers on HSD, including the search for meaning and purpose in life. In launching any HSD programs today, many a university has included important concerns of who a student is and becomes, as well as what a student does during college (Barkley, 2010; Braskamp, Trautvetter, & Ward, 2006). Universities guide students to become what the college thinks and believes is a desired end. They educate and work with students on purpose. In particular, colleges develop students in ways that recognize and build on their purpose in life, intellectually and morally. They intentionally create environments that center on purpose, helping students reflect on such questions as – Who am I? What are my goals in life? How do I want to make a difference with my life? Addressing questions such as a life good to live, is an important part of holistic student development across many campuses today. Tellingly, endeavoring to develop our full potential as human beings is certainly not only about financial achievement and professional success, but also living a life that is fulfilling and meaningful. Indeed, the HSD approach presses students to acquire knowledge and to develop a life of purpose; it challenges students to obtain and improve competencies and to know themselves; it also encourages students to engage the world and to probe the relevance and power of personal commitments, perspectives, and even their shortcomings. The question is how best to facilitate such student development. This chapter is aimed to describe an emergent model of virtual participation to help foster student success in college education, addressing such questions as: What does college education desire students to become? What skills and patterns of behavior do students need to learn and develop? How do members of the campus community – faculty,

staff, and administrators – contribute to the development of students by who they are as well as what they do? It is convinced that the answer lies in the cultivation of a virtual community of learning (CoL) comprising faculty dedicating themselves more fully to the totality of student life, colleges making an investment in students as whole beings, and students themselves becoming personally invested in their college experience. In particular, this chapter renders recommendations of how HSD could be enhanced if we could avail of the appropriate Internet technologies to support organizing online various student services, to be incrementally experienced throughout their college years of living and learning as members of the campus community.

### **Exploring Learning Communities for HSD**

In an address at the Inaugural Conference on Learning Communities, Patrick Hill (1985) stated that learning communities (LCs) respond to and help alleviate a number of educational problems. He argues that LCs increase the intellectual interaction between faculty and students, as well as among students, and help students grasp not only the complexity of today’s problems but also help them understand how various disciplines overlap to solve complex problems. Hill’s comments remind us of colleges and universities effort to develop environments that foster student learning and development the holistic way. The implication, we have to confess, is that too often college learning is fragmented, and student lives outside the classroom are disconnected from the learning environment. Students take many individual, self-contained courses to meet basic requirements, but they do not often see how the courses may be related, especially if they are not connected with their majors. Indeed, Tussman (1969) describes the dilemma of students taking three, four, or five courses during a semester with “no attempt at horizontal integration.” Each professor has a

certain percentage of a student's time, but "no teacher is in a position to be responsible for ... the student's total educational situation (p.6)." Unquestionably, learning communities address important educational concerns, as Hill (1985) has voiced. Obviously, with the installation of various LCs within or outside the classroom setting (Stein & Hurd, 2000; Hurd & Stein, 2004; Vat, 2000), HSD could be enhanced through promoting intellectual communication between faculty members and students, making connections among courses, bridging students' academic and social worlds, as well as giving faculty members some new perspectives as reflective practitioners on collaborative student development. Eventually, as Tinto (1997) has pointed out, the perceived benefits that result from LCs should include enhanced student intellectual and social development; improved GPA, satisfaction and increased persistence to graduation. LCs that do include a residential element such as in the Residential Colleges (RCs), are supposed to benefit students the most because their connected courses enable them to feel attached to a peculiar community of learning (CoL).

### **Virtual Organizing Campus Communities for HSD**

Accordingly, it is not surprising that many colleges and universities are looking to LCs to tackle their HSD concerns. Yet, Hurd and Stein (2004) remind us that there is no single way to organize LCs and no simple formula for creating successful LCs. Each campus should establish communities according to its unique culture. Each campus must develop its own vision of what a successful learning community is like. The nuts and bolts of organizing LCs require careful planning and work, whether the impetus for such an initiative comes from the college administrators, from faculty members, or from student affairs. The work entails much communication and negotiation among various campus entities. In particular,

it requires designing the specific LC model that works for the specific purpose, recruiting faculty members to develop the LC courses and teach in the LC, crafting the residence life component if it is meant to be a RC-based LC, recruiting students for the LC, and assessing the development of the LCs longitudinally. These steps serve as a hint of what goes into planning a LC, but whichever type of LC to be innovated, the conceptual issues of the LCs, must be closely examined and supported electronically to steer the course of LC planning, especially in the RC setting.

### **The Design Aspirations in LCs**

The twentieth century has witnessed many an educational experiment based on Dewey's (1933) and Meiklejohn's (1932) ideas. Each such attempt has developed and refined our understanding about community and collaboration as part of the learning process. According to Gamson (2000), all such experimentations were based on three common premises: the best learning takes place in relatively small, cohesive communities; learning has to be relevant to students' commitment to a world larger than the university, considering both the academy and society as sites for making knowledge; and education is at its most productive using a combination of tradition and innovation (pp.114-115). The Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington, and the University of California, Santa Cruz, on the central coast of California, both came into existence through state mandates to "develop an innovative structure that would not simply duplicate the existing academic resources of the state" (Yountz, 1984, p.95). Adams (2000) informs of their commitment to "innovative undergraduate education" that would be kept "intimate, personal, encouraging a sense of belonging" (p.131). The many small college buildings on the University of California, Santa Cruz, campus today are a remnant of the original intention to challenge disciplinary segregation by defining individual colleges through their own "coherent and inde-

pendent undergraduate curricula, based upon distinctive thematic definitions of liberal education, and emphasizing interdisciplinary courses and innovative teaching techniques” (Adams, 2000, p.132). Evergreen also considers “Interdisciplinary Studies to be the centerpiece of curricular efforts,” taking the opportunity in the first year to “design the strongest possible and most diverse set of Meiklejohn-like interdisciplinary program we could conceive” (Yountz, 1984, p.95). In *Learning Communities: Creating Connections among Students, Faculty, and Disciplines*, Gabelnick et al. see “recent work in such diverse areas as the social construction of knowledge, collaborative learning, writing and critical thinking, and cognitive and intellectual development, support and resonate with the learning community effort” as directly emerging from those earlier experiments (1990, p.17). Ruth Stein (2004) defines learning communities as the intentional arrangement of environments inside and outside the classroom to achieve learning outcomes by organizing more student interactions with faculty and between students around scholarship. LCs could have residential or non-residential and course or non-course components; however, the overarching goal is to construct seamless learning environments (Kuh, 1996) to enable the maximum potential of student learning and integration of material.

### **The Virtual Organizing Paradigm for LCs**

Learning communities compel professionals to think about learning in different ways, and encourage the construction of environments that maximize learning outcomes. Such a mission very much requires resources, time to plan, and commitments from staff, faculty members, and students. Broadly put, LCs are one example of reform in learning that foster student participation to develop knowledge. In order to best facilitate such a reform, the idea of virtual organizing, at-

tributed to Venkatraman and Henderson (1998), can be considered as a method to galvanize an LC, dynamically assembling and disassembling nodes on a network of people or groups of people, to meet the demands of a particular learning context.

Robert Barr and John Tagg (1995) describe a paradigm shift in higher education from where students passively receive knowledge through instruction, to the *learning paradigm*, where students and instructors are active participants in the acquisition of knowledge. Meanwhile, LCs are said to exemplify and benefit from the rise of constructivist approach to education (Kim, 2005), where knowledge is construed “not as something that is transferred in an authoritarian structure from teacher to student, but rather as something that teachers and students work interdependently to develop” (Cross, 1998, p.5). In fact, while not a new approach in the context of online education, the emergence of virtual organizing in response to the concept of virtual organization, which appeared in the literature around the late twentieth century (Byrne, Brandt, & Port, 1993; Cheng, 1996; Davidow & Malone, 1992; Goldman, Nagel & Preiss, 1995; Hedberg, Dahlgren, Hansson, & Olve, 1997), has rendered a promising means to support a virtual participation model in the LCs.

Undeniably, LC’s have been revived owing in part to some recent concerns about teaching and learning in college (Stein, 2004). In the 1998 final report, *Powerful Partnerships: a Shared Responsibility for Learning*, presented by the Joint Task Force on Student Learning (<http://www.myacpa.org/pub/documents/taskforce.pdf>), ten principles for higher education professionals from both academic and student affairs to improve student learning, have been proposed. Of particular relevance to LCs in the report include several essential contexts (pp. 3, 6-8): 1) learning is fundamentally about making and maintaining connections; 2) learning is done by individuals who are intrinsically tied to others as social beings; 3) learning is strongly affected by the edu-

cational climate in which it takes place; and 4) much learning takes place informally beyond the classroom walls. To facilitate such conditions for learning, virtual organizing renders two relevant assertions. Firstly, a virtual organization (say, an electronic form of LC) should not be considered as a distinct structure (such as a physical CoL) in an extreme and rigid form (Jagers, Jansen, & Steenbakkens, 1998), but virtuality is a strategic characteristic applicable to every organization (including a LC). Secondly, information and communications technology (ICTs) is a powerful enabler of the critical requirements for effective virtual organizing. Thereby, virtual organizing helps emphasize the ongoing process nature of the organization (LC), and it presents a framework of achieving virtuality in terms of three distinct yet interdependent vectors: a) virtual encounter for organization-wide interactions; b) virtual sourcing for asset configuration; and c) virtual expertise for knowledge leverage. The challenge for virtual organizing is to integrate the three hitherto separate vectors into an interoperable ICT platform that supports and shapes the new organizational initiative (LCs), paying attention to the internal consistency across the three vectors.

## **SCENARIO PLANNING OF LIVING-AND-LEARNING PROGRAMS**

Indeed, through some intentional collaborative restructuring of the curriculum and some elaborate design of the spaces for learning, it is intended that well conceived HSD practices could be realized electronically, through virtual organizing, in various forms of RC-based learning communities. According to Michael Porter (1985), it is not uncommon to use scenarios in strategic planning to identify what types of practices are appropriate for specific organizations (campuses). Living-learning programs, also known as residential college programs, are characterized by scholarly

community, deep learning, strong sense of belonging, a careful integration of the intellectual and social dimensions of university life, and democratic education with a spirit of innovation and experimentation (Meiklejohn, 1932; Goodman, 1964; Newmann & Oliver, 1967; Boyer, 1987; Guarasci & Cornwell, 1997). These are elements organized to introduce and integrate academic and social learning in residence hall settings through faculty involvement with the goal of an enriched learning experience for all participants (Schoem, 2004). At their best, such programs represent the genuine model of learning and community (Ryan, 2001; Waltzer, 1992) that is so much desired but still so elusive at many of our colleges and universities; yet, the inadequacies observed on different campuses to fully tap into the rich intellectual potential of bringing our students and faculty members together do call for a renewal and strengthening of the bold vision represented by such programs.

## **The Nature of Collegiate Community**

According to John Gardner (1990), “the community teaches. If it is healthy and coherent, the community imparts a coherent value system. If it is fragmented or sterile or degenerative, lessons are taught anyway – but not lessons that heal and strengthen. It is community and culture that hold the individual in a framework of values; when the framework disintegrates individual value systems disintegrate (p.113)”. Colleges and universities exist for purposes beyond developing knowledge and skill in our students. They are the sanctuaries of our personal and civic values, incubators of intellect and integrity. A collegiate community must be more than a collection of buildings connected by wires and fiber cables; instead, it must be a set of relationships that recognize and celebrate a shared vision of purpose and values. In such a collegiate community, students must be recognized and respected as emerging scholars and are given

voice to express ideas and opinions. In one of the most familiar and informing legacies of campus communities, Ernest L Boyer (1990) rendered some essential characterizations for campus LCs. Namely, they must be a purposeful community where students and faculty share learning goals; an open community where freedom of expression is nurtured and civility affirmed; a just community where diversity and the sacredness of each person is honored; a disciplined community, where individuals accept their obligations for the common good; a caring community where the nobility of service to others is upheld; and a celebrative community where the campus heritage and traditions are central to the values and culture of student development.

### **The Context of Virtual Organizing the Collegiate Community**

The first of the three vectors in virtual organizing deals with the new challenges and opportunities for interacting with the members of an organization (a campus community). The second focuses on the organization's requirements to be virtually integrated in a network of interdependent (learning and knowledge) partners, so as to manage a dynamic portfolio of relationships to assemble and coordinate the necessary assets for delivering value for the organization. The third is concerned with the opportunities for leveraging diverse sources of expertise within and across organizational boundaries (different residential colleges, or even different university campuses) to become drivers of value creation and organizational effectiveness. All these three vectors are accomplishable by the provision of suitable information system (IS) support, under the auspices of modern ICTs, whose ongoing design represents the IS/ICT challenge of every organization (university campus) in this Internet age.

### **Virtual Encounter**

The idea of providing remote (or online) interaction with the organization (campus community) is not new, but has indeed been refined with the advent of the Web technologies. Many campuses feel compelled to assess how their student services can be experienced virtually in the new medium of the Web 2.0 or Web 3.0 era (Li & Lee, 2010). The issue of customization is important. It requires a continuous information exchange with parties of interest, which in turn requires an organizational design that is fundamentally committed to operating in this direction. Pragmatically, organizations (campus communities) need to change from an inside-out perspective to an outside-in perspective. In the HSD context, this is often characterized by the emergence of different virtual communities of learning (CoLs), with the capacity to influence the organization's directions with a distinct focus in a wider campus community. Thereby, it is believed that as virtual organizing becomes more widespread (effective), organizations (universities) must recognize communities as an important part of the value system and respond appropriately in their operational strategies.

### **Virtual Sourcing**

The idea is to focus on creating and deploying intellectual and intangible assets for the organization (campus community) in the form of a continuous reconfiguration of critical capabilities assembled through different relationships in the network of CoLs. The mission is to set up a resource network, in which the organization is part of a vibrant, dynamic network of complementary capabilities. The strategic leadership challenge is to orchestrate an organization's (CoL's) position in a dynamic, fast-changing resource network where the organization as a whole, and the individual CoLs



can carefully analyze her relative dependence or inter-dependence on other players in the resource coalition and ensure her unique capabilities (or character in the making).

### Virtual Expertise

The idea is to focus on the possibilities and mechanisms for leveraging expertise at different levels of the organization (university). In today's college campuses, many tasks are being redefined and decomposed so that they can be done at different locations and time periods. However, the obvious challenge in maximizing learning-unit expertise often rests not so much in designing the technological platform to support community (or in a smaller scale, group) work, but in designing the organizational structure and processes to facilitate such work. The message is clear: though knowledge, often alive in the human act of knowing, is more often an accumulation of experience that is more a living process than a static body of information. Thereby, it must be systematically nurtured and managed (or facilitated). In fact, many an organization (campus community) is increasingly leveraging the expertise not only from the domain of a local organization (individual residential college), but also from the extended network of broader campus community (other residential colleges, or CoLs around).

### CASE INVESTIGATION OF RC PROGRAMS

Starting from the Fall-2010 semester, the University of Macau (UM) is launching its pilot residential college (RC) program called *Wonderful Life in Colleges* ([http://www.umac.mo/rc/pilot\\_rep.html](http://www.umac.mo/rc/pilot_rep.html)), involving two newly established residential colleges, respectively named *East Asia College*, and *Pearl Jubilee College*. This program is an extensible project in a sense that many of the learning in the two RCs are emergent. UM is

learning to put together a unique RC experience for resident students; the pilot RC program at UM experimented at her Taipa (a part of Macau) campus (with two colleges from 2010 to 2013), is to accrue experience for follow-up continuous improvement to be realized in the official RC program (10 to 12 colleges) in her Hengqin (an island next to Macau's Taipa, inside mainland China) campus, twenty times the size of UM's Taipa campus, starting from the fall of 2013.

### Assumptions about UM's RCs

1. The Residential College System (RCS) at UM is meant to be a four-year interdisciplinary liberal arts program integrating and realizing the vision and mission of an elite undergraduate education, with a unique relevance of General Education (GE), in the emergent context of a research university, emphasizing the quality of teaching and learning.
2. The relevance of GE in our RCS context remains the platform where students and teachers can together reflect on questions of common interest, and issues being mostly cross-disciplinary, are of concern to humanity and modern society. The goal is to nurture students to become educated persons in the modern, ever-changing world, with the intellectual and emotional ability and inclination to be able to appreciate and to become a positive force in any situation.
3. The Residential Colleges (RC's) could be characterized as a living-learning community because RC students live and learn in the same physical space. UM's RC community encourages and welcomes participation from different members of the UM family, including staff, students, faculty, friends, and alumni.
4. The RC's at UM should have a curriculum (activity-based learning, modeled after Harvard's experience) (Harvard, 2007,

p.19) of their own, which is largely interdisciplinary and engages students in creative exploration of the humanities, the social and the natural sciences, the engineering disciplines, the visual and performing arts, as well as some intensive foreign language study. The goal of the RC curriculum is to foster students' genuine appreciation and lifelong passion for learning, not merely individual quests for specialized knowledge, but preparation and encouragement that lead to effective and responsible engagement in the real world.

5. The RC's at UM should make a unique contribution to higher education, by combining typical residence hall facilities (dorm rooms, lounges, dining halls, recreational rooms, and many others) with the academic and artistic resources required for a liberal arts education (classrooms, creative studios, faculty offices, performance and exhibition spaces, and different types of student support services). Each RC is meant to be a small college community fully integrated with the public University of Macau. It is guided by a philosophy of participatory education—basically everyone gets involved in our RC's.

### **Reading Club as Residential Education Program**

The Reading Club is meant to be an activity-based learning embodiment of UM's pilot RC curriculum, presumably called *Think, Read, and Write* program. The requirements of this program are to conceive suitable learning activities for RC students to complete, so as to accomplish some specific RC curricular objectives. In the context of writing the learning outcomes for students joining the Reading Club, such outcomes are compliant with the SMART guideline (O'Neill & Conzemius, 2006): namely, to be strategic and/or specific, to be measurable, to be attainable, to be relevant and realistic, and to be tangible and/or time-bound.

1. **Strategic:** A Strategic Activity Has a Much Greater Chance of Being Accomplished
  - The mission of the Reading Club is not just to provide an opportunity for student residents to gather, to indulge in their reading hobby, and to participate in regular discussions about books they have read, but also to create a living and learning atmosphere for all student residents to experience UM's collegiate community, in close and constant association with one another, and with their tutors, advisors, coaches, and mentors, to experience pastoral care in a trust and safe environment so as to help students grow into an all-round character expected of a college student. So, it is the aim of the RC Reading Club to provide, through thoughtfully designed academic and social activities, an enjoyable opportunity and environment to share with one another, in order to facilitate character development and lifelong learning, to live up to the promise of holistic student development.
2. **Specific:** A Specific Activity Has a Much Greater Chance of Being Accomplished
  - **Who:** Reading groups are made up of individual RC students, who meet at regular intervals to discuss a specific topic such as a related book reading experience. Each group is assigned a facilitator played by volunteer teacher as coach and mentor to probe, to guide, and to steer the course of learning activities.
  - **What:** Reading group gatherings tend to be more personal and intimate since members have the chance to meet often, face-to-face and they usually could develop a strong social and intellectual dimension through mutual sharing. It is mentoring in ac-

tion, or rather in the terms of pastoral care, shepherding in action, especially when student writing is expected, such as from their own blogs.

- **Where:** Popular places for reading groups to meet include RC meeting or recreational rooms, library discussion venues, café or even in restaurants over meals. In practice, students could also meet online through group e-spaces that should not be a big problem with current Web facilities.
  - **Why:** Each reading group tends not to grow too big (not more than 10 persons typically) so, as members they have more control over the choice of reading matter. Usually, the reading for each period (say, two weeks to a month) is voted from a list of suggested titles or the members may each take turns suggesting a book.
  - **When:** Typically, twice a month for face-to-face gathering, but unlimited online exchange is always plausible, with the setup of some group e-spaces. However, the small size per group also means the views and perspectives involved in the discussion can be limited. This could be compensated by timely bringing in two or more groups with the similar topic chosen during the same period, if RC's were to organize student residents in groups of 10 each for various reading club activities.
  - **How:** One possible mode of operations could be the single-title selection. This is the most common method, where one title is selected at a time and all members read the same book in the same time frame. They then meet to discuss the selected book and this method works particularly well for those who like intensive discussion of books. Members are responsible for obtaining their own copy of each period's title, although they can either buy (new or second hand) or borrow from the library. It is nonetheless recommended that individual students keep a Web blog of what they experience during the reading so as to induce the reading and sharing with their fellow students.
3. **Measurable:** Establish Concrete Criteria for Measuring Progress toward the Attainment of a Specific Goal
- **Kick-Off Activity:** Invite each entering RC student to sign in a form with a specific section called Reading Club Questionnaire (by default, every RC student resident is a member of the Reading Club, as an RC curriculum requirement, with the goal to develop student's *Think-Read-Write* ability through learning-by-doing).
    - Provide a simple survey to conduct self-evaluation in proficiency of reading, thinking and writing: Good, Average, and Remedial.
    - Provide some categories of reading materials to collect student reading favorites: Books, Magazine, Blogs, and many conceivable others.
    - Ask how strongly student would like to see his or her abilities in reading, thinking, and writing improve, to get the most of his or her study at UM. Provide such choices as: strongly, average, not at all.
    - Ask whether the student is aware that his or her achievement in college is closely related to the ability to think, to read, and to write.

4. **Attainable:** Goals Should Challenge Students to their Best, but they Need Also be Achievable
  - **Starting Reading Club Blog:** Today, blogs are inexpensive: most of the popular blogging services offer free-of-charge hosting to bloggers. So, starting a blog will take very little time, though we should pay attention to some developmental questions before setting up student blogs in cyberspace: What is the purpose of the blog? Who will be privileged to post on the blog? Are comments allowed on one another's blogs? It is convinced that each RC should create the necessary blogging facilities to enable students in their Web blogs activities – writing their blogs, expressing themselves through blogging as their journaling activities after reading, preferably on a daily basis. There must be facilitators to lead the blogging activities by writing their own blogs to be the shepherds of students though.
5. **Relevant:** Goals Need to Pertain Directly to the Performance Challenge Being Managed. To be Realistic, Goals for Students to Achieve Must Represent an Objective toward which Students are Both Willing and Able to Work.
  - **Reading Club Community-Minded Ideas:** While Reading Club is initiated with the intention of discussing books or other literatures, it is not uncommon that club activities may evolve into enjoyable social gathering and as members get to know one another, many would become keen on the idea of other activities. Group outings and themed nights based on a particular title, are popular alternatives, where members could organize food and music, for some good cause (charity perhaps) to match the book content, such as serving food and music that have significant meaning in the book or are the favorites of the characters or events in the book. RC Students may also surprise fellow students (those not living in the RC) with their momentum (or gift) of a book that their Reading Club has read and enjoyed, and invite non-RC students to join Reading Club activities, in preparation for their enrolling into the RC house the next school year.
    - **The Key:** All such activities must be organized by the students in the reading groups themselves. So, facilitators among the reading groups must help lead the leadership training in each group to organize themselves and to plan and lead such activities. These are all learning-by-doing episodes, and are extremely important to develop students' abilities in creative problem solving, and other skills highly valued by the University. The underlying requirement is that programs like *Train-the-Trainer* for *Learn-To-Learn*, among students with such theme as *There-is-a-Leader-in-You*, become important.
6. **Timely:** Enough Time to Achieve the Goal-Not Much Time Can Definitely Affect Project Performance. Meanwhile, Goals Must be Tangible so that Students Could Experience them with their Senses
  - A. RCs must provide opportunities for students to integrate the academic mission of UM with a community living environment. RC staff should assist students in creating a living and learning environment, conducive to students' understanding of cross-cultural differences, personal and community

- responsibility, as well as life (or career) planning.
- B. RC staff should work hard to provide a supportive, involving and safe atmosphere within each residential college. A variety of activities and programs are scheduled during the year within each house to meet social and educational needs of students. Students are encouraged to discuss with RC staff their ideas about programs and their living environment.
  - C. The installation of RC Reading Club is meant to be an important means to meet the social and educational needs of resident students, especially to bring forth the perceived RC curriculum objectives. Students, after settling down in a specific RC, will be organized into different small groups, known as the Reading Groups. It is estimated that there could be up to about 15 to 20 groups in each RC, and such groups form the specific community of each RC.
  - D. Each of the RC reading groups must receive leadership training to manage themselves in terms of RC living and learning rules (or expectations) of the house, and be assigned a facilitator to advice and coach their living and learning activities. One of the important topics in leadership training is *Learn-to-Learn* (including upfront practice of *Think, Read, and Write*) among resident students.
  - E. Each of the reading groups under the Reading Club is to be equipped with an electronic group space, with individual electronic personal space for each group members, to encourage their blog writing, and to facilitate intra-group and subsequent inter-group communications. And the whole Reading Club should also be supported with an electronic portal space to facilitate any community-based announcement and activities. Through the personal e-spaces, students are expected to keep their individual learning portfolios in the form of their own blogs, sharable for others' reading. Such personal blogs are considered as a means to share student living and learning experiences, as an important part of their RC habits of learning. It is through students' blogs that their gains of common reading experience, could be made visible – it is an opportunity to learn to read, to think, to experience and to write – some concrete skills valuable throughout their four years of study and beyond.
  - F. There must be some electronic portfolios to keep track of individual students' development. Through active engagement, critical reflection and mentoring of others, the Reading Club activities can truly become the fiber of one's character. It is expected that students could retain at least 60% of what they do, 80% of what they do with guided reflection and 90% of what they teach or give to others. This model should form the basis for UM's RC-GE connection program to truly help students become active engaged citizens in their local and global communities. Throughout their four years, RC participants will reflect on their learning opportunities and service experiences through their electronic portfolios. Such reflections will be guided and responded to by peers, faculty and administrative staff (student affairs and academic affairs).

## **FUTURE TRENDS OF RC-BASED HOLISTIC STUDENT DEVELOPMENT**

Today, an organization's ability to learn is often considered as a process of leveraging the collective individual learning of the organization. We identify with Peter Senge (1990) that the organizations which will truly excel in the future will be the organizations that discover how to tap people's commitment and capacity to learn, and to produce a higher-level organizational asset. For many organizations, that often means leading and fostering the kind of culture that mobilizes people to share what they know with their peers (co-workers or cohorts) without a fear of being questioned, critiqued, or put on the defense. In particular, this culture of sharing which should be in the driver's seat for conceiving and designing the paraphernalia of learning communities in the RC setting in support of holistic student development (HSD) could be developed from the idea of appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Cooperrider, 1986; Vat, 2009b). Through such an inquiry, it is believed that an appreciative environment is needed in any design of living-learning experiences for the RC setting, in which developing an appreciative culture of knowledge sharing (collaborative learning) has the generative potential conducive to the fully functioning of HSD in any living-learning programs.

### **The Potential of Appreciative Coaching**

The practice of appreciative coaching (AC) attributed to (Orem, Binkert, & Clancy, 2007) is developed from the context of appreciative inquiry whose philosophy is based on the assumption that inquiry into and dialogue about strengths, successes, hopes and dreams is itself a transformational process (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). AC describes an approach to coaching that shows individuals how to tap into or rediscover their own sense of wonder and excitement about their

present life and future possibilities. It is an approach deemed very promising to enable students to grow psychologically, morally, intellectually and spiritually in the RC setting. AC is meant to guide individual students through different stages of appreciative development: discovery, dream, design and destiny – that inspire them to an empowering view of themselves and their future. The core process of AC begins with the selection of a topic, such as “enhancing student learning through implementing a LC in the RC setting.” At the outset of the coaching relationship such as in the discovery stage, core questions serve to explore the student's strengths, past successes, work and personal values, and the one or two things he or she longs to have more of in life. From the answers to these questions come the tools for learning and change. Throughout the RC experience, as in the dream stage, student and coach/mentor come together to make sense of the answers to the core questions so that they may apply these answers to the chosen topic to create something with which both the student and the mentor can explore and experiment. Once the student client could bring his or her dream into clear view, it is time to design a plan for the dream. Design implies a plan or an impression or a mock-up of some future reality. There is no assumption that an initial design is the final design. Experimentation is the order of the day. The ultimate design should incorporate as many of the skills and strengths of the client as is possible or appropriate. Typically, student clients step into the destiny stage once they have begun to implement the concrete actions and practices they identified and designed in the design stage for realizing their desired future. The destiny stage is a time for student clients to acknowledge and celebrate the accomplishments they are making in either moving toward or actually realizing their dream. At the conclusion of this stage, students may choose to move to a second cycle of AC by expanding on other elements of their dream or creating a new dream. This is an excellent opportunity for coaches/mentors to help student

clients reflect on the work they have done and appreciate the result they have achieved. This AC process of emphasizing the positive should turn out to be a pleasurable experience; hence, it is highly recommended as a practice of student HSD coaching or mentoring in the RC setting.

### **Appreciating the Flexibility of Virtual Participation**

The idea of virtual participation, as introduced at the beginning of the chapter, is based on the blueprint of virtual organizing, attributed to Venkatraman and Henderson (1998), which could be considered as a means of galvanizing an LC, dynamically assembling and disassembling nodes on a network of people or groups of people, to meet the demands of a particular learning context. In practice, it is interesting to observe how the ideas of virtual participation can be applied to nurture the growth of the various CoLs in the campus environment. In the pilot RC setting at the University of Macau (UM), an attempt has been made to put in place a pilot RC wikis initiative for the convenience of supporting online participation from students, RC personnel as well as academic staff.

#### **UM Pilot Wiki Initiative for RC Living-Learning Program**

Under this pilot wiki program, each RC is provided with an electronic space (e-space) whose administration is supported by a coordinator designated by the RC. Under this RC e-space, accessible through the Internet, we could install an electronic space respectively for each volunteer academic member, for each student, for each course offered by the RC, as well as for each related project/program of interest. Each such e-space could be managed (or administrated) by the respective person involved: an e-space for an academic staff member by his or her own self; an e-space for a student by him- or herself; a course e-space by

the course instructor; and a project e-space by the project leader. Access control could be set for such spaces by the administrator of the page, under basic regulations of the CLE (collaboration and learning environment) scheme. This wiki-based CLE could afford individuals the ability to edit their e-spaces to serve their respective educational purposes (teaching, learning, assessment, and research), or in the context of RC, activity-based learning, such as Reading Club. Through this CLE, our RCs aim to serve such purposes as (the list being not exhaustive):

1. To encourage student-centered learning: Even our students can build their web pages, embed images and video, and post documents on their e-spaces.
2. To encourage teacher-student collaboration: Both teacher and students could be invited into one another's e-spaces to participate in such activities as sharing, discussing, advising, coaching, and mentoring.
3. To assist teaching/learning support: At the discretion of individual staff, coordinate day-to-day teaching work and activity schedules. Timely share and comment on assessment findings. Possibly centralize links to outside resources and upload presentations.
4. To facilitate RC coordination: Manage projects, coordinate meeting agendas and document action-items and decisions. Share reports and presentations to a broader audience.

#### **Virtual Encountering RC-Based CoLs**

From a nurturing perspective, it is important to identify what CoLs are desirable in the RC setting, and how, if they already exist, but are not already online, to enable them to be online in order to provide more chances of virtual encounter of such communities, to the organizational members. For those communities already online, it is also important to design opportunities of interaction

among different online communities, to activate their knowledge sharing. Since it is an important CoL practice not to reduce learning (knowledge) to a transferable object, what counts as learning (knowledge) is often produced through a process of communal involvement, which includes all the possible controversies, debate and accommodations. This collective character of knowledge construction is best supported online with individuals given suitable ICT support to participate and contribute their own ideas. An ICT subsystem, operated through virtual encounter, must help achieve many of the primary tasks of a CoL, such as encouraging student participation, establishing a common baseline of knowledge and scaffolding what should be well understood so that people in the community can exercise their creative energies on the learning issues of interest to the community's collective growth

### **Virtual Sourcing RC-Based CoLs**

From the discussion built up above, it is not difficult to visualize the importance of identifying the specific expertise of each potential CoL in the organization (the RCs), and if not yet available, planning for its acquisition through a purposeful nurture of expertise in various CoLs related to different RC curricula of studies. This vector focuses on creating and deploying intellectual and intangible assets for the specific RC in the form of a continuous reconfiguration of critical capabilities scattered among the CoLs, assembled through different relationships in the network of CoLs distributed within and across the RCs. An ICT subsystem, operated through virtual sourcing, must help the RC understand precisely what knowledge will give it the unique edge. The RC then needs to acquire or develop this knowledge, keep it on the cutting edge, deploy it, leverage it in operations, and steward it across the networks of CoLs.

### **Virtual Expertizing RC-Based CoLs**

It is important to understand that not everything we know can be codified as documents and tools for the use of the RCs. Sharing tacit knowledge requires interaction and informal learning processes such as storytelling, conversation, coaching, and apprenticeship. The tacit aspects of knowledge often consist of embodied expertise – a deep understanding of complex, interdependent elements that enable dynamic responses to context-specific problems. This type of knowledge is very difficult to replicate. In order to leverage such knowledge, an ICT subsystem, operated through virtual expertise, must help hooking people with related expertise into various networks of CoLs, in order to facilitate sharing such knowledge to the rest of the RC communities.

### **Remarks for Continuing Challenge**

The major challenge to support virtual participation in a RC program lies in the installation of an appreciative knowledge environment (AKE) (Vat, 2010, 2009a) in which electronic support for AC (appreciative coaching) to enable collaborative knowledge work among students and between teachers and students is made available, especially in their respective work and study settings. Currently, the challenges of how to enhance the value of RC-specific knowledge work have rendered, at least, three main design reflections: 1) support the actual practices and daily tasks of the participants (teachers and students); 2) collect experiences and represent them in an accessible and equitable manner; and 3) provide a framework to guide the knowledge process.

#### ***Support the Actual Practices and Daily Tasks of the Participants***

The AKE environment should support the actual practices and daily tasks of teachers by helping them guide students' learning process through



the creation of a visible history of student work. For students, the AKE should support learning practices and tasks by making the thinking of their peers more visible and by illustrating the process of collaborative problem solving through both individual and group inquiry activities. Moreover, from a knowledge integration perspective, the design of living and learning programs involves developing a repertoire of models for explaining situations. What type of knowledge integration framework can best help students and teachers in their daily practice?

*Collect Experiences and Represent them in an Accessible and Equitable Manner*

The AKE environment should collect experiences and represent them in an accessible and equitable manner to promote the process of connecting ideas so that participants (students and teachers) can use them in subsequent tasks such as during follow-up clarification and illustration. Communities, if viewed as a network of relationships and resources, can be structured to elicit ideas, develop shared understanding, and promote the integration of a diverse set of perspectives. It is important to investigate the potential of structuring discussions in different ways based on the type of discussion and the associated pedagogical goals. Linking different types of pedagogical goals to design strategies is a challenging task because most of the students are yet to get accustomed to reflecting on the nature of their contributions.

*Provide a Framework to Guide the Knowledge Process*

The AKE environment should encourage participants to make sense of their learning by creating a culture where people ask each other for justification and clarification. It is essential to investigate how participants adjust their learning behavior as their peers prompt them to support their ideas with evidence. One strategy is to create some commonly agreed upon criteria and to examine

how these criteria are adopted and transformed by community members as they interact with one another. For communities to maintain coherence and develop a sense of what is desirable behavior, it is important that a strong community culture be established with a common set of values and criteria for making contributions. Student communities need a general framework to help define the mission and vision for their knowledge process.

## **CONCLUSION**

Today, many educational institutions across the world have implemented electronic learning (e-learning) environments (Curran, 2004; Salmon, 2005; OECD, 2005; HEFCE, 2005, 2009; JISC, 2007, 2010), for the convenience of their teachers and students. This new way of facilitating teaching and learning, coupled with the RC setting has the potential to extend learning methodologies, to open up opportunities for flexible online learning as well as to challenge more traditional methods of course delivery (Vat, 2009a). At the same time, it adds a degree of complexity to educational development and curriculum design. It is experienced that the key to student success is to concentrate on not merely thinking of how to integrate different sorts of content resources, but also on developing educational processes that blend online with face-to-face interactions. In this regard, the idea to support RC-based program participation online is to empower students to learn through various Web-based materials and activities including text-reading, simulations, video demonstrations or dialogue, and such resources as chat rooms, message boards, wikis, podcasts, and RSS feeds that have been purposely built for RC living and learning experience. Indeed, the increasing adoption of collaborative learning and the growth in online support has reflected the current shift away from teaching as a means of transmitting information towards enabling learning as a student-generated activity. Collaborative learning online is a timely

example of a blended learning experience for both teachers and students. In fact, the context of blended learning (Eklund, Kay, & Lynch, 2003) offers the possibility of changing our attitudes not only as to where and when learning takes place, but in terms of what resources and tools can support learning and the ways in which these might be used. In particular, blended learning fosters integration of different spaces, allowing students to learn from university, or from home or residence hall or on the move. It offers flexibility in the time when learners can participate in courses, reducing or removing restrictions arising from the balancing of school or home commitments with study. It opens up the range of media resources that can be used for learning. The blend of space, time and media offers new possibilities as to the sorts of activities students can carry out and the ways they can collaborate, using available electronic tools. Literally, the integration of physical and online spaces means that communities can form and interact in ways that were previously unimaginable. It introduces the possibility of interacting in real time (synchronously) in conjunction with opportunities to collaborate over a period of time (asynchronously). This in turn allows exploration of different forms of dialogue and new types of learning. New media resources and tools open up possibilities for students to create their own resource banks, integrating self-generated intellectual assets with more formal materials sourced from libraries around the world. This brings into question some of the traditional values of education, such as who owns, creates and controls resources and knowledge. New types of learning activities thereby challenge our thinking as to how learning might be facilitated, creating new etiquettes of learning and teaching, and shifting the locus of control from the teacher to the learner. This is the essence of holistic student development that could be enhanced through virtual participation, especially in the RC context.

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## KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

**Appreciative Coaching:** A coaching method derived from the change management philosophy called appreciative inquiry developed in the 1980s in the US, whose philosophy is based on the assumption that inquiry into and dialogue about

strengths, successes, hopes and dreams is itself a transformational process.

**Holistic Student Development:** A learner-centered student nurturing practice based on the essence of whole-person education, emphasizing the holistic development of a person including various aspects such as intellectual, physical, social, moral, and spiritual development of our students, especially in higher education.

**Learning Communities:** A learning community is a group of people who share common values and beliefs, are actively engaged in learning together from each other. Such communities have become the template for a cohort-based, interdisciplinary approach to higher education today.

**Scenario Planning:** Also referred to as scenario thinking or scenario analysis, is a strategic planning method some organizations use to make flexible long-term plans. It is often regarded as the act of testing various solutions to a problem situation through enacting it against possible futures.

**SMART Scheme:** A practical scenario planning method, emphasizing that any activity must be specific or strategic, implying a much greater chance of being accomplished (S); any activity must be measurable, implying that measuring progress toward the attainment of a specific goal must start with establishing concrete criteria (M); any activity planned must be attainable (A), implying that such goals should challenge the persons involved, to their best, to accomplish some achievable goals; any activity planned must be relevant or realistic (R) implying that such goals to be achieved, must represent an objective towards which students are both willing and able to work; any activity must be timely and tangible, implying that such goals could actually be experienced with our senses given enough time to effect the goals.

**Virtual Organizing:** An organization development blueprint to make use of Web and mobile technologies to organize online various knowledge assets, services, and activities for the convenience of learning and transfer among people in the form of learning communities.

### ***Scenario-Planning for Learning in Communities***

**Virtual Participation:** An organizational development scheme to encourage online participation of learning activities, say, in the context of higher education institution (university) where

students and teachers need to participate online to facilitate, encourage, and reflect on learning online.