The Moving Shadow: A Landscape of Learning in CONNECTEDkind

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Shadows stretch and contract each time the light shifts, their tones drifting as the change shape. When the light trembles, the shadow trembles with it, and its expression emerges from the relationship between illumination and the natural objects it touches.

I encountered CONNECTEDkind during a time when people around the world hesitated to interact, keeping distance through social distancing while daily reports of infection numbers filled the news. In a life where space had opened between one person and another, CONNECTEDkind offered a way to stay connected despite our physical separation. It became a place where we could share the present moment across locations and borders, mediated through our computer screens. It was a time that not only functionally CONNECTED us, but also restored the sense of drawing near to the unseen world of daily life.

What might this practice bring to school education? Was it merely an experiment in using digital tools to share and appreciate art? Or was CONNECTEDkind, in fact, questioning the very framework of "evaluation" itself?

Two experiences shaped the way I came to see this. The first was encountering the classroom practice of Ms. Suzuki. The second was the picture book "*Motion Silhouette: Stories of Light and Shadow*".

Ms. Suzuki's practice was filled with discoveries and moments that stirred the heart. Even the atmosphere of the classroom felt as if a gentle current of time was flowing through it. There was no trace of the stereotypical "teacher-like" presence. Instead, she watched over the children with empathy, attuning her imagination to their works as if listening closely to quiet voices. The children expressed their ideas freely and expansively, wrapped in a sense of safety that came not from being evaluated but from being accepted as they were.

Motion Silhouette is a picture book in which shadows rise when illuminated by the reader's light, and these shadows open new spaces within the story. The idea behind this book and the practice of CONNECTEDkind share something essential. In both, no predetermined learning goal exists. In the book, it is the reader who constructs the world. In CONNECTEDkind, it is the creator.

Through the picture book, I realized that the images used in CONNECTEDkind capture only a single instant that contains the light, the natural objects, the photographer's intention and even the air

of that precise moment. From that single point, it is the viewer's imagination that spins the story. And the works that emerge from the photographs then unfold again into entirely new worlds when encountered by those who view them.

Imagination is "the mental act of taking what is present as a clue to draw what is absent toward us, or even to create it" (Washida, 2019). To draw, to narrate, to appreciate and then to connect again with someone else's everyday life. This kind of circulation lies on a different plane from the compartmentalized "subjects" confined within school. Knowledge fragmented into separate domains may be effective for memory tests, but it does not easily become a living mode of thought connected to the world.

Modern education has been shaped in response to the demands of the labor market. In a system where means are arranged toward predefined ends, learning must be measurable. Efficiency is prioritized, standardization is advanced and achievements are ranked on a single scale of points. Only what fits this framework is treated as valuable. Yet there is learning that does not fit. Just as shadows shift with the flicker of light, our thinking and sensibilities move constantly within relationships and situations.

The works of CONNECTEDkind illuminate a realm that cannot be contained by the frame of "evaluation." within the photograph lies only a fleeting shadow, but the stories that emerge from it are countless. They exceed the photographer's intention, merging with the experiences and life-worlds of both the creator and the viewer. There, learning appears not as a "result" but as a "relationship," deepening through dialogue rather than scores.

What, then, are we trying to measure in school? And is learning something that can be captured in a single moment? Even if we draw the outline of a shadow, it will take on another form in the next instant. The shadow that emerges in the learning space depends on the angle of the light and the way the work is received, shaped through dialogue among those who gather there. That silhouette, in turn, plays a role in shaping our society.

What CONNECTEDkind offers is an experience akin to seeing light through the medium of shadow. In that space, the central focus shifts from the binary ease of "can or cannot," "good or bad" to questions such as "What did you see?", "What did you feel?" and "What did you weave from it?" When we turn our attention to the subtle motions and the open spaces that arise where learning meets the lived world, education transforms into a place that nurtures living thought. CONNECTEDkind

reveals a mode of learning that cannot be captured by evaluation and the power of imagination that illuminates what would otherwise remain unseen. When education learns to welcome that movement, it will begin to reflect new forms of learning.

References

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