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Identity and Ownership of Education in Africa Enlightened by Aboriginal Philosophy

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Abstract

The systems of education in the world have adopted many philosophies of education that are either skewed toward change or committed to conservancy. African philosophy and African philosophy of education form an activity and a process which is context-sensitive, whereby the relativity factor defines the peculiarity of thinking about education. However, alien philosophies have permeated the systems of education in Africa. The fulcrum of this treatise is to initiate thought which is necessary to avert this contemporary situation facing education theory, policy, and practice in Africa by interleaving African ontology and epistemology to augment the systems of education. Additionally, this treatise brings to the frontline the essence of African thought in education. This treatise underlines that education that teaches the learner about learning is insufficient, because the focal point of such education is to draw its attention only to the essentials for the longevity of an alienated pedagogy itself as well as to perpetuate the supremacy of foreign influence.

Keywords: aboriginal, philosophy, education, identity, ownership

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The difficulties that confront many regions of the world are, critically, caused by a collapse of the systems designed to provide education. The impact of this crisis is more severe in sub-Saharan African countries, where the history of endorsed systems of education shows that most of them (systems of education) do not properly integrate the aspirations of African people. It is obvious that these systems of education are devoid of African ontology and epistemology. Accordingly, aboriginal African ontology and epistemology shape the basis of African philosophical perspectives that are not archaic, but active and ongoing, and inculcating African ontology and epistemology translates to epistemic African aboriginal identity, native epistemological framework, unique African philosophy, proficient knowledge-base, and necessary ideals for African society (Mutekwe, 2015, p. 1298). It is probable that alienated education systems emanate from educational disharmony and societal aspirations which are subsumed under the question of relevance to the people (Mwinzi, 2020, p. 118). Relevance of education is founded on identified regional and philosophical frameworks within the totality of a specified cultural locale, including validated realms of a given society (Mwinzi, 2020, p. 678).

The basis of philosophical implication in these systems of education focuses heavily on what is taught, how it is taught, and why it is taught, leading to the importance of understanding, respecting, and acknowledging aboriginal thought in the systems of education (Lebaka 2019, p. 65). An aboriginal African thought in the systems of education raises the necessity of reviewing the distinct principles endorsed in Africa, defining the place of African thought in the world, binding Africans together, and humanizing Africans (Lebaka 2019, p. 67). Therefore, guided by the third assertion regarding "why it is taught," the necessity for relevance tends to ascend to the front as implied in aboriginal African line of thought. Aboriginal African thought shapes the practicality of definite educational concepts, principles, and values. Similarly, aboriginal African thought in the systems of education introduces the

necessity of defining African philosophy and African philosophy of education. In this case, asking questions about concepts, seeking clarifications and distinctions, and opening up new conceptual space to support claims are means of engaging in philosophy, and any attempted definitions of philosophy tend to emanate from diversity of ideological orientations and backgrounds (Abakare, 2016, p. 5). Accordingly, many definitions point to the complexity of philosophy, while existent reality remains the subject matter of philosophy as immersed in the diversity and complexity of its manifestations (Abakare, 2016, p. 6).

Aspects of diversity and complexity define African ontology and epistemology as action-oriented, which points at enacting an activity of morally worthwhile resolve to realize an impartial feat. It is palpable that the developing an African philosophical perspective in education is an active process that adopts African incisiveness to assess observable and practical pedagogies guided by African metaphysical connectivity (Moyo & Hadebe, 2018, p. 87). Accordingly, aboriginal African philosophy in the systems of education is a strongly notable and riveted action which involves an incessant search for valid reasons. Aboriginal African philosophical thought in the systems of education in Africa identifies how education can provide solutions to some issues challenging the solidarity of the African continent. This explains why aboriginal African line of thought, defined by African ontology and epistemology in terms of ideas, way of life, values, and belief systems, is largely relevant and a fundamental instrument for evaluating education by providing a sense of native direction, self-identity, self-actualisation, the value of an African learner, and the precept of being-and-belonging in the systems of education (Moyo & Hadebe, 2018, p. 82). Integrating aboriginal African philosophical thought in the systems of education draws attention to an investigation of existential and continental problems while determining the educational implications of identified issues.

Aboriginal African thought can be inferred as a theoretical and pragmatic framework for human action in Africa and beyond. Aboriginal African framework is a form of human

action focusing on continental magnitude and adopting its pragmatic paradigm to shape the systems of education (Moyo & Hadebe, 2018, p. 88). The paradigm aforementioned by Moyo and Hadebe (2018) is a response to the substance of an African philosophical framework which is applicable in diverse realms of human interaction. This means that aboriginal African philosophy in education is reasonable in its articulations. Furthermore, aboriginal African thought provides a platform of clarifying the purpose of the systems of education in terms of its practicality. This is where aboriginal African philosophy in education demonstrates the facet of moral maturity. Another aspect of the educational paradigm of aboriginal African thought is the necessity of formulating meaningful tactics toward the systems of education guided by fundamental philosophical analysis, suitable themes, subjects, and instructive strategies. The suitability of aboriginal African thought in education ought to be attuned to a continuum where consensual and deliberative dialogue takes precedence.

Aboriginal African thinking in the systems of education is necessary to initiate context-sensitivity where that relativity factor defines the uniqueness of Africa. As part of aboriginal African perspective, education at all levels in Africa remains a central concern and ought to constitute the basis of collective welfare in its diversity. Thus, functional education has to ensue from the environment to resolve the formidable issues in the same milieu. However, it is glaring that the difficulties confronting many regions of the world are caused by a collapse of the systems designed to provide education to those milieus. Often the systems of education tend to exaggerate the zeal for objectivity and reliability instead of relevancy, value, and most importantly, understanding and application (Mwinzi, 2020, p. 118). A system of education which is responsive to the milieu should constitute the totality of the human faculty of that society as a combination of commonly held societal data, experiences, needs, and projections. Hence, what is generally deciphered is that worthwhile education grows out of the environment, and the learning process should be directly related to the pattern of life (Ndille, 2020, p. 33).

The critical cause of divergence is that in an African purview, education is viewed within the precincts of philosophical perspectives endorsed from global magnitude and diversity—not as a set of specializations, but as a collective responsibility. The taxonomy of aboriginal African thought forms a decisive and conceptual base for analyzing and categorizing the paradigm of the systems of education (Mswazie & Mudyahoto, 2013, p. 171). The gist of designing systems of education based on an aboriginal African perspective draws attention to the relevance of education within Africa. This concern occurs because the quest for relevance of the systems of education to be adapted to the realities of Africa has occupied successive generations (Mswazie & Mudyahoto, 2013, p. 170). As a collective responsibility, it implies that education is given everywhere, at any time, by all members of the community, and ought to be closely linked to the environment, directly related to the needs of society, consistent with the productive potential of individuals, and without excessive emphasis on developing acquisition of ideas or applying perceptions, but promoting a sense of being-and-belonging to the community. The implication is that an African-centered system of education should be of necessity, be constructed and time tested, and be guided by undistorted African ontology and epistemology (Mswazie & Mudyahoto, 2013, p. 172). Hence, the process of designing systems of education involves everyone, has a comprehensive character, and preserves societal equilibrium in all aspects of life. Therefore, any slants of the systems of education are grounded in African philosophical perspectives and aligned to the content domains of African purposive ends (Mswazie & Mudyahoto, 2013, p. 175).

In the aboriginal context, the systems of education provide the learner with a sense of security, being-and-belonging, distinctiveness, connectedness, sensitivity, transformative authenticity, and identity processes. In a collective traction, the systems of education devised under aboriginal African ontology and epistemology encompass the values and mores that embody the best of Africa, such that education is not only perceived as a process of preparation, but also a cause of participation in life and work in order to reinvent, reshape, and

regenerate. This is the view that designates interpersonal relationships and the effort to be responsible in terms of unity and the worthwhile cause of communalism of humanity, i.e., unity of purpose (Akoma, 2008, p. 18). Although African education policy, theory, and practice represent a veritable subsystem of foreign systems of education aimed at training aboriginal elites, the essence of examining the impact of reintroducing crucial tenets of African ontology and epistemology in the systems of education in Africa is a practical pursuit (Mutekwe, 2015, p. 1299).

Objectives

(i) to interpret the dominant facets of aboriginal African thought

(ii) to assess the disparity challenging aboriginal African thought in the systems of education

(iii) to situate aboriginal African thought in education policy, theory, and practice

Methodology

This paper is routed and pegged on context-based strategy which is a method and technique established on the conviction that social context and milieu are the real causes that define the systems of education. The processes of learning and accessing knowledge, the perspective of deliberating that knowledge, and having a concrete and abstract framework are indispensable factors that shape the systems of education. Accordingly, aboriginal African thought is necessary to validate, generate, test, and apply context-based strategy to shape the systems of education. In all its incongruent formulae, a context-based strategy of learning harmonizes apparently divergent views not by resolving the paradoxes, but by selecting and blending what is useful and feasible for the purpose of attaining the desired ends (Ekanem, 2012, p. 55). In this case, aboriginal African thought injects knowledge within the context of the user (Owuor, 2007, p. 24). As a system of thought, aboriginal African philosophy constantly adapts to the dynamism of both abstract and empirical knowledge, as well as identifies with existential perspectives of changing social values. Therefore, African lived

experiences are essential theoretical entities derived from epistemological and ontological African foundations (Shizha, 2014, p. 1872).

The context-based methodological slant emanates from the conviction that learning is a social process and activity that is served within the milieu of its practice. However, in Africa, systems of education are not shaped by context-based framework, and this discrepancy is caused by ignoring the perspectives of aboriginal African thought, which is holistic and integrative in its paradigm (Ani, 2013, p. 308). In this case, aboriginal African thought serves as a method of inquiry where learning is estimated as a communal activity centered on the interactions between persons with substantial interests and standard structures. Hence, if aboriginal African thought is not used to guide and assess the systems of education, then existing education does not respond to the existential realities, and subsequently it inhibits the success of learning. Increasingly, there is a universal necessity in Africa for a shift toward identifying and considering the role of aboriginal African thought in the systems of education. A unique aspect of aboriginal African thought is the inevitability of diversity in acquisition of knowledge, as defined by the concepts of knowing, learning, instructing, teaching, and training. This tends to utilize, promote, and enhance awareness of aboriginal African philosophy by integrating various purviews as derived ontological and epistemological perspectives. Informed by this approach, this paper argues that aboriginal African thinking ought to permeate the systems of education in Africa.

Contextualizing Existential Standing of the Systems of Education in Africa

In its origin, philosophy emanates from the societal setting, and as such, African philosophy draws attention to contextual settings adhering to the defined African ontology and epistemology as reflected in moral and ethical values to address issues of societal concern (Lebaka 2019, p. 73). In Africa, the systems of education are alien to the aboriginal African philosophy. It is apparent that many African countries are currently experiencing this perilous crisis, and consequently, it has negative impacts on the systems of education in terms of

education theory, policy, and practice. Any attempt of creating identities in most African systems of education divulges intense contradictions, alternatives, trade-offs, and conflicts, whereby such conflicts, uncertainties, and contradictions lead to eccentric outcomes (Ndille, 2020, p. 39). The intensity of the negation of African thought in education escalated because the systems of education adapted tend to reflect diverse foreign influences, such that what is borrowed to shape African systems of education is alien to the aspirations of African people.

As an effort to minimize alienated perspectives from the systems of education in Africa, this treatise strongly avers that aboriginal thinking in education is a necessary undertaking and that it has a dominant role in the provision of education in Africa. The importance of aboriginal knowledge cannot be disputed, especially now that the world is facing a plethora of challenges which cannot all be solved by mainstream science or technology (Khumalo & Baloyi, 2017, p. 1). A corollary is that an aboriginal African philosophy retains a fundamental cause of generating systems of education founded on the ethical benchmark of African ontology and epistemology. Thus, the systems of education in Africa ought to escalate and internalize the actuality and knowledge as depicted in African aboriginal hought, which can contrive the essence of survival and sustenance of global communities (Khumalo & Baloyi, 2017, p. 1). In relation to ontology and epistemology in Africa, education has remained in a dilemma because it is compelled by an exogenously induced and internalized estimation of alienation, insufficiency, devaluation, and annihilation of African creativity, agency, and value system. Thus, aboriginal African thought is rarely considered as a prime benchmark to shape the systems of education in the African continent. It is questionable why most African countries endorse formal education whose content is still based on alien ontology and epistemology (Moyo & Hadebe, 2018, p. 82).

Subsequently, aboriginal African philosophy and education is shaped and informed by African ontology, epistemology, diversity, identity, connectivity, and adherence to moral standards. These moral standards are analogous to the idea of Lebaka (2019) who asserts that

African thought defines a cultural identity and permeates every facet of human endeavour. African aboriginal thought poses an impact on moral and ethical value systems in order to maintain successful upshots, sustenance, and retention of high standards within the society (Lebaka 2019, p. 74). Ontology and epistemology in Africa are also accompanied by the idea of diversity, but that is correspondingly defined by continuity. In this regard, aboriginal African philosophy is comprised of the uniqueness reserved to African culture and its systematic framework attained through the accumulation of informal and formal experiences and intimate adaption to the cultural setting. This treatise underscores that aboriginal African thought is accumulated and transmitted to individuals over time, owing to societal interaction. Simultaneously, the mode of transmitting aboriginal philosophy is linked to circumstances, experiences, observations, and testing, which might not necessarily apply to the laboratories.

The value and usability of aboriginal philosophy is generated by understanding, continued use, experience, and familiarity (Khumalo & Baloyi, 2017, p. 2). Aboriginal philosophy in the systems of education means that there are many different orientations in Africa, but in a similar thread, Africans persist in striving to continue. An anticipated problem is ameliorated on a holistic view of thought which presupposes a unity of experience, which is in tune with the African state of being founded on the assumption that reality depends on personal experience and the world has meaning, order, and unity by virtue of the lived experience. It is important to note that both the experiencing self, the object of experience, and the cluster of forces intervening in the act of thinking in Africa are governed by the law of causation or the principle of causality, i.e., cause-effect (Amaechi, 2014, p. 113). In this case, the idea of unity in diversity and continuity in variety has a significant basis in aboriginal African philosophy. According to Ezeanya (2015), “the one who pays the piper dictates the tune” and thus, rather than placing the emphasis on African aboriginal thinking in the systems of education, the focus has shifted in favor of the basics of foreign agendas in education theory, policy, and practice (2015, p. 5).

The contemporary systems of education in Africa are underrated and divorced from the centrality of aboriginal African thought as well as the context of Africa. Consequently, it is blatant that contemporary systems of education in Africa are withdrawn and isolated from indigenous knowledge, identity, methods, and content in the realm of sensitive propensity. The fulcrum of this discourse is to dispel this perception from the systems of education through a careful reconstruction and delineation of the meaning and nature of African thought in order to conceptualize and adopt the correct ontological and epistemological implications in education theory, policy, and practice (Amaechi, 2014, p. 108). There is an urgent need to integrate an aboriginal African purview as a model to guide African systems of education in order to generate learners who are properly shaped by native resolve and commitment.

African Diversity and Continuity

Africans are defined by diversity as it is reflected by uniqueness in terms of ethnicity. However, the nature of African existence emanates and culminates at the service of African unity in the sense that peculiar aspects such as are meant to augment communality. Thus, the element of peculiarity is meant to enhance communality which is equally informed by continuity in variety. These components of diversity and continuity of African aboriginal philosophy are identified as systems that serve as versatile and multifaceted means of acquiring knowledge (Ani, 2013, p. 298). Subsequently, diversity and continuity in Africa thought are social constructs determined by powerful and influential thinkers to provide a platform of blended space to support provisions of meaningful education (Ani, 2013, p. 302). In this respect, the stretch of African thinking as defined by diversity and continuity takes on a holistic approach that encompasses experiential, rational, pious, intuitive, symbolic, mythical, and emotional aspects of reality (Ani, 2013, p. 305). A solidity of diversity and continuity in African thought consolidates and propagates African values as a necessity of integrating continental aspirations to the progress and growth of the systems of education in the continent and beyond. All evidence points to a common origin and one destiny of humanity such that

the emotive response of an African is to recognize the subject and object in order to enter into an organic and dynamic relationship which culminates in the conscious apprehension of reality (Amaechi, 2014, p. 110). African thought as expressed in diversity and continuity is not a search for class struggle or fragmentation, but a means of promoting unity toward globalization. Even though Africa is diversely comprised, an African abandons subjective personality to become identified with the other, whereby the other, as per contingent orientation and outlook, attempts to study African epistemic systems, adopting African principles, concepts, and categories (Amaechi, 2014, p. 110). Consequently, that unity, continuity, and diversity cannot be based only on transient and imported systems, but has to include deeper values and norms rooted in ontology, rationality, and African belief systems.

African Ontology and Epistemology

The contemporary systems of education and inherent curricula are largely a reflection of foreign worldviews, which is a fragmentary disconnect from African realities, including lived experiences and aspirations. However, African realities as identified in experiences and aspirations endorse a distinct African epistemology as a crucial point of contextualizing knowledge and rationality in the systems of education in Africa. Similarly, it is sensible to underline that philosophical ideas and insights arise out of history and ontology, but once the ontological facet is omitted there is a prospect of being scuttled in aligning intellectual views, ideas, and values within education theory, policy, and practice (Amaechi, 2014, p. 114). It is palpable that most of the systems of education in Africa are framed within the hegemony of an alien epistemic canon that attributes knowledge to those foreign perspectives. On the contrary, it is necessary to acknowledge that education which is estranged from the milieu of its provision is not adequate to resolve that milieu's existential issues and thus, an African-oriented epistemology and education system are vital and worthy of academic pursuit. In the contemporary era, African ontological values and systems cannot warrant negotiations but integration into the present global and domestic realities of the continent (Ani, 2013, p. 316).

In an African context, epistemology and knowledge are analogous to wisdom. This means that an African scholar may not only seek solutions from an empirical and pragmatic knowledge-base derived from scientific inquiry, but also from the assimilation of wisdom from multidimensional perspectives, which is a central component in academic pursuit within the systems of education in Africa (Ani, 2013, p. 306). Conversely, integrating value from African ontology and epistemology is still a missing link in the systems of education that continues to create unnecessary partiality about the cause and tenure of universal knowledge.

African Existential Connectivity

African society is a corporeal network of relations comparable to the diversity of the parts of an organism. This existential connectivity of being in Africa creates a conclusive and decipherable reality of being-and-belonging. The essence of being-and-belonging in Africa spells out certain values, experiences, and characteristics which resonates in the uniqueness of African epistemology (Amaechi, 2014, p. 114). An individual in an African society can, however, possess a personal space which is necessary to affirm the state of one's own being, possession of thinking potential, potency to advance subjective proficiencies, originality, or personal propensities, but only within the society, and in union with others. Therefore, this idea of an African communality is propelled by the quest to internalize the uniqueness of African ontology and epistemology (Waghid, 2016, p. 13). In a parallel strain, a sense of commonality remains a central component in aboriginal African epistemology (Higgs, 2010, p. 2415). As derived from aboriginal African epistemology, it is palpable that an African finds full dimension in a community. It is within a community that such values as solidarity, togetherness, strong family ties, and connectivity are displayed. This is an omitted link in the theory, policy, and practice in the systems of education in Africa and it explains why African systems of thought are not present and cannot be made explicit within the framework of their own rationality. A glaring discrepancy is that aboriginal African epistemology has been adversely evaluated and that the processes used relate to theories and strategies whose

constraints, rules, and systems of operation suppose a non-African epistemological locus (Letseka, 2013, p. 5). An idea of being-and-belonging, or connectivity, is inherently a network of relations stretching out in a vertical and horizontal manner and in a hierarchical order. The essence of being-and-belonging concentrates on the values of human dignity and frames human rights in a general application of limited but strong concepts such as permissible, reasonable, justifiable, etc., while ratifying essential content (Letseka, 2013, p. 1). Thus, being-and-belonging is a dynamic merger of existence defined by an aboriginal and analogical African ontology and epistemology. This is a vivifying principle for communal stability, as a philosophy focused on collectiveness and practicality and contingent upon relevance. Aboriginal African ontology and epistemology aims at drawing attention to actuality, potentiality, and becoming, such that an African philosophical view in the systems of education in Africa is foreseen to progress a conception of education that can contribute towards imaginative, deliberative, alignment, and responsibility as per the dynamics of being-and-belonging in Africa (Waghid, 2014, p. 270).

African Moral Sensitivity

The authenticity of being-and-belonging as it resonates in aboriginal African ontology and epistemology is deeply defined further within the precincts of ethical maturity and moral sensitivity. Any conception of an African has the notion of a certain propensity toward ethical maturity, sensitivity, and competence annexed to it. According to African ontology and epistemology, a person in Africa is defined by vibrancy, destiny, and uniqueness. In this case, the enterprise of African ontology and epistemology is to examine and enhance an understanding and acceptance of the basic concepts and values that expand moral sensitivity. The uniqueness of the ethical maturity and moral sensitivity of every African positively augments the totality of communal relativity as it is deduced from exemplary commitment to duty, a sense of responsibility, communal refinement, and stability (Waghid, 2014, p. 8). By extension, moral maturity in African ontology and epistemology is an instructive component

of social fiber. As a filament of social fiber, moral maturity is indispensable in the education of an African. Education consists in initiating others into activities and modes of conduct and thought which have standards written into them, by reference to which it is possible to act, think, and feel with varying degrees of skill, relevance, and taste (Letseka, 2013, p. 25). Therefore, in African ontology and epistemology, an individual learns best within a social context. African ontology and epistemology is often noted for being a communal venture that serves as a platform to enable individuals to look forward in their thinking and backward to thread their thoughts to the wisdom strands of the community. In an African perspective, the uniqueness of ethical maturity and moral sensitivity as expressed in moral duty and responsibility remains the basis of absolute loyalty. African ontology and epistemology emphasizes the necessity of producing versatile individuals, but this is omitted in education theory, policy, and practice. A glaring problem facing the systems of education is to produce individuals in whom reason is properly developed, who care about the theoretical life, who are not side-tracked by subjectivism, who know fully what they want, and who have the strength of character to carry it through (Letseka, 2013, p. 26).

Aboriginal African ontology and epistemology that influences education is not only corroborated by the validity of statements, but by the creativity, procedures, and above all the authenticity emanating from an African mind and heart, which comes from moral sensitivity. Aboriginal African ontological and epistemological discourse has a very strong leaning toward an ethical pursuit of producing balanced individuals as per the obliged interest of the community (Waghid, 2016, p. 14). The veracity and accuracy of the mind and heart substantiate the lucidity and causes required to validate the relevance and stability of the systems of education in Africa. Thus, African ontology and epistemology transcend mere logic but, can equally occur in narratives or experiences found in the existence and proliferation of perceptions and beliefs (Waghid, 2014, p. 7).

African Transformative Cause

African ontology and epistemology in the systems of education should serve as an activity which culminates in initiating functional processes. Accordingly, African ideas are the most fundamental realities which can make sense of the world, of reality, of social life, and of human beings in Africa and for Africans (Letseka, 2013, p. 42). In Africa, aboriginal African thought as revealed in African ontology and epistemology is a medium offering an enactment of constructing and reconstructing possibilities. As a prospect, aboriginal African thought is envisaged to acquaint the systems of education with functional and preparational strands in order to initiate African thought and action in education. Thus, in African philosophical discourse, the authenticity of an ethical life rotates on a transformative cause in order to advance morality and humanity within the continent (Waghid, 2016, p. 15). Aboriginal African ontology and epistemology mislaid in the systems of education in Africa draws attention to a need for change. It is therefore critical that African aboriginal philosophy cannot be dispensed in education theory, policy, and practice in the systems of education in Africa.

African Authenticity and Identity

The notions of authenticity and identity are central to the understanding of self and the relation of that self to the rest of reality. In Africa, the dominant approaches to individual identity previously considered as authoritative can fully satisfy the complexity of what it means to be African (Forster, 2010, p. 2). Aboriginal African ontology and epistemology emphasize the significance of authentic identity. Accordingly, survival in Africa lies in the ability to operate within an African frame of reference based upon a proven value system that incorporates a sense of African responsibility (Shockley & Cleveland, 2011, p. 57). African philosophical discourse highlights the necessity of understanding and identifying with the rhythm of nature rather than manipulating nature. Hence, enlightened by aboriginal African ontology and epistemology, this treatise insists that physical reality is not a number of separate, self-contained static objects, which form the sum of the total of their meaning and

identity, but rather a dynamic whole in a constant state of change which is simply an explication of the undivided continuum that is in a perpetual state of flux (Forster, 2010, p. 2). In a parallel scope, an African identifies with community, but not in isolation, such that a meaningful focus of the African systems of education has to emanate from and assimilate the native ways of knowing and customize creativity and dynamic aspects in relation to the natural environment (Mawere, 2015, p. 59). African ethical observances are fundamental, but though all human beings are supposed to be borrowers, some specific traits of originality, identity, and authenticity tend to suggest that an understanding of the African mode of knowledge should be observed when designing the systems of education to match the background of African ontology and epistemology (Amaechi, 2014, p. 109). In this case, authenticity and veracity of African identity in terms of being, thinking, knowledge, philosophy, education etc. are necessary to inform the systems of education. An authentic reflection of Africa in the systems of education has to integrate the components of intangible heritage acquired from social values to insert alien knowledge within the fundamental facets of existing knowledge and its ways of knowing and practices (Mawere, 2015, p. 60). Therefore, a conscious orientation is central to all Africans who are involved in the task of endorsing and proliferating the uniqueness of African identity. African authenticity and identity support the continuity of sharing diverse ideas, perspectives, and opinions for the sake of harmony, and for the inevitable betterment of humanity. A system of education which is formulated to serve Africa ought to emulate this continuity of sharing rather than competition. Aboriginal African ideologies, conceptual frameworks, and imperatives are the main ingredients of African philosophical perspectives that are required to inform education theory, policy, and practice. In other words, the concepts of authenticity and identity create the background that defines African values, and the adoption and transmission of those values (Shockley & Cleveland, 2011, p. 56). Awareness of African authenticity and identity ought to

be central in the systems of education in Africa, and should inform reforms in education theory, policy, and practice.

Integrating Aboriginal African Thought in Education

The nature of a philosophy is the style of its persistent and dominant orientation, an imperative character of philosophy which evaluates extraordinary things using ordinary terms such as "believe" and "knowledge," "cause" and "effect," "explanation" and "substantiation," "space" and "time," "language" and "meaning," "truth" and "perception," "art" and "science," "religion" and "reason," etc. The value of philosophy is to seek, identify, and evaluate the lenses through which experiences are constructed (Stabley, 2010, p. 44). The rationale is that the philosophy of a people always aligns with societal aspirations, and such aspirations must presuppose a certain minimum of organic relationships among their elements. Consequently, integrating philosophy into the events adjacent to human enterprise implies reflecting on the nature of reality as it is radiated from experience (Bhatt, 2011, p. 39). A tradition of philosophy is identifiable in terms of the innermost essence of the intellectual pulse within which it is produced. However, any system detached from its ontological and epistemological framework lacks constitutive relevance of experience, and this is a glaring incongruity in the systems of education in Africa. In a parallel strand, the contingency of aboriginal African philosophy in education is to provide a paradigm of critical engagement with the systems of education in order to initiate a liberating potentiality shaped by situational discourse. An African philosophy has a threefold basis of consideration: mental, spiritual, and reasonable abstraction applied in human action and interaction within the context of African ontology, epistemology and experience introduces incorporeal perspective of African reality (Ekanem, 2012, p. 56). Accordingly, abstract arguments, hilarious rhetoric, and malicious propositions are neither relevant nor compelling in aboriginal African philosophical discourse. A leading aspect of rational discourse or abstract justification that is acceptable in Africa has to be a proposal toward collective results, which ought to be integrated in African systems of

education. Aboriginal African thought that upholds African conventions is a compelling facet to shape the systems of education in Africa. An inclusive trend is that provision and development of knowledge anywhere is naturally cultural and historical. It is determined to a great extent by the social context emanating from interaction informed by the ontology and epistemology of a people (Ekanem, 2012, p. 56). Thus, aboriginal African thought which should inform the systems of education in Africa has to provide the facets of coherence and consistency. This puts knowledge production and sharing at both communal and universal levels in its cultural context by involving the community knowledge holders as producers and users at the core that defines the systems of education (Kaya & Seleti, 2013, p. 41). Accordingly, the systems of education in Africa have failed to embrace the aboriginal African thought. A crucial cause of the missing link of aboriginal African thought in the systems of education is that the learners are only partially prepared to align their education with the existential challenges, and in this case, internalize the holistic nature of African ontological and epistemological underpinnings (Kaya & Seleti, 2013, p. 41). A significant trait of African ontology, and by extension epistemology, is inter-subjectivity, which refers to shared dignity. This transcends a functional relationship to espouse active engagement in horizontal relationships that shapes the true identity of an African. Thus, true identity is not only based on the tasks or roles of the individuals, but communal objectivity. Communal objectivity consists of a resilient relationship of dignity and respect that ratifies human individuality as an ontological fact and an analytic finitude and that ascribes ontological primacy in the African milieu (Forster, 2010, p. 9). Therefore, negation of this connection is the cause of opposing identities and limitations facing the systems of education in Africa. A system of education that lacks ingrained identity cannot serve the societal needs that it purports to address. Accordingly, this paper underlines that the aim of aboriginal African philosophy is so rich in terms of its communalism, functionalism, preparationism, perennialism, and

comprehensiveness, that it should be transmitted to the systems of education which are currently directed by foreign interests and uninterested in supporting an African identity

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is essential to underline that African systems of thought are rational if one understands why they are held and logical if one understands the premises on which they emanate from. It is fundamental to postulate that systems of education designed by alien philosophies do not serve the goals of societal initiatives. In Africa, alien systems of education should be retracted to integrate the richness of diversity and experience of African ontology and epistemology into the African systems of education. A meaningful system of education in Africa has to consider Africans' individual and collective identity which emanates from deeper values and norms rooted in the ontology, epistemology, and belief systems of Africa. Thus, a basic mode of cognition derived from the ontology and epistemology enables learners to know themselves and their world. Aboriginal African thinking in the systems of education is comparable to a corporeal reality which animates and supports the expressions of education theory, policy, and practice in Africa. As derived from aboriginal African ontology and epistemology, the systems of education are reflected throughout African contexts, methods, and expressions. This treatise construes that there is a need for new structures, new foundations, and new realities in the contemporary philosophy of education in Africa. This is the backdrop whose key collective outlook of aboriginal African thought as derived from African ontology and epistemology is a consistent and pragmatic statement about the nature and value of education in Africa. Accordingly, the effectiveness of the systems of education in Africa requires aboriginal relevance in pedagogy so that education will (i) explore existential deficits, (ii) examine learner achievement while maintaining identity, and (iii) assess discrepancies within the systems of education and societal structures (Shockley & Cleveland, 2011, p. 59). Therefore, this article concludes that the systems of education in African cannot thrive devoid of aboriginal African philosophy in

educational enterprises, which are necessary to establish the existential values and consistency that are unattainable from alien structures.

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Higher Education in the Midst of a Pandemic: A Dean's Perspective ~ Revisited

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Abstract

This paper is a follow-up to determine the accuracy of the predictions stated in a previously published article titled "Higher Education in the Midst of a Pandemic: A Dean's Perspective" (Rowley, 2020). Those predictions were more like educated guesses since the paper was written in 2020, the year the pandemic was beginning to spread across the country. It was certain significant changes would occur, but the nature and scope of these changes were unknown at the time. As mentioned in the above referenced paper, the difficulty of predicting the future was the fact that there were no predetermined guidelines for how to offer academic programs to students in the midst of a serious, widespread health crisis. College administrators were called upon to flexibly respond to a changed environment they had not previously experienced. This paper will review the predictions made in the areas of college sustainability, financial viability, enrollment, program delivery, technology, library and student services, and the college experience.

Keywords: college sustainability, higher education, financial viability, program delivery, technology, in-person instruction, virtual instruction, student services, library services

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Higher Education in the Midst of a Pandemic: A Dean's Perspective ~ Revisited

College Closures

Previous Prediction

It was suggested there would be few small, private, liberal arts colleges left standing. This would be the case for small, private, liberal arts colleges with low enrollment and inadequate endowments to carry them through the pandemic.

Response to Pandemic

The closing of colleges and universities is not a phenomenon unique to a pandemic. In fact, between the years 2016 and 2019, the year prior to Covid's spread worldwide, 47 colleges had either closed or merged according to Higher Ed Dive, which tracks trends in higher education (2022). Richard Ekman, president of the Council of Independent Colleges, observed that the number of small colleges closing or merging has varied between none and 10 each year over the past couple of decades (Gordon, 2021).

However, at the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, pundits forecast mass closures of colleges and universities because of the loss of tuition and key auxiliary revenues due to a complete shift to online learning. There were closures to be sure, but not nearly the number some expected (Natow, 2021).

There were likely several reasons for fewer closures and mergers, including the creativity, flexibility, and hard work of administrators, faculty, and staff, but no small reason was the federal assistance provided to colleges and universities through the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF), which was part of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act of March 2020. This fund initially provided $14 billion of federal money for direct distribution to colleges and universities during the pandemic to hold off such closures (CARES, 2020).

Nevertheless, there were colleges that didn't survive Covid. Twenty-four colleges either closed, merged, or consolidated during the critical pandemic years of 2020 to 2022. These colleges represented closures in 16 states, with five states having two or more closures. At least 14 of these schools were established over 100 years ago (Higher Ed Dive, 2022).

A review of these institutions indicates they were at risk of closing prior to the pandemic. Covid-19 wasn't the only reason for closure, but it served as the final straw that sent them to their demise. For example, Terry Hartle, senior vice president for government relations and public affairs at the American Council on Education, observed that Mills College, an institution founded before the Civil War, was financially at risk for years, but the pandemic exacerbated matters, and it couldn't survive Covid (Gordon, 2021).

MacMurray College, founded in 1846, is another example of how Covid hastened the closure of institutions that were at risk of closing prior to the pandemic. Charles O'Connell, chairman of the school's board of trustees, indicated that the economic disruptions of the pandemic were factors that worsened the college's financial problems (Aspegren, 2021).

Some small colleges were able to take a different route in order to survive. Tahoe's Sierra Nevada College experienced a 25% decline in enrollment over the past seven or eight years. The situation was made worse when the pandemic led to the online delivery of courses, and students didn't want to pay for an on-campus experience they couldn't experience. Instead of closure, Sierra Nevada College considered merging with another institution. The University of Nevada, Reno became its new partner (Renda, 2021). Although the end game was different, the pandemic made worse an already declining enrollment, which could have led to closure.

Covid was a contributing factor but not the only one that pushed at-risk colleges to close or merge with another institution. Higher education can celebrate the fact that closures were kept

at a minimum, but it would be too soon to think the risk is over. Richard Ekman, president of the Council of Independent Colleges, warns that a small increase in college closures can be expected due to issues brought on by the pandemic (Gordon, 2021).

Financial Viability

Previous Prediction

It was suggested that college administrators would need to be aggressive in order to maintain their institution's bottom line due to a loss of income resulting from the closure of campuses to students. It seemed reasonable to assume that colleges would freeze faculty hiring, leave staff positions open, lower salaries and fringe benefits, and reduce benefit packages to remain financially viable during the pandemic.

Response to Pandemic

Maintaining the financial viability of colleges and universities proved to be a challenge. Andrew Pietro (2020) described the difficult environment in which college administrators had to work to maintain their institution's bottom line. "For both students and colleges, the coronavirus crisis has created a massive disruption in the financial 'norm' of higher education. With schools closing, switching solely to online, restructuring classes, cutting costs and so much more, some of the most basic assumptions about college and college life have already been thrown out the door."

Many colleges and universities reverted to tuition discounts in hopes of attracting more students. Kerr and Wood (2022) reported that tuition discounts were on the increase prior to the pandemic. John Moody (2022), citing the most recent Tuition Discounting Study conducted by the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO), reported that the average discount for first-time undergraduates was estimated to reach 54.5%, an all-time

high. Over 82.5% of undergraduate students at all colleges surveyed received financial aid, coming from unallocated general funds, college reserves, and either withdrawals or interest from endowment funds.

Discounting tuition was a commonly used strategy to attract students, but it raised the question as to the long-term sustainability of a college. Skladany (2020) suggested that tuition discounts reduced the availability of financial aid in the future.

Although every college was financially impacted by the pandemic, some schools were impacted more heavily than others. According to a survey conducted by NACUBO (2021), it was necessary for most four-year, private, non-profit colleges to take more dramatic business decisions than public colleges in order to survive. For example, these schools were more likely to take an endowment withdrawal than public colleges. The most frequently anticipated budgetary challenges were declines in auxiliary revenue, delays in deferred maintenance, decreases in annual fund giving, declines in athletic revenue, and across-the-board budget cuts.

Public universities anticipated a decline in state funding. According to a survey of state higher education agencies completed by New American and the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (2021), the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on state funding for public higher education varied from state to state. Although the results were preliminary, some states reported sharp cuts to their budgets, while others had not seen a significant relationship between the pandemic and state higher education funding.

A hiring freeze was announced by many institutions, including faculty positions, and capital projects were postponed in order to prevent future layoffs. Institutions making these decisions included elite schools with large endowments, less well positioned private schools, and public institutions (Flaherty, 2020). Other strategies like minimizing overtime pay, freezing merit

pay, and employing short-term furloughs could be found (University of Rochester, 2020). What could not have been predicted was Congress providing approximately $14 billion to the Office of Postsecondary Education as the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (CARES Act, 2020).

It had been suggested that college administrators might have to evaluate and cut some curricular programs that weren't self-sustainable. In fact, according to a survey conducted by NACUBO (2021), some private, four-year, nonprofit institutions planned to either increase the number of their academic offerings or restructure their academic programs.

Enrollment Decline

Previous Prediction

Prior to the pandemic, enrollment in higher education had been declining for several years, as reported by the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (Fain, 2019). It was reasonable to suggest that this decline would continue as a result of Covid-19.

Response to Pandemic

Unfortunately, the decline in enrollment continued during the pandemic with significant numbers of high school seniors choosing not to enroll and students already in college delaying their return to college. There was a decline of undergraduate enrollment by 3.6% in fall 2020 and by 3.1% in fall 2021. Total undergraduate enrollment fell by 6.6% from fall 2019 to fall 2021, a loss of just over a million students. In the fall of 2020, there were 20.7% fewer students since 2019 (Conley & Massa, 2022). At the same time, colleges experienced the largest two-year decline in 50 years (Dickler, 2021).

The numbers for community colleges were worse. Enrollment in one community college in the suburbs of Washington fell 19% (Anderson, 2021). According to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, there were 15% fewer students in the nation's public two-year

colleges in the fall compared with two years earlier (2021). This stunning decline doesn't bode well for four-year colleges that anticipate students from these schools to eventually transfer to them.

Moody (2022), citing the most recent data from the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, reported that enrollment decline has fallen for five straight semesters, with community colleges taking the hardest hit. Across all levels, enrollment for spring 2022 fell 4.1%. Enrollment from spring 2020 declined by 17.1 million students and now stands at 15.9 million.

Following decades of increases, the number of international students studying in the United States significantly declined. First-time students declined by a stunning 45% from the 2019-2020 school year to the next, and in 2020-2021, there was an additional drop of 15% (Svrluga, 2021).

While many prospective students could visit a campus virtually during the pandemic, the majority of students, or 56%, made their college decision during the pandemic having taken an in-person campus tour (Ezarik, 2022).

It was previously suggested that some colleges and universities would extend the application deadlines due to the pandemic. Many schools in 2020 extended their deadline into September, well past the traditional date of May 1 (Moody, 2021). However, it should be noted that many are returning to the May 1 deadline but encouraging students to continue applying after that date.

Program Delivery

Previous Prediction

As the pandemic was at its beginning, it was suggested that not only was virtual instruction here to stay, but colleges and universities would learn that technology could be used far more effectively and extensively than in the past.

Response to Pandemic

The Chronicle of Higher Education (2020) reported that schools were ready with multiple plans for delivering instruction, including in-person, online, and hybrid instruction. It would only take a decision to implement them. They were just waiting for a decision on how they would deliver instruction to their students.

Most courses employed the use of Zoom classes, a video-conferencing method developed in the late 1990s. Most institutions adopted cloud-based software, but few adopted a cloud-based infrastructure or platform. Although IT services were becoming the rule, limited resources set the pace for moving in new direction (McKenzie, 2019).

When the decision was made to close campuses to ensure the health of students, staff, and faculty, online learning was the learning platform of choice. Gallagher and Palmer (2020) suggested Fall 2020 was an inflection point, resulting in higher education seriously considering multiple platforms for course delivery.

Distance learning education increased by 93% between Fall 2019 and Fall 2020 across the 2,300 colleges and universities participating in SARA, a voluntary agreement which establishes comparable standards for U.S. states and territories regulating postsecondary distance education (Lederman, 2020).

Online learning expanded across all levels of education. Expanding the use of virtual education ensured delivery of academic programs if schools were unable to resume face-to-face education (Masalimova et al., 2022).

It was previously suggested that institutions would have to distinguish themselves from other similar institutions order to combat enrollment decline. Three small colleges—Hampshire, Goddard, and St. John's—are examples of this (Schwartz, 2020). Hampshire was near closure in 2019, but since then has revamped its academic offerings, allowing students to organize their programs around current societal problems. Goddard, on probation since 2018 by its creditor, has lowered its cost to students and is significantly investing in and expanding its digital infrastructure in order to attract students. St. John's has cut tuition by 33% and is attempting to move from a tuition-based model to a philanthropy-supported mode. It has seen an increase in applications from prospective students and alumni donations. All three schools, in the midst of a pandemic and enrollment decline, have instituted fundraising campaigns. Each college is betting on the future that students will return.

The Chronicle of Higher Education (2021) surveyed 600 college and university senior administrators to understand how the pandemic changed or hastened the ways higher education used technology to fulfill its institutional mission. The report noted that the most significant change in the short-term was changing from in-person learning to on-line instruction.

Technology

Previous Prediction

The use of technology was predicted to have an increased role in the teaching/learning process. Institutions will have learned they can use technology effectively and extensively.

Result of Pandemic

In a very short time, institutions developed a technology infrastructure that would support remote instruction. Faculty members quickly shifted to teaching online instead of in the classroom (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2020).

According to Lederman (2019), federal data prior to the pandemic indicated only 34.7% of college students were enrolled in at least one online course in 2018, compared to 33.1% in 2017. That was less than the 2% increase from 2016 to 2017, but it was still an upward trend.

Many faculty members were unfamiliar with putting their courses online or teaching students online. This included many tenured professors who were challenged by virtual teaching (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2020). They needed immediate help from IT experts. Without IT experts, higher education would have come to a complete stop, which placed IT experts at the forefront of academic delivery.

Prior to the pandemic, less than 5% of college budgets were allocated to IT spending (Gallagher & Palmer, 2020). However, this health crisis was responsible for the acceleration and transformation of digital learning. Four and a half billion dollars was invested in ed technology, with more expected over the next 10 years (Stoltz-Loike, 2020).

Gallagher and Palmer (2020) reported that new platforms and technologies were emerging, which involve the use of cloud computing, large data sets, and artificial intelligence. MOOC make use of data from millions of learners and billions of course datapoints, which in turn use machines to grade assignments and deliver content and assessments.

That colleges and universities were able to move so quickly from primarily in-person instruction to remote teaching and learning is remarkable. IT experts were called upon to help higher education institutions manage this health crisis. Technology came out of the background and became a point of success for colleges and universities. This unparalleled success was the result of many people working together (O'Brien, 2020).

Kelly (2021), citing an Educause Horizon Report, noted three possible trends in regard to the future of technology: the adoption of hybrid learning models, increased use of learning

technologies, and online faculty development. As previously stated, virtual learning is not going away.

Library Services

Previous Prediction

It was predicted that the demands for library services by students and faculty would expand. Additional and significant investments would be necessary to keep pace with technological advances related to the teaching and learning process.

Response to Pandemic

At the onset of the pandemic, the demand for library services was felt immediately. This included patron visits and the use of library services and facilities. The use of virtual support to patrons also increased, which included reference interactions and virtual consultations (De Groote & Scoulas, 2021).

Libraries served faculty and students through Zoom, and fortunately for faculty and students, online catalogs and interlibrary loans were still available (Connell et al., 2021).

Library services were pushed to the forefront of providing electronic and digital services, and faculty and students became more aware of these important services to colleges and universities. At the same time, Covid-19 gave library personnel opportunities to improve their own technical and collaborative skills. The use of digital library services will continue to increase after the pandemic (Zareef & Ahmad, 2021).

Frederick and Wolff-Eisenberg (2020), citing an Ithaka S+R survey of 638 library directors, noted that funds were redirected towards digital resources and services as a result of the pandemic. At the same time, the survey indicated challenges. The survey found that 75% of

the library directors surveyed were operating on reduced budgets of 1-9% for the 2020-2021 school year.

Notably, the deepest budget cuts occurred at public institutions with doctoral programs. Cuts to the budget were least likely to occur at private, undergraduate colleges. Difficult decisions had to be made regarding digital resources and resources, organizational finances, personnel cuts of those who worked in the physical libraries, and the health and welfare of staff (Frederick & Wolff-Eisenberg, 2020).

Health Services

Previous Prediction

Health services will have an enlarged role on campus. Staff members will provide professional expertise in planning an institution's response to the pandemic. They will continue to keep institutions apprised of the latest health directives.

Response to Pandemic

According to a survey conducted by the American College Health Association (2020), college and university health services stepped up to form emergency response teams and provide medical expertise to their institutions in light of the pandemic. Significantly, they used telemedicine technology to reach students with significant health concerns.

According to a survey by Montclair State University of 4,700 college students in New York and New Jersey in the spring of 2020, students were negatively impacted by academic, financial, pandemic-related, and mental health factors. Additionally, students of color were particularly stressed by financial issues (Montclair State University, 2022).

It is well known that colleges and universities sent students home in an effort to prevent the spread of Covid-19. According to a study by Lee et al. (2021), this change of learning

environment, coupled with the quality of their education, negatively impacted the mental health of students. Their report indicated that those students who were closer to graduation faced increased anxiety, feeling of loneliness, and depression. Many found it difficult to complete their semester's work at home. Notably, first-generation students took time off from school more often than other students.

As students returned to campus, the use of health services on campus increased (Redden, 2021). One of the reasons presented is that addressing students' health problems was delayed while campuses were closed. Reasons for visits to health services included physical and mental health and Covid-19 concerns. Attendant problems for health services due to this increased demand for services was being short-staffed and having overworked and exhausted health professionals.

In a survey published by the American College Health Association (2020), financial stress was of concern to students. Two-thirds of the students in the survey indicated concern over finances. The fact that students were not on campus created financial hardships due to the loss of jobs on campus and in the community (Lederer et al., 2021).

The College Experience

Previous Prediction

The college experience is predicted to be unlike any other in the past. College is a unique experience for most students, especially new freshmen. It provides new experiences and significant challenges. For most students, it all adds up to a positive and life-changing experience. It may be the first time away from home for an extended period of time. Students meet new friends, adapt to new roommates, have coffee with some of their professors, eat in the

Commons, participate in clubs and organizations, and attend athletic events. However, until the coronavirus is under control, none of this will be the same.

Response to Pandemic

Life was not the same for college students during the pandemic. In addition to being away from campus and taking courses on zoom, there was the matter of missing out on internships, outside-of-class learning experiences, eating with friends in the Commons, and losing campus jobs that helped pay for tuition, books, and other supplies. At the university where I served, there were no informal groups of students sitting under towering trees on the Loop in the fall.

A normal part of the college experience is participating in extracurricular activities. These activities were not available as long as campuses were closed (Lederer et al., 2021). These activities could include participating in an on-campus club, attending a concert or drama, playing for an athletic team, eating in the Commons, and many other social activities. More significant was the cancellation of graduation ceremonies.

With campuses closed in order to maintain the health and safety of students, colleges and universities closed their on-campus residence halls and food services during the height of the pandemic. In those instances where exceptions were made in housing, social distancing, wearing masks, and other safety measures were enforced. These had been places where students could learn to live together and bond during their college years. However, by the fall term of 2020, many higher education institutions were planning to open these facilities again (Pierce, 2020).

Some students chose to take time off from school, known as a gap year. Not wanting to

miss all the opportunities of a typical college experience, they chose to wait until things returned to normal. Some felt the need to take time off due to the stress of the pandemic (Rodriguez, 2021).

The prediction that the college experience would not be the same during the pandemic was an understatement. As the pandemic plays itself out, perhaps life on campus will once again return to normal.

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Celebrating Diversity in Every Classroom: Culturally Responsive Perspectives on Video Analysis for Teacher Development

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Abstract

Teacher education programs and professional learning programs have increasingly offered opportunities for educators to engage in video analysis using pre-recorded video clips of teachers using instructional strategies. Teachers were only able to access online learning and teaching due to the inability to watch live classrooms in real time during the COVID-19 lockdown. The authors advocate for the continued and intentional use of video observations of expert or master teachers that promote culturally responsive teaching (CRT). Integrating video observation and debriefs into teacher education programs for both preservice and in-service educators demonstrates the application of instructional strategies being taught but also deliberately showcases diverse master teachers and content areas in an effort to dismantle existing barriers to equitable education. Diversifying the teaching workforce may be accomplished through authentic and intentional efforts that ensure underrepresented preservice and in-service teachers are reflected authentically and consistently throughout teacher preparation programs and curricula.

***Keywords*:** teacher education, preservice teachers, video analysis, culturally responsive teaching

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Celebrating Diversity in Every Classroom: Culturally Responsive Perspectives on Video Analysis for Teacher Development

The primary aim of our paper is to explore viable ways that professional learning activities focused on video analysis promote culturally responsive pedagogical practices for both preservice and in-service teachers. Utilizing resources for video analysis in teacher education has been around since the 1970s (Baecher et al., 2018). For alternative route programs that typically span one year, preservice teachers are often placed in a classroom from the beginning of their program and have the chance to observe expert teachers firsthand while also taking coursework. For more traditional teacher education programs, preservice teachers typically take coursework during the first year of the program, whether that is fully online, traditionally (face-to-face), or hybrid. Year two of a traditional program is when they tend to complete their student teaching or internship. Teacher education programs oftentimes offer opportunities for students to engage in shorter practicums or classroom observations aligned to the learning topics prior to a full-time internship.

For in-service teachers, instructional coaches might facilitate professional learning using classroom observations if possible, but this can create logistical challenges due to the need for substitutes and schedule alignment. Classroom observations via asynchronous video allow educators the flexibility to showcase classrooms with diverse teachers and students that may even exist outside of the walls of their school and district. Professional learning facilitators who are facilitating these opportunities might also take into consideration the purpose of using the videos as they design the structures and approaches they use to support analysis of such classroom observations (Baecher et al., 2018; Blomberg et al., 2013).

Engaging teachers in video analysis is one way for them to learn how to disrupt patterns of inequity to ensure each child flourishes, through the lens of culturally responsive teaching. As

student demographics shift, the teaching population has not shifted in the same way. Aronson and Meyers refer to this as the "demographic divide" (2022, p. 32), as the primarily White teaching force educates a progressively more diverse student population. The majority of new teachers are still White, monolingual females. Yet this population also experiences greater attrition than their persistently underrepresented counterparts in their early career (Guarino et al., 2006). This fact signifies a need for integrating culturally responsive approaches to engage both preservice and in-service teachers in learning equitable practices to ensure teachers are prepared when they exit their teacher preparation programs. Specific attention to supporting early career teachers may also be helpful for the purposes of teacher retention.

Purposes of Culturally Responsive Teaching in Instructional Practices

Teacher educators are obliged to consider ways in which they facilitate opportunities to promote culturally responsive teaching practices through examining both the content they are providing and their own methods of facilitation. (Note that in this article, "teacher educators" will refer to those who prepare preservice teachers as well as those who may serve in the roles of instructional coaches, mentors, and facilitators of professional learning to in-service teachers.) Culturally responsive teaching (CRT) is not simply an isolated event, lesson, or unit that conveys "culture" into a curriculum, but a comprehensive approach to teaching that seeks to address and overcome intrinsic bias and inequitable teaching practices (Gay, 2018; Samuels, 2018; Warren, 2018).

We wanted to also note that the scope of this article serves to highlight the importance of culturally responsive teacher preparation as a pedagogical approach as compared to the critical race theoretical framework which critiques power structures inherent in certain groups (Aronson & Meyers, 2022). Similar pedagogical and curricular design implications may arise from the

tenets of critical race theory, including the overuse of Eurocentric curriculum, but for the purpose of this article, we chose to focus more broadly on implications for culturally responsive teaching as a pedagogical approach.

Muhammad (2020, p. 57–58) proposed an equity framework called Historically Responsive Literacy that addresses four pursuits to create a responsive education model: (a) literacy as identity meaning-making: making sense of one's self through coming together to read, write, and think; (b) literacy as skills: developing one's proficiencies in the content one is learning; (c) literacy as intellect: gaining new concepts and knowledge in the world; and d) literacy as criticality: understanding power, authority, and anti-oppression through the reading of texts and media. Educators can utilize this framework as they audit their own teacher preparation courses. Further, preservice and in-service educators may see this framework as a way to analyze their own teaching practices and the facilitation of learning for students. While this overview is certainly not meant to be an exhaustive literature review on CRT, it is useful to understand the ways in which teacher educators may learn how to effectively create opportunities to prepare teachers to disrupt cycles of oppression. Preservice, novice, and veteran teachers need to be given the opportunity to understand their own practices to seek out ways in which they counter or perpetuate bias within the classroom in order to promote a more equitable classroom (Samuels, 2018). In fact, a recent study (Mellom et al., 2018) revealed that many teachers' cultural assumptions and prejudices do have a strong influence on their attitudes towards emerging bilingual students, while training in culturally responsive pedagogy may in fact reduce these negative perceptions over time.

Roles of Video Analysis in Promoting Culturally Responsive Teaching

It is critical that teacher educators consider the literacy materials they are using to promote CRT, including texts, articles, and other multimedia resources to engage their students and colleagues. Utilizing instructional videos to evaluate and analyze culturally responsive teaching practices reflecting the diversity of teachers, classrooms, and spaces across the world is a way to encourage CRT practices.

Decades of research on the use of video analysis as learning and training opportunities in teacher education have clearly shown the wealth of benefits it has (Gamoran Sherin & van Es, 2009; Nagro et al., 2016). Most prior studies conducted on culturally responsive video analysis examined how teachers viewed videos of themselves or colleagues as a means to develop appropriate instructional practices (Baecher et al., 2018; Blomberg et al., 2013; Fullam, 2017; Rosaen, 2015), while extremely limited studies focused on the use of videos as a heuristic approach to comprehensive teacher education, utilizing video exemplars of those outside of their professional networks as a means to engage in CRT.

Uses of Video Analysis in Teacher Education: Preservice Teachers

Teaching and learning shifted to fully online in both higher education and K-12 during the COVID-19 lockdown, and the fundamental opportunities to conduct classroom observations in person were all but eliminated. Preservice teachers' internship experiences consisted solely of online teaching and learning. In-service teachers focused on ensuring high-quality online education, and preservice teachers had few opportunities to engage in what education might look like once they eventually returned to more traditional face-to-face methods of teaching. Teacher education program faculty relied heavily on pre-recorded classroom videos to showcase examples of quality instruction. In short, an entire cohort of teacher education students had little practical experience observing or teaching within the walls of a physical classroom before

earning their teaching certificates and launching into their first year of teaching. Most of this cohort of first-year teachers were expected to teach students face-to-face in what was quite possibly the most difficult year of teaching in recent history, with hardly any traditional (face-to-face) teaching experiences within a physical classroom.

The opportunity encased within this challenge was to provide preservice teachers ways to see their future selves by offering them new systems see fellow teachers, who look like them, teaching their content areas. Thus, they were able to identify with the role models shown them. One way to compensate for a lack of practical classroom experience was to engage preservice teachers in analyzing master or expert teachers through video observations of previously recorded footage. As Kang and van Es wrote, "Video can capture images of possibilities in teaching" (2019, p. 238). For the first time in history, the use of video observations was the primary way in which preservice teachers could visualize themselves teaching students within the walls of a physical classroom.

Indeed, video observation has always been an effective way of professional learning and increasing one's self-efficacy in teaching (Mongillo, 2016; Sancar-Tokmak, 2013). Johnson et al. (2019) advocated for the use of the Presence + Experience (P + E) framework and suggested a high tech plus high touch experience that draws from the use of video observations of classrooms as a powerful mechanism for learning. Many resources have already been available to allow preservice teachers a glimpse into the classroom. Online platforms such as The Teaching Channel (https://www.teachingchannel.com), Annenberg Learner (https://www.learner.org), and YouTube (https://www.youtube.com) enable users to examine pre-uploaded videos by searching for a content area, topic, or theme of interest. The videos held within these platforms are not necessarily all perfectly executed classroom instruction exemplars but instead offer a real

glimpse into a variety of classrooms, diverse in both instructional strategies and topics and in student and teacher populations. Many of the videos include reflections and debriefs by the students and teachers involved in the creation of the clips that provide additional insights into the decisions being made within the teaching and learning sessions. Utilizing online video-streaming platforms to engage in video analysis is an example of differentiation at its best.

If preservice teachers were given the flexibility to select a variety of video clips that exhibited a specific instructional strategy from a multitude of diverse classrooms, they might fully engage in those videos where they saw their future selves. One challenge to creating a culturally responsive teacher educator program is that programs often claim to be promoting diversity, when in actuality, inserting a CRT course within a program in isolation from the rest of the curriculum or including a couple of additional readings into a course is a typical practice (Sleeter, 2017). A transformational approach in teacher education programs is needed, one that ensures classroom instructional videos are selected and used meaningfully with intention. This approach will be more likely to create future teachers armed with the knowledge and resources to engage in *ongoing* professional learning through the lens of equity and social justice for all students.

For novice and veteran teachers learning new skills, analyzing and sharing video clips of teaching strategies has been a common part of professional development (Marsh & Mitchell, 2014). This same practice can be extremely beneficial for preservice teachers. During the COVID-19 lockdown, teacher educators relied on the use of video observations even more because they realized that might be the only opportunity for preservice teachers to see classroom examples of the theories they were learning. In essence, video observation and analysis truly constructed the tenuous bridge that connected theory of instruction to practice. Video analysis

became less of a supplemental activity that helped make the course experience more dynamic and more of a call to action to ensure that all preservice teachers, regardless of race, culture, or background experiences, were able to see themselves as the teachers shown in the videos. Teacher educators may continue to see the tremendous asset that this type of instructional and professional growth opportunity is for preservice teachers and continue to use video analysis as a tool for learning about instructional strategies. With this also comes a plea to encourage video-streaming platforms to continue to diversify their video collections, enabling all types of educators to see themselves within the expert educators they are viewing online. Taking this one essential step further, it is central to the conversation that teachers analyzing videos need substantial experiences linked to different reflective approaches that disrupt dominant cultural ideologies and translate pedagogical theories into practices.

Whether the program is an accelerated program where preservice teachers are fully immersed in the classroom or a more traditional, two-year program where preservice teachers are in classrooms part-time, video analysis of instructional strategies as an integral learning experience can be beneficial. This endeavor requires teacher education institutions to promote the use of video observation through the lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion and as an embedded programmatic design within their curriculum. Video-streaming organizations that continue to maintain diversity in both the content of their videos and the students and teachers being showcased to the greatest extent possible may also help support video observation of authentic classroom learning environments.

One practical benefit to engaging in regular video observation is that preservice teachers are no longer learning from one or two master teachers, but rather they get to choose from a variety of master teachers they now have access to at their fingertips. Preservice teachers can

showcase directly what they are teaching through sharing video content of field experts. Preservice teachers are enabled to critically analyze these videos in a safe space, which is equally beneficial. This "safe space" refers to the opportunity for preservice teachers to engage with their peers through the critical examination of teaching without the concern for interpersonal issues that might arise if they were critiquing their mentor teachers or peers. Due to power structures inherent in the mentor teacher/student teacher relationship, it may be difficult to utilize this dynamic as a method for engaging in a critical analysis of a teaching observation (Yoon & Larkin, 2018). Preservice teachers will increase their own self-efficacy, confidence, and ability to discern effective instruction when given the chance to be critical consumers of teaching strategies (Mongillo, 2016). Video-based observation resources create an opening for critical dialogue to occur.

A pressing priority for teacher education due to the increasingly diverse population of students is to help preservice teachers foster and execute culturally inclusive practices within a rigorous curriculum. Recent studies about preservice teachers' perceptions of culturally responsive teaching reveal that participants reported low self-efficacy in implementing specific culturally responsive techniques in instructional materials (Cruz et al., 2020). Participants in another study noted "insufficient opportunities to observe and execute the practices associated with culturally responsive teaching" with the authors noting that this "was a result of a disconnect between coursework and field experiences" (Siwatu et al., 2016, p. 289). Video observations on culturally responsive strategies enacted in real-life contexts can enrich preservice teachers' knowledge and engagement in planning appropriate pedagogical approaches for supporting diverse students.

Integrating video observation is meant, in equal measures, to inform preservice teachers of what high-quality instruction looks like as well as to promote and nurture a teacher-as-researcher stance. As teacher educators, promoting a teacher-as-researcher stance also lays a firm foundation for future professional learning opportunities that these preservice teacher graduates-turned-practitioners can adapt within their own educational environments (Bulgar, 2007). Teacher educators can provide their students with opportunities to analyze classroom videos individually but also collaboratively, offering them different protocols and ways to engage in productive dialogue around a video clip (Barth-Cohen et al., 2018). Both ways of engaging with classroom videos will provide preservice teachers with a background of knowledge and experiences regarding what effective professional learning and collaboration look like before they even enter their first year of teaching (Yadav, 2008). At the very least, it provides preservice teachers with a firm understanding of areas of their own teaching skillset which they can self-identify as either effective or in need of improvements that are within their grasp to attain (i.e., attainable goal) when set alongside an exemplar (Bulgar, 2007; Moreno & Valdez, 2007).

Uses of Video Analysis in Professional Development: In-Service Teachers

The benefits of utilizing videos for ongoing professional learning for in-service teachers, both novice and veteran, are evident through integrating video into new teacher training programs, and they incude inclusion within teacher evaluation framework professional development and the disruption of threats to justice within the classrooms of any teacher, regardless of the demographics of students and teachers. Video observation-based activities promoted with in-service educators may serve as a way for teachers to transform their own teaching and learning as they see themselves capable of enacting such changes (Ball, 2019; Fullam, 2017; Gamoran Sherin & van Es, 2009).

In 2011, all states adopted a revised teacher evaluation process requiring the use of a framework as directed by the federal government aligned with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The two primary frameworks selected were The Danielson Group's Framework for Teaching and the Marzano Causal Teacher Evaluation Model (Close et al., 2019; Learning Sciences Marzano Center, 2013; The Danielson Group, n.d.) with many states allowing individual districts to choose which framework to use. Resources accompanying these frameworks typically included materials for teachers' professional growth and reflection, not solely for evaluative purposes. These supplemental materials accompanied the evaluation frameworks to help facilitate opportunities for reflection and evidence related to CRT. Considering ways in which teacher educators might further engage in learning CRT through the lens of the educator's respective evaluation framework is a valuable opportunity and can also account for the district's unique context, including teacher and student demographics. Using video observation analyses can be a powerful way for teachers to bridge theory to practice, increasing one's self-efficacy and effective use of CRT practices (Baecher et al., 2018). Considering the ways the teacher evaluation framework(s) can be used to support the use of CRT may help teacher educators create an integrated and meaningful approach to ongoing professional learning. Ball (2019) argued that many normalized practices dominate values and beliefs within schools and continue to be of White-centered perspectives. For example, teachers who want to "fix" problems of students assume *everyone* is the same in their eyes regardless of racial identities and home cultures. Therefore, the debriefing protocols used in video analysis during professional learning can be valuable if they are centered on the dismantling of racial bias, not continuing the White-centered narrative that so often, albeit oftentimes unknowingly, occurs.

This consideration, along with the strategic use of instructional videos to demonstrate the desired teaching strategies highlighted, has immense potential. Blomberg et al. proposed five research-based heuristics that frame a learning opportunity using videos, which are as follows: (a) consideration of learning goals; (b) designing an activity aligned to the identified learning goal; (c) selecting appropriate video materials that align with the goals; (d) awareness of the strengths and limitations that the video presents; and (e) aligning assessment with the goals and activity (2013, p. 95). Blomberg et al. (2013) also noted under activity three, the selection of videos, that decisions regarding the *content* of the video and *who* is being showcased in the video need to be carefully considered. The Teaching Channel, Annenberg Learner, and YouTube were previously referenced as online video resources to support preservice teachers. These resources can also be powerful tools for in-service teachers. However, these may not necessarily be tied to a specific framework and may be difficult and time-consuming to navigate if someone is attempting to search for a very specific resource aligned to a framework indicator or domain to showcase. Knowles (1970) outlined in his theory of adult learning that adults desire learning that is both timely and relevant. The School District of Philadelphia created the Exemplary Teaching Video Library (https://www.philasd.org/etvl/) that exemplifies the connection between using classroom instruction videos to promote the teaching practices they wish to highlight and creating learning opportunities both timely and relevant. These videos are categorized by The Danielson Group's Framework for Teaching (n.d), their district's selected evaluation tool. By simply clicking on a video, the educator is shown the domain connection to the framework, a video of the strategy in action, probing questions to consider, and additional resources such as teacher interviews. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) similarly utilizes a library of videos aligned with their evaluation framework

(https://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/calibration/videos.html). Materials such as video observation protocols, including the Culturally Responsive Teaching Rubric (https://www.doe.mass.edu/edeffectiveness/prof-learning/crt-videos/rubric.docx) to engage in collective reflection and calibration of teaching practices, are available. They also offer resources that include protocols for engaging in professional learning using teaching observation rubrics and other calibration tools and resources.

Utilizing video analysis in teacher training can also be a powerful tool as teachers seek out specific ways in which they themselves determine their professional learning needs that extend beyond the lens of the teacher evaluation frameworks. Video analysis can be a bridge for engaging in ongoing learning as new teachers settle into their unique teaching and learning context that will inevitably differ from their teacher preparation program's environment (Bulgar, 2007). Video analysis can be used as part of new teacher support programs for the induction and retention of new teachers (Nagro et al., 2020). For novice and veteran teachers alike, video analysis can also be used as a method to change teacher beliefs regarding their ability to transform their teaching and shift their pedagogical practices towards a culturally responsive, asset-focused approach (Fullam, 2017).

Although approximately half of Americans identify as persons of color, 80% of current teachers are White. Students of color will be unlikely to have a teacher who they can identify with (Ball, 2022). Likewise, current White teachers may not have had a teacher of color when they were students themselves. Because of the lack of representation in the teacher workforce and the whitewashing of preservice teacher education that prevails, the lack of diverse representation of teachers is likely to perpetuate. Thus, it is crucial to create support systems that retain teachers of color within the teacher workforce by examining the methods by which

professional learning is designed and implemented. However, it is not enough to seek out videos that showcase teachers and students of color (Sleeter, 2017). To encourage teachers' efforts to shift toward CRT pedagogies, ensuring an asset-oriented mindset regarding the students and teachers shown in videos is a critical element. This shift is accomplished through designing meaningful dialogue during video analysis debriefs. In a dynamic keynote, Ball (2019) shared ways in which teachers are confronted with their own biases by having them examine a video of a student conversation focused on a common student misconception of a mathematical concept. During this address, Ball (2019) shed light on the typical assumptions many teachers have and how these assumptions are communicated unknowingly to students in the classroom. She then suggested alternative methods for debriefing the video that encourage the teachers to learn culturally responsive practices that aim to dismantle threats to equitable teaching. Ball (2019) also referred to the term "discretionary spaces" that allow teachers to pause and reflect on the moments within a classroom, demonstrating that the teacher has the choice to make an instructional decision and respond to a student's thinking while watching the classroom video. This opportunity to engage in the discretionary spaces and to see the nuances of the classroom environment and collective teacher and student reactions is lost if teachers are simply reading a case study or a transcript of a lesson (Moreno & Valdez, 2007). Viewing video clips that allow teachers to also experience students' reactions in the classroom is invaluable. As Fullman wrote, "This use of instructional video is powerful because people often need to see transformations in teaching and learning before they can believe such transformations are possible" (2017, p. 133). Teachers are better able to examine the ways in which the teacher in the video responds to their students while at the same time engaging in conversations to dissect teachers' preconceptions that allows for transformative teaching and learning.

Transforming Video Analysis Practices

It is essential for preservice and in-service teachers to be prepared to implement instructional strategies holistically to support their students. Integrating video observations offers a multitude of perspectives not otherwise witnessed and/or yet experienced. Baecher et al. (2018) noted in their meta-analysis that the effectiveness of video analysis as part of teacher education rests on how the facilitation of this process is implemented in teacher educators and instructional coaches.

Culturally Responsive Protocols for Video Analysis

Carefully selecting classroom video clips that align with the teachers' learning outcomes through examining both the *what* (content being presented) and the *how* (pedagogy) is an important consideration for the productive use of video observation (Baecher et al., 2018). Kang and van Es suggested an integrated framework specifying the six decision-making criteria, namely (a) articulating goals of preservice teacher learning, (b) setting specific learning objectives, (c) selecting a clip, (d) designing a task, (e) selecting a tool, and (f) facilitating conversation (2019, p. 242). Teacher educators want to be intentional about the videos they choose to use for instruction to ensure that the teachers and students being showcased reflect and acknowledge diverse representations. This intentionality considers whether the protocols being used to debrief the videos include specific reflection questions and prompts that engage preservice teachers in discourses surrounding issues such as social justice and equitable access to educational opportunities. If the goal, for example, is to examine a particular instructional strategy or relational interactions, or perhaps to consider the experiences of the preservice teacher within the program, the video selected should clearly reflect the specified aim. Differentiated protocols or debrief processes used should be in alignment to the videos chosen,

according to the learning outcomes. While prior research suggested observation protocols for culturally responsive instruction such as the Culturally Responsive Instruction Observation Protocol (Powell et al., 2017) and the Growing Awareness Inventory for Science and Mathematics Classrooms (Brown & Crippen, 2016), only a handful of publications designed the protocols or video analysis tools to specifically aim at analyzing and promoting culturally responsive practices within the classroom (see Table 1). Insufficient literature is available regarding the validation and accessibility of the instructional video analysis tools specific to culturally responsive teaching.

Table 1

Video Analysis Protocols through Culturally Responsive Pedagogical Approaches

Protocol	Author, Year	Outline of Protocol
The Mindful Reflection Protocol	Ready4Rigor.com, adapted from Gudykunst & Kim (2003).	A protocol for checking unconscious bias through examining description, interpretation, and evaluation.
Culturally Responsive Mathematics Teaching (CRMT)	Aguirre and del Rosario Zavala (2013).	The CRMT Lesson Analysis Tool is designed to promote intentional teaching discussions and critical reflection on mathematics lessons with a combined focus on children's mathematical thinking and equity.
Studying Culturally Responsive Teaching Through the Video Calibration Library	Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2021).	A protocol for discussion and reflection on culturally responsive teaching using classroom instruction videos from the DESE Video Calibration Library.

Equal Access

A step toward improving the use of culturally responsive pedagogy through video analysis is to ensure that an equitable and accessible distribution of videos is available to authentically represent the demographics of teachers of color. “Teacher preparation programs work against teacher diversity initiatives when students of color are only presented with a ‘window’ (Bishop, 1990) into the teaching profession but never see themselves reflected in the teacher education classroom or their student teaching placements” (Haddix, 2017, p. 146). Selecting online video streaming platforms that produce videos and resources for preservice and in-service teachers that are diverse in both content and in whom they represent is a key consideration of teacher educators. Preservice teachers desire opportunities to see themselves in videos that are shared with them during their coursework to promote a sense of identity and belonging within the teaching profession. If the vision is to promote interdisciplinary educational spaces that welcome all teachers, then it is important to have open access to a myriad of videos so that searching for diversity within the classroom videos is effortless.

Opportunities for Future Research

Researchers can further investigate existing video observation resources to determine who and what is being primarily showcased. Determining the gaps in representation has the potential to bring awareness of the videos being used frequently to inform sites such as The Teaching Channel, Annenberg Learner, and YouTube, and other video observation platforms, including district-specific video libraries. This may help to ensure inclusion of a broader and more authentic representation of students and teachers in videos. Districts who construct their own banks of videos for use in professional learning can examine this content through the lens of promoting CRT with their teachers to ensure their videos represent their community

demographics. As Fullam (2017) also stated, it is essential to ensure that the protocols be responsive to the needs of the students and teachers within a district. A promising next step is to learn how to adapt protocols through seeking out the voice of the district yet maintaining the priority of closing the opportunity gap.

While there may be an abundance of tools available for educators wishing to improve teaching practices through video observation-based activities, there are very few protocols that specifically focus on analyzing the use of CRT. Furthermore, oftentimes the video protocols focus on teachers examining their own teaching or the teaching of their peers rather than an exemplar. For these reasons, further research on specific protocols for analyzing CRT practices through video analysis is desirable in order to determine which methods most effectively transform teaching practices from deficit-based to asset-based approaches. A promising direction is to replicate studies that aimed at finding significant differences in transforming teaching and learning, comparing those who engaged in a video analysis protocol using CRT and those who did not use a specific protocol focused on CRT. Research comparing groups of teachers who analyze videos to those who only analyze transcripts may also be valuable to better understand what impact evaluating the "discretionary spaces" (Ball, 2019) makes on teachers' learning.

Conclusion

Teacher educators frequently audit courses within their program through the lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion, yet do they also take into consideration the frequency with which diverse videos are being used in meaningful ways? Oftentimes videos are inconsistently used throughout the program, used heavily in some courses and not at all in others. Aronson and Meyers (2022) argue that teacher education programs must commit to the consistent use of culturally responsive pedagogy throughout programs. Encouraging a culture of authentic video

analysis that helps to promote CRT throughout a preservice teacher education program or existing professional learning program within a district will equip teachers with a sense that professional learning starts with observing others and oneself and engaging in reflection and analysis. Developing CRT through video analysis allows for a greater depth of understanding and pedagogical effectiveness specific to underrepresented student and teacher populations. It is important for preservice teachers to master this disposition during their preservice experiences. When preservice teachers complete their programs and move into the workforce, they can continue to nurture a sense of lifelong professional learning through critical analysis as they become veteran teachers, perhaps even instructional coaches, themselves.

Let us not easily forget the opportunities we had during the COVID-19 lockdown that reminded us of the potential video observation had on teacher education, both preservice and continuing professional learning. This practice has the potential to promote authentic, safe, and relevant learning opportunities for all educators. The momentous changes in 2020-2021 created a remarkable opportunity to unpack the positive impact of having hundreds of classroom spaces available to teachers and teacher educators with only a few clicks. If we want to venture into the ongoing journey towards educational equity and teaching excellence, let us continue to pave the way for teacher education programs that include access to diverse expert teachers through flattening the classroom walls for all educators, present and future.

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Pedagogical and Intercultural Facets in an International Students' Research Training Program in Times of Pandemic: A Case Study on "The Intersections' of Gender, Family, and Society in Kyrgyzstan"

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Abstract

This paper discusses the conception of a joint intercultural students' research program of one German and two Kyrgyzstani teachers and students from the Otto-von-Guericke University of Magdeburg (Germany) and the American University of Central Asia (Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan). The paper conceptualizes such a research training program and gives reference to qualitative methods teaching in the two corresponding universities. What follows is a description of the chosen research topic: "The 'Intersections' of Gender, Family, and Society in Kyrgyzstan" and the course program. With different academic cultures concerning research ethics in the Anglo-Saxon and continental European contexts, a challenge for such a program will be addressed. A short review of the research results of the different students' teams is provided, and the paper is finalized with a self-reflection upon such a joint intercultural undertaking.

Keywords: students' research training program, qualitative research, research ethics, COVID-19 pandemic, intercultural communication

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Pedagogical and Intercultural Facets in an International Students' Research Training Program in Times of Pandemic: A Case Study on "The Intersections' of Gender, Family, and Society in Kyrgyzstan"

All over the world, faculty and students have suffered from Covid-19 lockdowns at universities and were forced to enter into online teaching and studying. Especially during the first wave of infections, universities and staff were not prepared for such a transition from ordinary seminars with in-person teaching to online teaching of both synchronic and asynchronic types. There were no existing technical standards and platforms, there was suspicion against certain programs concerning security for sensitive contexts, there was not appropriate hardware among staff and particularly students, and, furthermore, there was no experience in online teaching. Initially, the individual solutions of teachers were frequent, since the universities had not purchased the necessary software. PCs were not equipped with cameras, microphones, or headphones. After half a year, online teaching became more routine, although it had also become obvious that the technical equipment of students depended on their socioeconomic background. Many students used their smartphones for a year and a half to join lectures and seminars. Once universities returned to ordinary teaching, they raised questions about positive and negative experiences with online teaching to evaluate new forms of teaching, such as hybrid forms. There are many well-known disadvantages of online teaching which we do not want to repeat here, but also various advantages for subgroups such as students or faculty with children or working students, for example, with asynchronic teaching forms. This article, however, will take up another perspective. The software provided is not only appropriate for communication between staff and students at their home universities; it can also be used for joint national and even international seminars between different universities. The Departments of Sociology at the Otto-von-Guericke University of Magdeburg (OvGU) in Germany and the American University of

Central Asia (AUCA) in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan took the opportunity to design and prepare a joint students' research project, monitored by their teachers, which is the focus of this paper.

Development of the Concept of "Students' Research Training Programs" at Otto-von-Guericke University of Magdeburg

When one of the authors (Heiko Schrader) started working at OvGU, he introduced a concept which he brought from the Sociology of Development Research Centre at the University of Bielefeld. The idea is that excellent students are invited to participate in an intensive training program (in German: "Lehrforschung") to learn in and out of classroom about the research cycle and practice every part, particularly field research. For some time now, the concept has been practiced by the author in the Department of Social Science of the Faculty of Humanities at OvGU. This program aims at bringing students to empirical research, more precisely, qualitative research with interview techniques, which they can use both in academic as well as extra-university careers, where the gathering of qualitative data and their interpretation is crucial. Usually, the whole process takes a period of one to one and a half years, which already provides a limitation for a two-year Master program. A precondition to join is having participated in a course on qualitative methods, provided by the author or by other colleagues. His own course is already designed and addressed as a preparation for this research training program.

Thus, well prepared students may join the students' research training program. We start with building background knowledge (phase 0), selecting a research topic and country (preferably in an extra-European Union context to include an intercultural perspective) for where to do research, establishing a relationship with a partner, collecting and analyzing secondary material for the chosen topic and country, developing the research design, working on research methodology and ethics; then writing a research proposal (phase 1), conducting field research in cooperation with lecturers and students of our partner university (phase 2), making data analysis,

and finally, writing a research report (phase 3). The supervisors take the function of facilitators leading the students through the entire process, giving them feedback on their applied interview techniques in the field and supporting the analysis and writing process.

The scientific aim of this training program is going beyond pure methodological classroom teaching to learn about the exciting (and sometimes also disappointing) work of an empirical qualitative researcher in the field, where the method is adapted to the topic and not vice versa. Besides scientific aims, this training program exposes the students from the German university to a very different (national and academic) culture, confronting them with sometimes extreme poverty in developing countries, giving them deeper insight into the life-world and biography of marginalized people and the work of NGOs and other organizations in the field, and challenging their personalities with regard to a potential working perspective in developing countries and in direct interview contact with other people.

The first three courses were placed in India and the fourth in Nepal. Usually, the 10 to 20 students from both OvGU and the partner universities split up into different sub-projects of four to five people. In 2004 and 2005, a group of students conducted research on the strong segregation in Mumbai slums according to religion and place of origin or ethnicity. In spring 2007, another student research group worked on social activism in Mumbai slums: communalism and anti-communalist movements, grassroots organizations, and NGOs. The 2014 research group examined five different topics related to the population of informal settlements in rapidly changing and growing environments in Pune and Mysore. The Nepal project in 2018 took the 2015 earthquake as the starting point to investigate the Disaster-Conflict Interface, the interplay between a natural disaster and conflict. The students analyzed whether and in how far previously existing social conflicts were lessened or increased in the aftermath of the earthquake. The four research topics were (1) the marginalization of Dalits in the Gorkha earthquake; (2) LGBTI:

challenges and opportunities in the context of the earthquake; (3) former child soldiers and the question of whether the earthquake formed a window of opportunity for integration of this marginalized group; and (4) knowledge as context to the Gorkha earthquake and its aftermath. The results of such research trainings have been very positive. Students work in cross-national teams, learn about the advantages and disadvantages of teamwork, get cultural sensitivity, and decide after the project whether research in foreign settings might be a good work opportunity for them. This refers to both research qualities as well as their own personality. For job applications as well as for academic scholarships, participants can include this special feature in their CVs and transcripts, which makes them interesting.

Teaching Qualitative Methods at OvGU and AUCA

The Department of Sociology at OvGU was established in 1993, and the different study programs in social science (BA and MA in Social Science, MA in Peace and Conflict Studies, BA and MA in European Studies). The department is strong in both quantitative and qualitative empirical research projects and publications. The three study programs offer methodological courses in both quantitative and qualitative methods. According to a decision of the German Sociological Association (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie, or DGS) in 2002, the discipline should provide professionalization by a double methodological training in both quantitative and qualitative methods in BA and MA programs, because graduates with profound methodological training can expect good employment opportunities and comparative advantages to those of other subjects. It is emphasized that even for such graduates who will not be employed in research later on, the knowledge of research methods is necessary to critically assess the quality of other scholars' research publications and journalistic articles referring to research findings.

This paper is not the right place to address the basic differences between quantitative and qualitative methods; however, it is worth emphasizing that in the tradition of sociological

research in the first half of the last century, the two approaches supplemented each other both in American and German sociology, e.g., in ethnography (Reinhart, 2012), while during the second half of the 20th century, both approaches took a more hostile position towards each other; the major critique from the quantitative side was a lack of objectivity of qualitative research, being purely descriptive and not explanatory, and thus unscientific (Aspers & Corte, 2019). Only in the late 20th and then in the 21st centuries could qualitative research step out of the shadow and emancipate itself in academia, research, and research publications (Flick, 2005; Mruck & May, 2007). Nowadays empirical researchers recommend mixed-method approaches, and even qualitative data analysis (QDA) software integrates quantitative features.

In the author's methodology seminar, a broad topic is chosen (we experimented with different topics, and most interesting so far has been the topic of violence), and students learn about the theoretical foundation of that topic. Then they study the research cycle (beginning with shaping an individual research question and linking it to appropriate theories) to design their own interview (ranging from expert interviews to problem-centered and even narrative interviews), set up an interview guide (if required), find an interview partner, take this single interview, write an interview transcript (according to the standards of the discipline), make a content analysis and interpretation of the data (preferably with QDA software)[1], and finally take a self-reflection on the own work: what went well and what can be improved.[2] In addition, every student works in tandem with a partner, who takes the role of an observer of the interview situation and gives

[1] Of course, for an analysis of only one interview, QDA software is not necessary. However, the course aims at preparing students for larger research, e.g., for their master thesis, which usually covers 6-10 interviews, or even for a PhD thesis with many more interviews. Thus, the knowledge of QDA software is useful for a later stage of research.

[2] This process of self-reflection aims at discovering the researcher's own weaknesses in any of the phases of the research cycle. This self-evaluation which is intensively discussed with the teacher engenders an efficient post-learning process.

feedback to both teacher and student (afterwards the roles are switched). The research reports of the students, which involve a transparent description of the entire research process, are carefully evaluated by the teacher to give them deep face-to-face feedback. The appendix includes the full transcript of the interview,[3] the interview guide, and the code tree and coding material, to make the entire project transparent and help the teacher identify and discuss problems in the entire process. Due to the fact that the entire research process is based on decision-making, the research result is path-dependent on such decisions.[4]

The Department of Sociology at AUCA was founded in 1998 and today is considered one of the strongest departments at the university. The members of the department are leading empirical researchers working with both local and international partners. Like at OvGU, the department offers quantitative and qualitative research methods as well as courses in applied social statistics and SPSS. These courses are offered at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

The Qualitative Methods course teaches students how to think qualitatively and become critical and reflective researchers. The course module includes such topics as the research cycle, the research question, a theoretical framework, interviews, participant observation, ethnographic oral history observation, and content analysis. Working with MAXQDA software is obligatory.

The authors of this paper agree in the following problems that they most often encounter when teaching qualitative research methods. Students have a simplistic understanding of research design, often addressing a certain "interest" in a particular field but not a research question and its

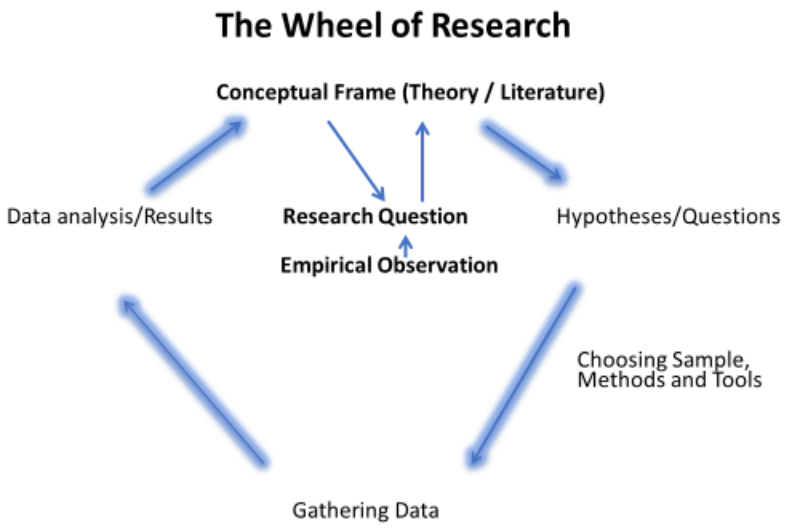
[3] For the feedback, the joint look of student and teacher into the interview transcript is of particular interest. The teacher can show the student where he missed a window of opportunity for adding an ad hoc question and can see, in comparison with the interview guide, whether the necessary flexibility is missing.

[4] To provide an example: following his or her interview guide, the interviewer has to listen to the answers of the respondent and decide whether or not to take up the window of opportunity, which is revealed by the interviewee's response but which would lead in another direction.

theoretical embedding. As empirical researchers we believe that teachers of qualitative research courses should avoid teaching research design as a linear process but more as a cycle, as addressed in the following figure.

Figure 1

Designing Research



First of all, we can enter the research cycle from different points. This is either an empirical observation, in our case, "disadvantages of women in Kyrgyzstani society," or literature, which brings up an interesting question to be applied to another context, for example, "bride abduction in Kyrgyzstan." The research interest may also be taken from theory, e.g., in our case, "masculine domination." Students learn and understand the connectedness of these points of access and if and why it is worth investigating this field, and how the investigation can contribute to the topic. One of the learning outcomes is also that theories and methods can be flexibly combined for promising research.

Since students in the qualitative course program at both universities follow their own projects, they will have to make literature reviews and other presentations in class to share with the rest of the student body so that all students can become familiar with the different theories and methods. Of particular importance is the nexus between the research question and its theoretical background. The sharpening of the research question is also achieved by thinking about different theories as well as methods to be applied and discussing their pros and cons. In the same way, at the end of the research process or qualitative course program, students have to reconsider their research question, provide potential answers, and discuss them in the framework of different theories. To paraphrase Margaret Eisenhart and Robert L. DeHaan, the aim of our course programs is introducing students to a "culture of research" (2005).

Further core elements in the course programs are biases of researchers in research (particularly cross-cultural research), our own cultural, gender, class, etc., lenses that we apply, and how our lenses influence our interpretations. Also important is that students learn about certain sensitive fields of field research. This does not only concern the question of research ethics (see later) but also involves questions of accessibility of the researcher to informants, e.g., with regard to gender issues.

Both universities include the application of QDA software to organize data, analyze content, make connections and comparisons, identify patterns, and relate information from interview notes, test results, surveys, and other research data. Like in the methods course of the German author, students at AUCA submit a final report that includes an explanation of all steps of the study, key findings, and part of the discussion of the data. Students write a brief literature review and justify how the study contributes to the field. In the analysis section, students connect the research findings with the theoretical framework. The final report highlights the strengths and

limitations of the study. It includes major conclusions and emphasizes what the research adds to the knowledge of the field. The final grade for the course is cumulative.

The 2020/2021 Project with Teachers and Students from OVGU and AUCA under Covid-19 Conditions

Here we want to report on and analyze the most recent research training project in 2020-2021. Cooperation between the two departments of sociology dates back to 2009. It is based upon teachers' and students' exchange in the course of an ERASMUS+ program as well as joint research in Kyrgyzstan[5] (Dittrich & Schrader, 2015, 2018) and a larger EU project (TALENT) on the introduction of a master program in Human Resource Management in Central Asia. The idea for this students' research training program in Kyrgyzstan emerged from discussions in December 2019 and January 2020, when teachers from AUCA visited OvGU in Magdeburg. This was before the Covid-19 pandemic arose.

The COVID-19 situation finally led to home office and online teaching in Germany and Kyrgyzstan. Of course, we generally agree that working conditions for both students and teachers were disadvantageous during the pandemic; however, what we have to stress here is one advantage which opened up a new perspective. This is the new momentum of synchronic online teaching software in both universities (which technically had not existed at these universities before the introduction of ZOOM or similar platforms for online teaching and conferences). When we had the opportunity to acquire knowledge of online teaching during the 2020 spring term at our home universities, we immediately realized that the use of this software as well as e-learning platforms opened up a new perspective: synchronic preparation for field research in an international seminar with teachers and students from both universities. As we could not foresee

[5] Galina Gorborukova was team leader of the Kyrgyzstan research team.

the spreading of the different Covid waves, we were hopeful that the German teacher and students would be able to come to Bishkek for field research at some point in the project.

However, some adaptations were necessary for such a joint course program. First of all, the time difference between Kyrgyzstan and Germany is four hours, which made us put the joint seminar in the early afternoon in Magdeburg and later afternoon in Bishkek. This would be more difficult when the time difference with other participating universities was 12 hours. Secondly, we had to adapt the time frame of the entire project. In Magdeburg, previous students had taken up to one term to write their final research report, but we decided—due to the different credit requirements at both universities and different term schedules—to shorten this last part of the project. One example of this change was that while the students on the 2018 Nepal research team worked a full year to write a joint full-scale 100-page research report (Magdeburg Research Group, 2019), one that was published in the department's working paper series and was read by other scholars as well as organizations in Nepal, we now put stronger emphasis on the process than on the results. This meant that the research reports of the participating teams remained brief and only summarized some findings. Furthermore, the teachers were fully aware that the Covid-19 situation was very specific, and depending on the development, might cause a plan B where instead of travelling to Kyrgyzstan, interviews might have to be taken online. Last but not least, we have to mention that OvGU is a public university with enormous freedom in teaching elective courses, while AUCA is a private university with a different academic model. Nevertheless, both universities supported this joint international project.

The core of our collaborative research training program was developing and team-teaching the interdisciplinary course "The 'Intersections' of Gender, Family, and Society in Kyrgyzstan," taught during the 2020 fall semester and 2021 spring semester. The syllabus was designed by the authors of this paper and a colleague. Along with the aim of improving the

research skills of students and their acquaintance with the actual problems of gender and family in Kyrgyz society, this course aimed at enriching students' international research experience and intercultural communication.

The course consisted of three modules. In the first module, major theoretical perspectives regarding issues of gender, family, and society were explored. In the second module, interrelationships between gender, society, and the state in Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia were studied. The third module focused on preparing and conducting students' research projects. Students from different social sciences master's degree programs from both universities (i.e., Sociology, Peace and Conflict Studies, Social Anthropology and Talent Management) organized themselves into four research teams. For their research projects, students focused on women's issues related to marriage and childbearing, Islamic influence, activism and rights, political engagement, and electoral behavior. The problem of domestic violence was also addressed. Course requirements included the research proposal, interview guide presentations, the final research report, attendance, class participation, and endeavor. An important condition for studying in this course was intensive reading of scientific literature, which was offered by an online reader on an e-learning platform,[6] and the development of an appropriate theoretical framework of research. In addition to our regular online class teaching, student groups set up their own online meetings to develop their projects.

A key issue for research in different teams was the advice to the students to immediately transcribe the interviews or at least provide summaries of them in an online learning platform so that every course member could get information about the other research groups. It was agreed that the research knowledge gathered by the different teams would be common knowledge for all

[6] This platform was based at OvGU. It should be mentioned that foreign students needed special temporary access which was provided by the university authorities.

groups. Another issue was agreement in how research teams should conduct their interviews. The different roles were decided in advance before the interviews; there would be one interviewer and different observers who could place some additional questions at the end of the interview and deliver context information. Furthermore, the teachers advised the students to keep the interview guide as flexible as possible to be adaptive to the flow of the interviews, and every student was to slip into the role of interviewer at least once.

One of the major challenges of teaching and learning was the necessity to rapidly adapt to the new requirements of the pandemic reality. As mentioned above, we had to abandon the plans for the Magdeburgian students to travel to Kyrgyzstan for data collection and get acquainted with the local culture in direct conditions. The impossibility of the usual mobility of students and teachers and the probable decrease in students' motivation to study required a certain amount of pedagogical flexibility, since not only lectures and seminars had to be conducted online, but also all elements of the research project, with the exception of some live interviews. This was not an easy task as a number of difficulties were faced in the process of working on research,. There were challenges in data collection due to an online regimen, linguistic barriers while communicating with the respondents,[7] in-group communication challenges related to the distribution of tasks between team members, high pressure upon time management, and a significant time difference between Germany and Kyrgyzstan. Interaction and communication issues proved to be the major challenge when total transition to online mode was taken. Although the technical problems associated with unstable internet connections were not a big issue, the lack

[7] Although the non-Russian speaking German students were advised to work with personnel from NGOs with English language knowledge, some of the interview partners preferred to talk in Russian. Thus, the students from Kyrgyzstan had to sometimes switch into the role of translators, or they at least summarized the content of such an interview.

of access to face-to-face communication between students, faculty, and research participants posed a major challenge for this course, causing some level of emotional stress.

To mitigate these negative effects of distance learning, the course instructors stepped up the practice of individual/group consultations, revised the deadline schedule, changed course requirements for the final research report, and encouraged students' engagement in teamwork. Social distancing due to the new reality significantly interfered with social ties and mobility, but at the same time opened the door to developing new approaches to online learning with an emphasis on collaborative research. These approaches should work for reinforcing interaction between research team members, improving in-class communication, developing effective time-management, designing proportionate course requirements with realistic expectations and learning outcomes, and preventing undesirable consequences of the fatigue caused by extensive video conferencing.

Research Ethics Assurance: A Controversial Issue

Adherence to research ethics was an essential requirement of this course before entering into qualitative interviews, but it was a controversial issue according to the standards of the two corresponding universities. AUCA has a structure called the Institutional Review Board, or IRB. The task of this committee, made up of university professors, is to verify that the planned study complies with the ethical standards formulated in the "Belmont Report," published by the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research (1979). IRBs are widespread ethics committees in U.S. universities. AUCA also follows this model. In order to receive IRB permission to start their research (data gathering phase), our students provided their research protocol, informed consent forms, copies of interview guides, and additional technical documents. Along with this, students and faculty were

required to take a multiple-choice exam on research ethics principles and rules or provide a valid certificate of a similar test confirming a passing score.

For the German teacher and his students, the requirements for passing the IRB procedures turned out to be new and even unexpected. We have to admit that this created some level of stress, especially the requirement of taking the multiple-choice exam. Although going through IRB procedures is more of a technical process, we have found that this requirement revealed differences in American and European approaches to research culture. First of all, the German tradition, for example at Magdeburg University, and also the tradition all over Europe (except the UK), is that such a top-down institutional structure as the IRB does not correspond to the principal requirements of freedom in qualitative research in social science. Instead, students learn about the principles and rules of research ethics throughout the course of their studies at the university. Here, the pedagogical emphasis is placed on the development of the personal accountability of the future researcher for the observance of ethical standards. Secondly, the German tradition maintains a fairly wide range of exploratory flexibility if it is dictated by the concrete research situation, and thus does not favor IRBs and formalized rules (for example, see von Unger et al., 2016, for a German critique to IRBs, as well as Lincoln & Tierney, 2004, or Swauger, 2009, for an Anglo-Saxon critique).

The two positions of freedom of research and fixed institutional ethical standards have been discussed in "Ethics in Social Science and Humanities" by the European Commission (2018). It is argued that research in social science has to adapt certain standards concerning human beings (e.g., the "do not harm" principle that concerns informants), while on the other hand it has to guarantee the freedom of science. The Commission's position is that principles of research ethics have continuously changed and become more complex and that the researcher has to take decisions in all parts of research (from planning via data gathering to data analysis and

publication). The researcher in social science has to decide whether the benefits from research outweigh the potential risks, and prospective research participants "are free to decide whether or not to take part in the research, and whether any data collected from and about them is included in analysis" (European Commission, 2018, p. 5). This is nowadays guaranteed through obtaining informed consent from the participants, which is similarly a requirement in the IRB rules.

Our broad research topic of "The 'Intersections' of Gender, Family, and Society in Kyrgyzstan" is a sensitive topic and deserves ethical consideration. We knew the topic might involve domestic violence and psychological pressure, the traumas of victims, and sensitive material concerning women and children in particular. Such may be touched in problem-centered and narrative interviews, and old wounds of the respondent may be torn up once more. As experienced senior researchers, but with no specific trauma training, we nevertheless know that following the rules of a problem-centered or narrative interview with a traumatized person will give that person the choice to get deeper into the trauma or to stop talking about the context. The decision is in the hands of the traumatized person, and he or she is able to make such a decision. The researcher should not pressure him or her but open up a window of opportunity or hardship. The latter example shows that research ethics cannot be fully standardized since they depend on discipline, research topic, and the method involved.

But in our case, most interviews taken by our research teams were interviews with expert members of organizations that deal with such sensitive topics. This means the interview partners had professional expert knowledge on the topic and they, and not our students, dealt with the vulnerable people. Thus, the students did not even come into contact with potentially traumatized people and only had to guarantee anonymization of names or places if the interview content concerned victims or perpetrators. Information gathered from experts usually remains rather

aggregated and abstract, and the researcher has to even motivate them to provide concrete examples.

In the context of our course, the dichotomy of personal conscientiousness versus institutional control manifested itself quite clearly and caused a lively discussion between the training participants, including teachers. An important question that arose before us in connection with the revealed dichotomy was how to reconcile these two approaches. What is more important—institutional control, or awareness of individual responsibility for research ethics without institutional oversight?

While IRB procedures are a mandatory technical requirement for everyone regardless of university affiliation in order to determine whether a study is ethical and whether the researcher is familiar with the basic principles of ethics when working with people, our position was that we should avoid excessive formalization in teaching students about research culture, but at the same time fulfill the institutional requirements of a particular university. Our experience emphasizes the importance of finding common denominators and minimizing the factors that divide us. Today we are still in search of answers to the questions posed above, as the two approaches to the academic culture of research ethics seem to contradict rather than unite.

A Short Review of the Different Student Projects

Within the framework of this research training, students organized into mixed inter-university groups carried out four research projects. The first project concentrated on the theme "Women's Rights Activism in the Region of Osh." In this project, students studied the opinions of experts and activists about women's civic engagement after the tragic ethnic conflict in southern Kyrgyzstan in June 2010. At the center of these events was the exacerbation of long-standing contradictions and escalated tension between the Kyrgyz and Uzbeks, which resulted in massive acts of violence. In this traditional environment of South Kyrgyzstan, students found a

rather negative attitude towards women's activism, which is perceived as a destabilizing influence of Western organizations sponsoring the activities of feminist groups. The study also revealed a discrepancy in attitudes towards female activism among older and younger generations.

The second group's research project was focused on studying how the Muslim religious affiliation of women affects their decision-making regarding their daily life. The title of this research project was "Women, Islam, and Navigating Transformation in Kyrgyzstan." This study highlighted the social pressure on young women to meet traditional religious expectations regarding their behavior both in the private and public realms. One of the rationalizations of such an influence is to ensure that a woman gets married and properly plays her traditional female role.

The third project was titled "Domestic Violence and Traditional Ideologies in Kyrgyzstan: A Focus on Married Women and Bearing Children." The hypothesis was that, according to traditional gender roles, wives are expected to be fertile and should preferably deliver boys, and if this causes problems, they are under pressure from their husbands and families. Despite the fact that the analysis of interviews did not reveal any sign of a connection between cases of domestic violence and pressure on women related to childbearing, it emphasized that culturally determined ideas about childbearing may be a precondition to domestic violence.

In the fourth research project, "Electoral Participation of Women in Kyrgyzstan," students studied how local women's non-governmental organizations contributed to the involvement of women in the political process through the example of parliamentary elections. Traditional lifestyle and gender roles pressure, low living standards, and limited access to education for girls and women were found to be obstacles to women's political engagement.

Evaluation of the Students' Research Training Program by the Teachers

How did the authors evaluate this joint students' research training program? To stress the point once again, such a training program aims less at research findings than an understanding of

the research process. Of course, we are aware that only a portion of graduates will continue working in academia and empirical research. However, nowadays, a variety of competencies of students is required in the labor market. These involve translating certain demands into planning processes and breaking down larger tasks into smaller entities. This also happens during the research cycle. A topic is narrowed down into a research question and project, which can be handled under constraints of time, space, and money; it is broken up into different work steps. Here the emphasis is laid upon systematic proceeding and the logic of transparency. As emphasized by the German Association of Sociologists, graduates who have achieved both methodological training and practical research experience have comparative advantages in the labor market.

The second aspect in such research training is learning about the strengths and weaknesses of teamwork. Working in teams provides different challenges from working alone. In the latter case, I have to rely on my own strengths and cope with my hopefully known weaknesses. Working in teams, on the other hand, provides a mix of often unknown people, usually not aggregating according to one's own choice. People are connected through their working place only and usually not through friendship. People who are less active or shyer can hide themselves in the group, while more active group members take over the lead, so that in many cases teamwork enhances and strengthens individual qualities and weaknesses. Teamwork progress can to some degree be restricted by the personalities of the weakest and slowest group member. If other group members want to speed up the entire process, they often take over certain tasks of the weakest group members and sooner or later feel unjustly treated when the weakest group member gets the same benefits for less work. It is often wishful thinking, when one considers group processes in reality and not theory, to say that the group members add up to a finally more productive entity (cf. diversity management). Friction losses are too high, and in the

worst cases, an entire research project may be endangered by disturbing group dynamics and individual hostilities. The other way around, the team members can learn about themselves; less active group members may take a more responsible role by being supported by the team and the supervisors; dominant group members, on the other hand, may be kept under control by group democratic processes.

The result of comparative advantages of graduates in the labor market is often indirectly connected to their research competences: potential employers honor the experiences that students have developed to adapt themselves to teamwork, complete a long and exhausting project, and (in the case of the German students) work in a foreign culture. Those experiences lead to competencies in problem-solving and structuring group processes.

But let us remain on the academic level. In master theses, many students nowadays are interested in empirical work. Unfortunately, many of them have never practiced it. A result is that they first of all underestimate the prospective time involved for a research process, and secondly, they lack the necessary instruments, which they may be somewhat familiar with from classroom teaching but have never applied. The result is that their ambitions are too high and the methods involved are too handsome; students step into many traps that open up in the research processes. Then teachers' evaluation reports politely talk about "ambitious projects" that are "difficult to handle for the student due to lack of tools and lack of time." The mismatch between ambitions and outcome is so tremendous that in the end the mark is often disappointing for both student and teacher, and a literature-based thesis might have brought much better results.

Our own experience shows that students who participated in such a research training program deliver good results in empirical theses. Here we talk about qualitative research only, but the same holds true for quantitative research. They know the process and can assess the difficulties that occur in every step in the research cycle; they know particularly how much time

it takes to take an interview and to write a transcript. They know how multiple interviews can be coded and analyzed and can apply QDA software to support the handling of data. Their experience makes them self-conscious in contacting potential interview partners—even if these are professional experts. They have already learned about the frustrations of when an interview partner does not show up or has nothing to say about the research question. They are perhaps inventive enough to solve sudden problems which could not have been anticipated and to adapt the entire research process to new circumstances. They have learned about ethical standards and self-responsibilities.

We recommend empirical work in master theses only. The aim of a bachelor thesis is that students can translate and apply a theory into an empirical problem identified in the literature. This can involve statistical data, for example, or findings from other research projects, but should not involve time-consuming data processing or interview transcripts. The major requirement is not originality, but good academic practice. In master theses, on the other hand, we recommend manageable empirical studies which are taken up under supervision and with the recommendation of the teacher. These projects have to fit the time frame which is provided to the student by his or her institution, and they require time-consuming monitoring of the entire process by the teacher.

If this is the case, then are the findings of such research trainings not interesting for academia or the public because students are still undergoing their education and the time for such a project is very limited? Not necessarily. Working in a team means that not everything has to be done by one's own effort. A division of labor takes place. In a rather short period, more interviews can be taken compared to when working alone, which means that more raw material will be delivered. To provide an example: let us assume the research period covers a time span of two weeks or 10 working days. The team consists of four people. Every day, two interviews can

be taken (this works if interview partners have been found in advance) and immediately transcribed. At the end of that period, 20 interviews are thus available for the team, and if—like in our case—there are four such teams, it adds up to 80 interviews. Even if it is only 10 or 15 per group in reality, this is quite a lot of material.

From such a number of interviews, insights into a more complex issue are possible. Interviews can be compared according to various criteria, including the demographic identifiers of the interview partner such as age, gender, or other social/structural criteria; they can be measured in closeness or distance to ideal types, and the like. Of course, such a gathering of raw materials is the preparation for content analysis and further analysis only. This means, in the best-case scenario, there would be enough time for the students to work with the data. Not in this training, where students immediately needed their ratings to start their master thesis, but in the other cases which were mentioned at the beginning of this article, students continued to work on the material for at least one term. In all cases except this online research, the outcome was a joint research report of 60-100 pages, structured according to the different sub-projects under the joint major topic. We published these reports in our reviewed working paper series, and we can see from our web statistics that these reports are read by other academic scholars, but also by organizations. This means, students can also show a publication in their CVs and deliver such a paper once they apply for a job.

The other option is that students use the gathered material for their own master thesis. We decided to take all the gathered information of the four groups in this training as a knowledge pool available for every student, which meant that every transcript, memo, or summary of an interview was uploaded onto an online platform available for all participants.

What can we say about the intercultural proceedings? As already mentioned before, academic cultures are different. Although most national academic cultures aim at

internationalization, the synchronization of standards has not necessarily taken place. As we have already shown with the research ethics, they are different in the US and Germany. The same holds true for rating standards and requirements. Furthermore, national cultures and national academia impinge on students' behavior. This concerns the closeness or distance of teachers and students, for example. This may also concern the self-consciousness of students in interacting with respondents—especially when they are experts—and the behavior of experts towards students (e.g., hierarchical expectations). And finally, different national cultures impinge on the mix of the research teams, which may increase disturbances of a smooth flow of working together.

Another issue of self-reflections of the authors involves the hegemony of academic cultures. While US or German universities are rather well-equipped with funds and hopefully provide space for not directly curricular seminars, universities from the global South usually cannot not afford such equipment or academic freedom. This also concerns teaching obligations, whether such a training has to be added to the workload of the teacher or can be taken as part of it. As a matter of fact, it is the well-equipped universities from the global North that develop such teaching forms, and those teachers have the freedom to choose at least part of their workloads for such projects; very often they look for partners from the global South, who have to take such a course as an unpaid additional workload. The teachers and students from the former places enjoy travelling into a foreign culture, while those from the latter places work in their own environments and sometimes have to function as interpreters for their Western counterparts. We are fully aware that this can be discussed as hegemonial under the issues of post-colonialism or post-structuralism. It is also a pity that exchange programs do not offer additional funds for the latter universities to join such projects or perhaps even reverse the travel direction.

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Does It Matter Having Constructivist or Traditional Teaching Beliefs for Academic Achievement: A Study of Preservice Teachers

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Abstract

Conceptions of teaching and learning influence ways of teaching and learning and naturally are associated with students' motivation, self-efficacy, and achievement. Constructivist teaching and learning conceptions provide a productive learning environment to train students equipped with 21st century skills. Therefore, it is still crucial to examine preservice teachers' conceptions. This study investigates preservice teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning regarding gender and undergraduate years and reveals the relationships between preservice teachers' teaching and learning conceptions and their academic performance. Data was collected from 513 preservice teachers using the Teaching and Learning Conceptions Questionnaire. Results indicated that female preservice teachers had more constructive beliefs than males. First-year preservice teachers had the most traditional beliefs, and second and third-year preservice teachers had more constructive beliefs than seniors. Regression analysis showed that preservice teachers' constructive conceptions increased their academic performance while traditional conceptions decreased it.

Keywords: Conceptions of teaching and learning, preservice teachers, pedagogical beliefs, academic achievement

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Does It Matter Having Constructivist or Traditional Teaching Beliefs for Academic Achievement: A Study of Preservice Teachers

Preparing the students who will analyze, apply, and evaluate knowledge to think creatively and innovatively in solving real-world problems for society is imperative for teachers to respond to the rapidly changing world (Larson & Miller, 2011; Lemley et al., 2014). Twenty-first century skills become increasingly important as employers need employees who can find and interpret information using multiple sources and transfer the information to make decisions and create new things (Silva, 2009). Therefore, it is essential to train students to be equipped with 21st century skills such as creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, innovation, and decision-making, since they also directly influence teaching and learning (Larson & Miller, 2011). To achieve these instructional goals in the 21st century, teachers and students should work together to make sense of knowledge, solve educational problems, and make effective decisions to get appropriate outcomes (Larson et al., 2010). Educators should not focus solely on students' success; instead, they should focus on improving students' potential to contribute to society.

Students should apply and transfer the knowledge they learn in schools to the authentic contexts of their daily lives (Larson & Miller, 2011). Therefore, they are supposed to think creatively and innovatively, solve authentic problems, and work in collaboration (International Society for Technology in Education, 2007; Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2009). According to students, an essential element in a 21st century classroom is a respectful, connected, and relevant relationship with their teachers (Lemley et al., 2014). This finding reveals the importance of interaction between teachers and students. Students who experienced studying in a social setting where they actively participated reported that they favored this

experience (Nicholas, 2008). Changes in students' roles and expectations have also affected teacher practices and roles. Teachers are expected to be the classroom designer to provide students with an engaging and successful learning environment (Schlechty, 2011). Teachers are essential in shaping students' learning and in developing education reforms (Anagün, 2018). It is not the learning that needs to be changed, but the delivery of information (Franklin, 2011). Therefore, teachers should improve their teaching methods to promote students' constructive learning (Lemley et al., 2014).

Most research mentions reforms and initiatives to shift from traditional-based approaches to student-centered approaches to prepare students for the 21st century (Alt, 2018). A paradigm shift is necessary for teachers to reconsider how they should teach to help students use their knowledge and skills, solve problems, and develop a way of thinking and questioning that they can use in different disciplines (Galloway & Lasley, 2010). Fullan and Langworthy (2014) claimed that the necessary shift from teacher-led to student-based instruction does not exist yet, and the nonexistence of this shift hinders schools from fostering 21st century skills.

Based on this need to shift instruction from knowledge transmission to knowledge construction, many governments have made reform efforts in their education system. In this context, Turkey's renewed curricula from the Ministry of National Education (MoNE), updated in 2018, emphasizes common competencies in science, mathematics, social sciences, and reading. The competencies listed by MoNE include communication in the mother tongue and foreign languages, mathematical and technological competencies, digital competence, learning to learn, social and citizenship competencies, entrepreneurship, and cultural awareness (2018). Generally, it can be said that the new curricula aim to equip students with 21st century skills, competencies, knowledge, and values to survive in this rapidly changing digital era and

contribute to society. However, achieving the goals of the reforms and the curricula depends on teachers' teaching and learning methods.

Teachers' beliefs may be predictors, reflectors, and determinants of their actual classroom practice (Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992; Wilkins, 2008). Therefore, it is essential to consider teachers' beliefs, perceptions, and values to understand how a 21st century learning environment based on the constructivist approach should be structured (Anagün, 2018). Ernest (1989) proposed that teachers might teach differently because of their different beliefs, even if they possess similar knowledge and skills. It may be valuable for educators and policymakers to identify why some teachers teach constructively and others teach traditionally. One of the beliefs that affects teachers' instructional behaviors is their conceptions of teaching and learning (CoTL). This study investigates preservice teachers' CoTL and describes the differences in preservice teachers' conceptions in terms of gender and undergraduate years. I also examined the relationship between participants' academic achievement and teaching and learning conceptions.

Literature Review

Conceptions of Teaching and Learning

Teachers' beliefs play a crucial role in teacher education (Kagan, 1992) and may be more influential than knowledge in shaping their teaching practices (Pajares, 1992). Teachers' beliefs influence their instructional strategies and performance in the classroom (Cheng et al., 2009) and their lesson planning and assessment (Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992). Teachers' beliefs are related to their "preferred ways of teaching" and their instructional decisions (Teo et al., 2008), and these decisions affect the teaching and learning process either positively or negatively (Woolfolk, 2006). Therefore, comprehending preservice teachers' beliefs is of great importance for researchers and teacher educators (Chan & Elliott, 2004).

It is essential to note that the terms "conception" and "belief" can be used interchangeably to define ideas about teaching and learning (Kagan, 1992; Kember, 1997; Tigchelaar et al., 2012). CoTL may be regarded as fundamental beliefs that influence how teachers teach (Kim et al., 2013; Lee et al., 2013). CoTL are beliefs related to the teaching and learning methods teachers prefer, the meaning of teaching and learning, and teachers' and students' roles (Chan & Elliott, 2004). CoTL are related to the teacher's opinions about the nature of the content, how they should teach the content best, and how learners learn the content best (Da-Silva et al., 2007). Teachers' CoTL influence their intentions to employ specific teaching strategies (Kember, 2009), affect their instructional decisions (Tillema, 2000), and are closely associated with their actual practices in classrooms (Zhang & Liu, 2014).

Teaching conceptions may be bisected as knowledge transmission and knowledge construction (Chan & Elliot, 2004; Entwistle et al., 2000; Lee et al., 2013). These conceptions are regarded as resting on a continuum ranging from teacher-centered, structured, direct learning environments and traditional approaches to student-centered, unstructured, open-ended learning environments and constructivist approaches (Chan & Elliott, 2004; Kember, 1997; Kim et al., 2013; Tigchelaar et al., 2012). In this study, I use the classification of "traditional conceptions" and "constructivist conceptions." Individuals' perceptions related to knowledge and instruction are compatible. Someone who regards knowledge as content to be transmitted may likely think that teaching is the process of delivering knowledge. Contrary to this, someone who considers knowledge as meanings constructed personally needs a productive learning environment that supports knowledge construction (Teo et al., 2008).

Traditional teaching regards knowledge as unproblematic, verified facts and knowing as absorbing these facts passively (Sing & Khine, 2008), and it may also be considered teacher-

centered. Knowledge transmission is considered a unidirectional process from teachers to students (Cheng et al., 2009; Enwistle et al., 2000). Traditional approaches, known as teacher-centered, focus on teachers' input and the extent to which students receive the content taught (Alt, 2018). The teacher is the source of knowledge, and students passively receive information transmitted from teachers or textbooks in the context of traditional learning (Chan & Elliott, 2004). Teachers with traditional conceptions believe that transmitting knowledge to students is the most efficient and effective learning and teaching method (Cheng et al., 2009). They give attention to drill and practice, rote learning, and teacher authority (Kim et al., 2013; Zhang & Liu, 2014) and usually espouse didactic teaching (Lee et al., 2013; Sing & Khine, 2008). However, the regular practice of mathematical processes promotes procedural mastery that enables the use of these mathematical processes to solve authentic problems (Tularam & Hulsman, 2015). Therefore, it is not appropriate to ignore the effect of traditional approaches on problem-solving skills, which is one of the 21st century skills.

The main disadvantages of the teacher-centered approaches are the lack of feedback about student learning for teachers, the lack in meeting the needs of students with different learning styles, and the expectation that all students learn at the same pace (Schwerdt & Wuppermann, 2011). Despite these drawbacks, the authors also found that students whose teachers devoted more time to lecturing than problem-solving were more successful in TIMMS. Additionally, blended learning consists of 24/7 lectures mainly based on traditional teaching (Tularam & Machisella, 2018). Some researchers assert that the automatic recall of the processes would decrease the cognitive load and help students transfer their prior knowledge to support deeper understanding (Tall, 2004).

On the other hand, constructive teaching regards knowledge as uncertain and knowing as constructing personally meaningful understanding (Sing & Khine, 2008). This approach is learner-oriented. The constructivist conception of teaching is in line with student-centered approaches in which the teacher is a facilitator to improving students' self-motivation, self-reflection, and participation (Cheng et al., 2009; Enwistle et al., 2000; Kim et al., 2013; Sing & Khine, 2008). The primary descriptors of constructivist conceptions are the opportunities to help students think critically, explore and construct knowledge, and collaborate with peers (Marlowe & Page, 1998). Teachers who hold constructivist conceptions give importance to students' ideas, participation, and interaction in the classroom (Chan & Elliott, 2004; Zhang & Liu, 2014). Students' prior experiences and interactions among teachers and students play a significant role in students' knowledge construction (Cheng et al., 2009; Güneş & Bahçivan, 2018). An active learning environment is a requirement for students within the context of constructivist learning (Chan & Elliott, 2004). Students actively participate in decision-making related to instruction, so they take responsibility for their learning.

Student-centered approaches address engaging students with activities that employ innovative pedagogical methods (Alt, 2018). Teachers with constructivist conceptions recognize students' different characteristics and learning styles and respond to students' diverse needs with contemporary teaching methods and techniques (Pritchard, 2017). Teachers' constructivist conceptions encourage them to use digital tools more effectively and efficiently and adopt new technologies in their teaching practices (Güneş & Bahçivan, 2018; Teo et al., 2008). Constructivist teaching improves students' 21st century skills, such as problem-solving, critical thinking, and creativity (Fer & Cirik, 2007; Lee et al., 2013). The more preservice teachers that

hold constructivist beliefs, the more possible it may be to achieve the 21st century goals required to be competitive in the global economy.

Teachers' conceptions can shape how teachers teach and students learn (Cano, 2005; Kember, 1997; Tigchelaar et al., 2012). There is a relationship between teachers' styles of teaching and students' styles of learning. Students tend to have an in-depth learning approach in classrooms where teachers adopt more constructivist beliefs (Entwistle et al., 2000). Teachers' CoTL may be regarded as one of the most significant factors that affects students' academic achievement (Chan & Elliott, 2004). Students in a constructivist classroom are more successful academically than students whose teacher has traditional conceptions (Bas, 2016; Gow & Kember, 1993). Even though it is mainly conceived that constructivist teaching is more efficient than traditional teaching, it is worth noting that there is also no evidence of a significant difference in student achievement between traditional and modern approaches such as computer-assisted instruction (Zhang, 2005) and problem-based learning (McParland et al., 2004). The effect of teachers' conceptions on students' learning increases the importance of examining teacher conceptions.

The importance of constructivism makes researchers and teacher educators interested in better understanding the educational practices that support or hinder constructivist teaching (Alt, 2018). Students and teachers are expected to create a knowledge community where experiences, reflections, and interactions lead to knowledge construction (Howard et al., 2000). Most teachers began their teaching careers with teacher-centered conceptions of teaching (Alger, 2009), although there is a contemporary trend from traditional instruction to constructivist instruction (Bas, 2016; Travis & Lord, 2004). It is crucial to examine preservice teachers' beliefs before they graduate and begin to teach because teacher education is a transition process for their

beliefs. Preservice teachers' previous experiences underlie their beliefs and serve as filters in interpreting new experiences (Alt, 2018; Canbay & Beceren, 2012; Chan, 2004; Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992; Tigchelaar et al., 2012). Describing the profile of preservice teachers' CoTL would improve the possibility of achieving 21st century goals (Sing & Khine, 2008). The more preservice teachers become aware of their beliefs, the more they improve their understanding of teaching (Chan & Elliott, 2004). Therefore, many studies have investigated preservice teachers' CoTL. The following section summarizes the research related to preservice teachers' CoTL.

Research Related to Preservice Teachers' Conceptions of Teaching and Learning

CoTL have become a focus of interest for researchers who study teachers and preservice teachers. There are many studies related to teachers' CoTL (Alger, 2009; Alt, 2018; Bas, 2016; Deng et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2013; Lee et al., 2013; Tigchelaar et al., 2012). However, I focus on the research related to preservice teachers' conceptions. Researchers mainly examined the relationship between preservice teachers' CoTL and epistemological beliefs (Chai et al., 2010; Chan, 2011; Chan & Elliott, 2004; Cheng et al., 2009; Güneş & Bahçivan, 2018; Sing & Khine, 2008; Yilmaz & Sahin, 2011). Some also investigated the relationships among beliefs about knowledge, teaching, learning, and the use of technology (Chai et al., 2010; Gurcay et al., 2013; Güneş & Bahçivan, 2018; Teo et al., 2008). Differently, Bilgin and Aykac (2016) studied the relationship between CoTL and attitudes towards teaching. Eren (2010) also looked for the relationships among preservice teachers' efficacy beliefs, achievement goals, and teaching and learning conceptions.

This study aims to describe preservice teachers' CoTL while considering the influence of background variables (gender and undergraduate years). A few studies addressed the effect of background variables (Chan et al., 2007; Eren, 2010; Sing & Khine, 2008). The other aim is to

reveal the relationship between PSTs' CoTL and academic performance. The literature includes studies on the relationship between teachers' CoTL and students' achievement (Bas, 2016; Chan & Elliott, 2004; Gow & Kember, 1993; Trigwell et al., 1999). However, I did not see any study examining the relationship between preservice teachers' academic achievement and teaching and learning conceptions. The research problems guided in providing a closer look at the preservice teachers' teaching and learning conceptions and answering whether academically successful teachers ensure constructivist teaching. The research questions are:

1) What are the conceptions of teaching and learning held by preservice teachers?

2) Are there significant differences in preservice teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning regarding gender and undergraduate years?

3) Are preservice teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning significant predictors of academic achievement?

Methods

Research Design

This study is a descriptive research study and employs a relational survey design. Descriptive research identifies a phenomenon's existing situation, while correlational research statistically reveals the relationship between two or more variables (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018; Creswell, 2012). This study aims to describe preservice teachers' CoTL based on the independent variables determined for the study (gender and undergraduate years) and reveal the relationship between the CoTL and academic achievement.

Participants

The accessible population of this study was the preservice teachers (PSTs) at a state university in Central Anatolia in Turkey. The sample of the study included 513 PSTs randomly

selected from the accessible population. A sample size of 278 participants is enough to generalize the findings with a significance level of .05 and the deviance level of .05 to a population of 1000 participants (Cohen et al., 2018). Instruments were distributed to 550 PSTs, and 513 of them, which were appropriate for data input, were included in the study. The return rate of the instruments was calculated as 93.2%. The return rate should be in the range of 70%-80% to make valid interpretations (Creswell, 2012). Five hundred thirteen PSTs were enough to generalize this study's findings to the accessible population of the study. Table 1 demonstrates the background variables of the participants.

Table 1

Participants' Demographics in Terms of Gender and Grade Level

Independent Variables		**f**	**%**
Gender	Female	412	80.3
	Male	101	19.7
Undergraduate Years	1st Year	89	17.3
	2nd Year	146	28.5
	3rd Year	122	23.8
	4th Year	156	30.4

Five hundred thirteen PSTs participated in the study. Of these, 80.3% were female and 19.7% were male; 30% of participants were in their 4th year, 23.8% in their 3rd year, 28.5% in their 2nd year, and 17.3% in their 1st year.

Data Collection Tools

The data collection tools were the Personal Information Questionnaire, asking participants information about their demographics of gender and year in school; a "transcript" showing the general academic grade point averages of preservice teachers; and the Teaching and Learning Conceptions Questionnaire (TLCQ).

The Teaching and Learning Conceptions Questionnaire (TLCQ)

The TLCQ was developed by Chan and Elliott (2004) and adapted into Turkish by Aypay (2011). The TLCQ has 30 items and two factors. The first factor refers to constructivist teaching and learning conceptions and includes 12 items. Sample items for the constructivist conception factor are 1) "Learning means students have ample opportunities to explore, discuss, and express their ideas" and 2) "The focus of teaching is to help students construct knowledge from their learning experience instead of knowledge communication." The reliability coefficient was calculated as .88 for this factor.

The second factor is related to traditional conceptions and has 18 items. The reliability coefficient was calculated as .83 for the traditional conceptions factor. Sample items for the factor "traditional conceptions" are 1) "A teacher's major task is to give students knowledge/information, assign them drill and practice, and test their recall" and 2) "The traditional/lecture method for teaching is best because it covers more information/knowledge."

The Cronbach's alpha for the overall questionnaire was calculated as .84. I calculated the fit indices to see whether the instrument's two-factor structure was valid for the sample of this study. The TLCQ was validated with satisfactory goodness of fit indices (GFI=0.87; AGFI=0.83; RMR=0.055; RMSEA=0.09; CFI=0.91), showing that the original two-factor model had acceptable fit indices for the data obtained from the sampled preservice teachers (Jöreskog & Sorbom, 1993). Besides, 10 preservice teachers were asked to read and answer the items aloud (think aloud) to see whether the items were understandable for preservice teachers.

General Academic Grade Point Averages

End-of-year academic grade point averages were used to determine the academic achievement of PSTs. I obtained the academic grade point averages of PSTs from the Faculty of Education by getting legal permission.

Data Analysis

Descriptive and correlational statistics were used to analyze the data. Descriptive statistics used to identify PSTs' teaching and learning conceptions were frequency, percentage, and standard deviation. Normality tests were used before analyzing PSTs' CoTL regarding gender and undergraduate years.

Table 2

The Results of the Normality Test

	The Teaching and Learning Conceptions
Mean	3.77
Median	3.73
Mode	3.56
Skewness	.488
Kurtosis	.176

Table 2 shows that the mean, median, and mode values of PSTs were close to each other. However, the kurtosis value for the questionnaire was .176, and the skewness value was .488. Tabachnick and Fidell (2013) proposed that the skewness and kurtosis values should be in the range of -1.5 to 1.5, while George and Mallery (2010) proposed that the range should be -2.0 to 2.0 for the normal distribution. Additionally, the mean, mode, and median are close in the normal distribution because the normal distribution is also symmetric (Kalayci, 2010). Table 2 reveals that this study's data had a normal distribution since the mean, median, and mode were close to each other, and the skewness and kurtosis values were in the suggested range. A t-test was employed to examine the differences in PSTs' teaching and learning conceptions regarding gender, and an ANOVA was used to investigate differences regarding the undergraduate years. The source of the significant difference was determined via the Scheffe test. Cohen's *d* was calculated to determine the effect size of the significant differences in t-tests, and Eta Squared to estimate the effect size of significant differences found in ANOVA. Lastly, to examine the third

research problem, simple linear regression was performed to see to what extent PSTs' academic achievement predicted their teaching and learning conceptions. The criterion variable was PSTs' academic achievement, and the predictor variables were PSTs' constructivist and traditional conceptions.

Results

The findings are given in a way that responds to each research question.

Preservice Teachers' Conceptions of Teaching and Learning

The first research problem is related to the teaching and learning conceptions held by preservice teachers. Table 3 demonstrates the descriptive statistics of PSTs' CoTL.

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations of PSTs' Teaching and Learning Conceptions

Dimensions	M	SD
Constructivist conception of teaching and learning	4.422	.488
Traditional conception of teaching and learning	3.128	.731

The mean scores of PSTs with constructive conceptions (M=4.422) are higher than those of PSTs with traditional conceptions (M=3.128).

The second research problem is related to significant differences in PSTs' teaching and learning conceptions regarding gender and undergraduate years. Table 4 shows significant differences in terms of gender.

Table 4

Gender Differences in Teaching and Learning Conceptions

Dimensions	Gender	N	M	Sd	t	p	Cohen's *d*
Traditional	Female	412	3.060	.737	-4.311	.000	0.50
	Male	101	3.404	.636			
Constructivist	Female	412	4.474	.457	5.022	.000	0.53
	Male	101	4.208	.550			

Female preservice teachers' mean scores are higher than male PSTs' in comparing constructivist teaching and learning conceptions, and male preservice teachers' mean scores are higher than female PSTs' in comparing traditional teaching and learning conceptions. The mean differences between groups are statistically significant both in traditional conceptions (t=-4.311; p<.05) and in constructivist conceptions (t=5.022; p<.05). Both significance levels have a moderate effect size ($d_{traditional}$=0.50; $d_{constructivist}$=0.53). Findings reveal that PSTs' CoTL differ due to gender. Male PSTs hold traditional conceptions, and female PSTs hold constructivist conceptions. Table 5 is related to differences in PSTs' teaching and learning conceptions in terms of undergraduate years.

Table 5

Differences in PSTs' Conceptions of Teaching and Learning by Undergraduate Years

Dimensions	Undergraduate Years	M	SS	df	MS	F	p	Source of the significance	η^2
Traditional	1st Year	3.432	11.929	3	3.976	7.731	.000	1>2,3,4	0.04
	2nd Year	2.969	261.800	509	.514				
	3rd Year	3.114	273.729	512					
	4th Year	3.112							
Constructivist	1st Year	4.426	2.755	3	.918	3.920	.009	2,3>4	0.02
	2nd Year	4.489	119.263	509	.234				
	3rd Year	4.474	122.018	512					
	4th Year	4.316							

PSTs' traditional (F=7.731; p<.05) and constructivist (F=3.920; p<.05) conceptions differ statistically regarding their undergraduate years. Significant differences in both dimensions of teaching and learning conceptions have a small effect size. First-year PSTs have the highest score in traditional CoTL. The mean differences between the first, second, third, and fourth-year preservice teachers are in favor of the first-year preservice teachers. Although the freshmen's scores in constructivist conceptions are higher than those in traditional conceptions, freshmen's

traditional beliefs are stronger than other preservice teachers in their second, third, or fourth undergraduate year.

The mean scores of the second (M=4.489) and third-year (M=4.474) PSTs in constructivist teaching and learning conception are closer to each other, and they are higher than the mean scores of first and fourth-year PSTs. The mean differences between groups are statistically significant (F=3.920; p<.05). The significant differences between second, third and fourth-year PSTs are in favor of the second and third-year PSTs. It can be said that second and third-year preservice teachers have more constructivist teaching beliefs than senior PSTs.

The Relationship Between PSTs' Teaching and Learning Conceptions and Academic Achievement

The last research question deals with the relationship between PSTs' teaching and learning conceptions and academic achievement. Table 6 indicates the relationship between the constructs mentioned above.

Table 6

Correlations Between PSTs' Academic Achievement and the Dimensions of Teaching and Learning Conceptions

		Traditional conception of teaching and learning	Constructivist conception of teaching and learning
Grade point averages	r	-.222	.125
	p	.000	.003
	N	513	513

Table 6 points out a negative and weak relationship between PSTs' traditional teaching and learning conceptions and grade point averages (r=-.222) and a positive and weak relationship between PSTs' constructivist teaching and learning conceptions and grade point averages (r=.125). It is worth noting that the effect of traditional conceptions on preservice teachers' academic achievement is stronger than the effect of constructivist conceptions; in turn, the

variance explained by traditional conceptions is more than that explained by constructivist ones. This result implies that the preservice teachers' academic achievement increases with constructivist teaching and learning conceptions and decreases with traditional teaching and learning conceptions.

Table 7

Results Related to the Established Model

Variable	Unstandardized		Standardized	t
	B	Std. Error	β	
Traditional	-.085	.018	-.208**	-4.801
Constructivist	.058	.026	.095*	2.199
F (2, 510)			15.727**	
Constant			2.979	
Durbin-Watson			1.736	
R Square			.058	
R Square Change			.058	
Adjusted R Square			.054	

Note. *p<.05; **p<.001

Model 1 established in the ANOVA table data is significant (F=15.727; p<.001). Also, the value of Durbin-Watson is calculated as 1.736. These findings indicate that PSTs' teaching and learning conceptions predict their academic achievement and have low error values. In other words, the established model is significant. In Table 7, the B value is -.085 (negative value) for traditional teaching and learning conceptions and is .058 (positive value) for constructivist CoTL. It can be said that both dimensions of teaching and learning affect PSTs' academic achievement, and values are significant ($t_{traditional}$=-4.801; $t_{constructivist}$=2.199; p<.05). It reveals that 5.8% of the variation in the academic achievement variable is explained by PSTs' conceptions of teaching (p<.001). The regression model established for Model 1 according to the values in Table 7 can be explained with the following equation:

Grade point average=2.979+(0.058×*Constructivist*)-(0.085×*Traditional*).

As the mean values for constructivist conceptions increased by one, grade point averages increased by .058, and as the mean values for traditional conceptions increased by one, grade point averages decreased by .085.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study examined PSTs' CoTL in terms of the background variables of gender and undergraduate years (see Figure 1 and Figure 2) and the relationship between their academic achievement and teaching and learning conceptions. Data collected from 513 PSTs using the Teaching and Learning Conceptions Questionnaire were included in the data analysis. Chan and Elliott (2004) noted that the participants of their study did not believe in either traditional or constructivist teaching, as their mean scores in both dimensions are below three points. Based on this implication, we can say that our participants believe in both traditional and constructivist teaching since their mean scores in both dimensions are above midpoint three. Besides, they seem to agree with constructivist teaching and learning conceptions more than traditional conceptions. Their mean scores in the constructivist dimension of teaching conceptions are higher than in the traditional dimension. These results are like the results of Chan and Elliott (2004), Sing and Khine (2008), Cheng et al. (2009), Bas (2016), and Alt (2018). It can be said that constructivist teaching was regarded as the most effective and efficient teaching strategy by participants of much research. This result looks promising for the future of the educational community. Sing and Khine (2008) argued that the relatively higher score in the constructivist conception was due to the strong emphasis on constructivism and the contemporary trend from traditional teaching to constructivist teaching (Travis & Lord, 2004). However, a further examination of teaching and learning conceptions based on different demographics is needed.

Gender is a variable that leads to significant differences in participants' teaching and learning conceptions. It is found that male PSTs have a higher level of traditional conceptions, and female PSTs have a higher level of constructivist conceptions. Finding that female PSTs have a higher level of constructivist conceptions is a common result found in most research (Aypay, 2011; Lee et al., 2013). It is also known that female PSTs have more positive attitudes toward teaching and feel more efficacious than their male counterparts (Kartal, 2020). Teachers with a high level of teacher efficacy and positive attitudes towards teaching consider students' different needs and use new and innovative student-centered methods and techniques to promote student learning (Weiner, 2003). These aspects of high teacher efficacy and positive teacher attitudes align with the constructivist CoTL. This may be why female preservice teachers had more constructivist beliefs than males. On the other hand, Sing and Khine (2008) reported that gender leads to no significant differences in their participants' teaching and learning conceptions.

PSTs' teaching and learning conceptions differ due to their undergraduate years. Beginner PSTs have more traditional teaching and learning conceptions. The second and third-year PSTs are found to have more constructivist teaching and learning conceptions. Preservice teachers may be in a transition process in which their beliefs move from naïve to sophisticated in their initial teacher education programs (Cheng et al., 2009). It is seen that the transition process in this study begins with traditional beliefs and then transforms into constructivist beliefs and continues with traditional beliefs.

The undergraduate year differences in PSTs' teaching and learning conceptions may imply that participants came to their initial teacher education programs from a traditional and teacher-centered learning environment. Knowledge transmission from teacher to students may

still dominate the learning environments even though the benefits of constructivist teaching are known, and researchers, policymakers, and educators suggest constructivist teaching.

Senior PSTs are the participants who have teaching experience in schools. The traditional learning environment in their student-teaching schools might still influence fourth-year PSTs' teaching and learning conceptions. The shift from constructivist beliefs to traditional beliefs may be the indicator of teacher-centered instruction in schools. Many studies relate teaching experience to traditional beliefs (Sing & Khine, 2008; Teo et al., 2008; Tillema, 2000). As a result of observing traditional teaching in the actual context of schools, most of the beginning PSTs initiated their teacher preparation programs with teacher-centered conceptions of teaching (Alger, 2009). The other reason for the traditional teaching and learning conceptions in fourth-year PSTs may be their desire to control the classroom in their field experience. It is known that classroom management is a crucial issue for PSTs when they first come to class to teach (Kartal & Çinar, 2018). The teacher is the only authority that manages the classroom effectively in the traditional classroom (Alt, 2018; Bas, 2016; Zhang & Liu, 2014). Therefore, they may mostly hold traditional teaching conceptions. Figure 1 and Figure 2 illustrate the influence of background variables on PSTs' teaching and learning conceptions.

Figure 1

Background Variables (Gender and Grade level) in Traditional Conceptions

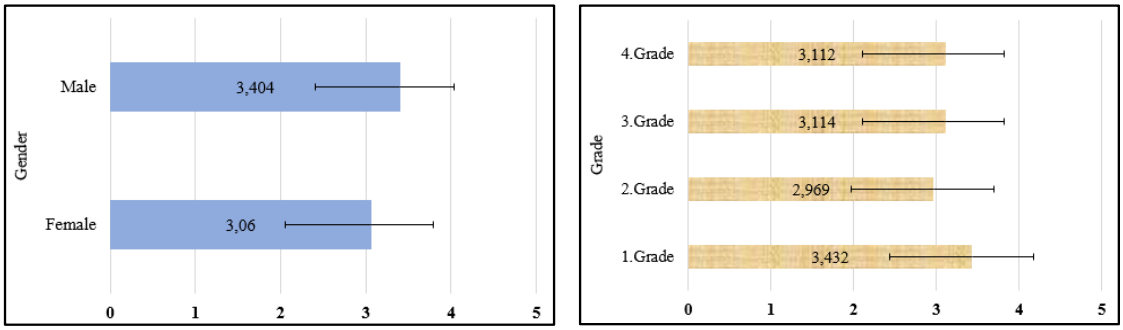
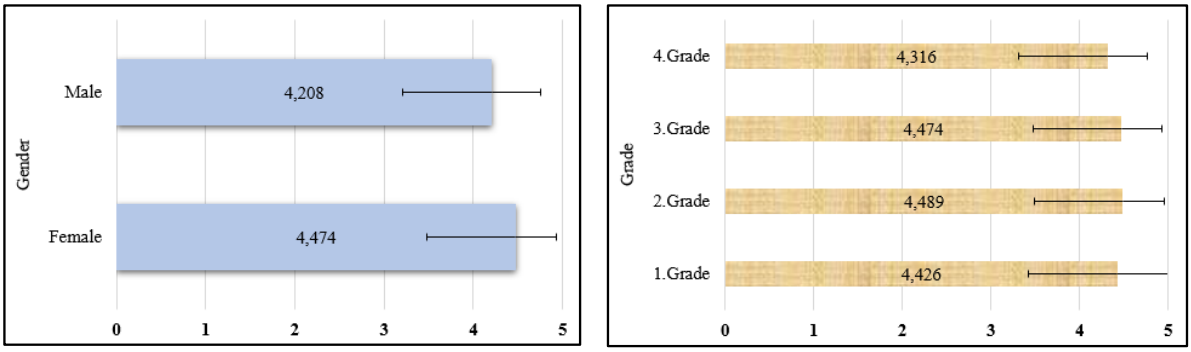


Figure 1 and Figure 2 demonstrate the mean scores and error bars in traditional and constructivist teaching. The error bars demonstrate the range on which participants' mean scores lay. Figures describe the preservice teachers' profiles in both dimensions.

Figure 2

Background Variables (Gender and Grade Level) in Constructivist Conceptions



Teachers' CoTL are related to students' achievement (Bas, 2016; Cano, 2005; Chan & Elliott, 2004; Gow & Kember, 1993) and learning styles (Entwistle et al., 2000; Kember, 1997; Tigchelaar et al., 2012). This study contributes to the literature by revealing the relationship between PSTs' teaching and learning conceptions and their academic performance. Preservice teachers' teaching and learning conceptions are significant predictors of their academic performance. Moreover, there is a weak negative relationship between PSTs' traditional conceptions and academic achievement and a weak positive correlation between PSTs' constructivist conceptions and academic achievement. The established model in this study addresses that PSTs' constructivist conceptions increase their academic performance and traditional conceptions decrease academic performance. Constructivist teaching and learning do not regard knowledge as the passive absorption of information transferred from teachers to students and do not regard learning as remembering and memorizing (Brooks & Brooks, 1999). The deep-learning approach is also associated with constructivist CoTL (Entwistle et al., 2000).

It is possible to say that participants with constructivist teaching and learning conceptions attempt to make sense of knowledge based on their prior experiences.

This study once again demonstrated the importance of constructivist conceptions in academic achievement. Someone with constructivist teaching and learning conceptions is more likely to consider learning as knowledge construction via effort and tends to play the role of knowledge producer as a learner. These features are closely associated with a deep learning approach that leads to higher academic performance (Entwistle & Wilson, 1977). This result shows that teaching and learning conceptions affect students' achievement positively and also affect PSTs' academic performance.

Implications

The results of this study could be addressed from two perspectives: (1) the contributions to literature and (2) the contributions to initial teacher education. This study would be considered evidence of the positive correlation between preservice teachers' constructivist teaching beliefs and academic performance for the former category. In this line, teacher preparation programs should encourage PSTs to make sense of new knowledge based on their prior knowledge and learning experience from the first year of their teacher education programs. This would also help them increase their success and feel more confident and efficient. For the latter category, this study revealed a pattern that begins with traditional conceptions, transforms into constructive conceptions, and ends with traditional conceptions. The pattern that begins and ends with traditional conceptions may be an indicator of traditional approach-based instruction in schools. Fourth-year PSTs should be supported to increase their mastery experiences in which they see that they can teach in a constructivist manner, because mastery experiences have a crucial impact

on teacher beliefs. They should recognize the value of constructivist teaching with mastery experiences and verbal encouragement from teachers and educators.

Limitations

This study is limited to a self-reported measure and one teacher preparation program. We know that different findings can be obtained with varying profiles of participants. Therefore, further research is still needed across countries to comprehend teaching and learning conceptions. Self-reported data needs to be verified with different data types, such as observation, artifacts, or interviews. Further research may examine PSTs' and teachers' conceptions in the same province to compare the conceptions held by PSTs and teachers. This would help us understand why fourth-year PSTs have traditional conceptions and observe whether they practice mainly teacher-centered instruction.

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The Mystery of Education

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Abstract

In this paper, I shall shortly investigate if some kind of guiding principle, general message, or fascinating buzzword can manifest in philosophy or pedagogy (in their theory and practice). The question which I am interested in is whether the pedagogical and philosophical aspects can meet in education. To put it more specifically: whether a spirited and noble buzzword exists or not. It is obvious that goodness is not universal and obligatory; one "only" has to strive for it. This article claims that the cultures of philosophy and pedagogy can do a lot for the formation and practice of independent and critical thinking and the virtue of goodness. Critical thinking requires the bravery of the intellect; goodness necessitates the decency, the nobleness of the heart and the catchword of philosophy and pedagogy soul. One has to learn and understand both of these catchwords.

*Keywords***:** culture, virtue, critical reflexivity, goodness

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The Mystery of Education

"What led me to sociology before was the critical reflexivity."

Iván Szelényi

Introduction

Elaborating on Szelényi's utterance chosen as his motto, one can undoubtedly expect from philosophy and, furthermore, from pedagogy (practical pedagogy), that they will critically evaluate the examined questions and concerned subject. In philosophy, critical thinking can be considered a widespread method. However, in pedagogy, the critical attitude has not become a common criterion. Nevertheless, it can easily happen that the theory and practice of pedagogy might receive strong "ammunition" and motivating force from philosophy.

In this paper, I shall investigate if some kind of guiding principle, general message, or catchword can manifest in philosophy or pedagogy (in their theory and practice). The question in which I am interested is whether pedagogical and philosophical aspects can meet in education, or to put it more specifically, whether a spirited and noble catchword exists or not.

Defining the Art of Philosophy: Science or Not?

Let us start out from the general abstract meaning of culture. Even nowadays one can accept Spengler's about one-century-old definition without approaching the narrower notions of culture and the known application utilized in sociology and philosophy that culture is an organism "which makes its incorporated peoples and estates become possessors of a universal idiom based on a common history" (Spengler, Vol 2, 1994., p. 54.). This universal history and idiom allow a human being, the humanity of a given moment, to be capable of expressing how he views himself and his community as a form of self-expression that is a natural human

need. The human being, continues Spengler, "talks about himself through culture, (…) his knowledge and opinion are the part of his self-expression" (Vol 1, 1994, p. 178.).

Whatever the truth is, philosophy has an important role in culture in both its narrower and broader senses. It interrogates itself and the world continuously and consciously. The philosopher is led by his love of wisdom. Nevertheless, the criterion of philosophy strongly divides the discipline. Many views and misconceptions have evolved in terms of the essence of philosophy and wisdom. In my opinion, the most widespread and biggest misconception is the one which regards philosophy as a science and thus interprets and evaluates "the science of wisdom" in accordance with scientific principles. This kind of interpretation has a certain foundation; one can refer to the cultural historical fact that different kinds of disciplines have evolved from philosophy. Many researchers have drawn the conclusion that philosophy became the science of sciences. The expectation is enormous: philosophy will give the final and authoritative responses to the grandiose and complicated questions that other disciplines cannot answer. The stubbornly curious person who asks questions all the time cannot get rid of the comfortable standpoint that philosophy will have the final word and will articulate the incontestable truth.

I think disciplinary criteria cannot be derived from philosophy without any negative impact. The reason for it is that the foundations of philosophy and the nature, behavior, categorization, and methodology of sciences are different. The major difference is in terms of their scope. Philosophy does not investigate all aspects of reality; furthermore, the philosopher is not interested in the details, but in the integrity of the world, thus the scope of philosophy is the "whole." A further considerable difference is that the professional scientist attempts to unearth the governing rule in a manner that validates the discovered law, scientific data, or fact from an exact scientific viewpoint. Or, at least, it indicates the borders of its validity that is accepted by every reasonable person. Nevertheless, one must see that the

philosopher must not have such pretensions and aims. He must be satisfied with—which is not a small thing—communicating thoughts, posing questions and, as I have mentioned before, inquiring into reality. In addition, he cannot even present and prove irrefutably what he has discovered. Maybe that is why the particular phenomenon emerges that some people accept the standpoint of the philosopher but others do not. Lastly, one cannot disregard the standpoint that the philosopher analyzes such general and deep-lying questions that he cannot even answer. The afore quoted Spengler is right when he writes that "philosophy regarding its deepest foundations is nothing, but the defence against the inconceivable" (Vol. 1, 1994, p. 209).

I cannot avoid discussing the question of the relationship of philosophy and science. Philosophical discourses and debates emerge concerning this problem. In this respect, let me refer to the work of the excellent contemporary philosopher, János Tőzsér. It is worth quoting his text in detail, on the one hand, because it indicates the most important particularity of philosophy—one could say its mission, or buzzword. On the other hand, an idea occurs in it which can directly be related to pedagogy (to a given discipline), namely to one of its characteristics—however, a not sufficiently emphasized feature.

> Philosophy is (…) a failed task, – he writes - because it did not solve any of the philosophical problems. (…) Nevertheless, philosophy is the best mentor of *critical reflexivity* (…) and helps us to become such alert personages who consider assembling their epistemic affections through their self-reflexivity as a responsibility. (…) This is the *moral* dimension of practicing philosophy, but, at the same time, it gives *pedagogic significance*. If somebody literally experiences from his childhood that in terms of certain questions he cannot exclusively rely on his epistemic affection, he will not become fanatic (or demagogue – S. K.) and will be *a better person* in general than without this competence. He will be able to do what not many people can: place

himself in the cognitive perspective of others and understand their motivations. (Tőzsér, 2018, p. 13. and p. 343)

The extract contains many fruitful ideas which can encourage us to profoundly debate or agree. I do not share the negative perspective of the author, namely that philosophy would be a futile campaign because it cannot solve the examined problems (what is more, not even a single one of them!). However, the task of philosophy is not to give final and eternal answers, but "only" to propose an infinite number of starting points, approaches, and questions concerning the whole of the world, its existence, the place of men in it, and the purpose of men. In addition (let us think about the aforementioned idea of Spengler), it discovers deeply imbedded dilemmas that cannot even be answered from a theoretical viewpoint. What is the consequence? The philosopher cannot endeavour to make ex cathedra assertions, as he does not possess a firm and unique truth that subjugates all people. The philosopher cannot be in the elevated position which claims that he is in possession of all knowledge, as he is not the representative of the science of sciences. The love of wisdom means that he does not pursue feverishly eternal and universal answers which are comprehensible for everybody. Instead, he realizes that he lives in the state of continuous *intellectual orientation*, and the major result of his reasoning is the ability to articulate more *differentiated questions*. Because of these criteria, philosophy is *not a science*, but a certain form of restless intellectual occupation, intellectual joy. Nevertheless, philosophy is not free from the task to follow permanently the results of disciplines that fundamentally shape the given epoch and to reflect them in a certain way. In other words, one can claim that philosophy is not simply a science (especially not the king of sciences), but arguing that it should separate itself from the development of sciences and should not take inspiration from them is equally unacceptable.

Furthermore, in the quoted extract of Tőzsér's work, one can find a wonderful realization and a remarkable but not examined prevision too. His former idea was highlighting

the *critical* function; to put it differently, he defines the most important function, the essence of philosophy, as the critical judgement of phenomena (philosophy is the best mentor of critical reflexivity). The other is the importance of *goodness*, which can be regarded as one of the possible—if not decisive—spheres of the conjugation of philosophy and pedagogy. Last but not least, I state that both of them, namely critical skill or ability and the virtue of goodness, are catchwords of philosophy and pedagogy. I shall discuss them separately in the following sections. The latter one might be presented in a slightly more detailed manner, because as a discipline, pedagogy has not paid enough attention to the theme of goodness.

Critical Reflexivity

It is worth considering the idea chosen as Szelényi's motto. The personal remark of the famous Hungarian sociologist can serve as a general moral which can be adopted by philosophy and pedagogy (in this case, practical pedagogy). The actual context is the following: "What led me to sociology before was critical reflexivity with the help of which one can reflect on the used data. (…) The researcher (…) uses critical reflexivity in order to determine what his data means and how he produced them" (Szelényi, 2019, p. 109–110). What does this kind of critical reflexivity mean in terms of philosophy, science, and everyday education? It is not a secret that the critical stance has always been present in the history of philosophy, from the Socratic tradition through critical empiricism to 20th century analytical philosophy and so on. In this case, let me highlight one specific addition in order to demonstrate the idea in question. I deliberately choose such texts which have been disregarded by philosophers, and referring to them might shock some of the thinkers: namely, I shall refer to one of the essays of Karl Marx. In the letter of September 1843 that Marx wrote to Rugé, one can interpret the following: the task of philosophy is not to construct the future, but to realize it. "I am referring to *ruthless criticism of all that exists*, ruthless both in the sense of not being afraid of the results it arrives at and in the sense of being just as little

afraid of conflict with the powers that be." (Marx & Engels, 1957, p. 346). Ferenc Tőkei, a well-known Hungarian philosopher, rightfully remarks in relation to the above-mentioned lines that Marx himself calls "ruthless criticism of all that exists" critical philosophy in which principle of historicity applies in contrast with dogmatism (1977, p. 373–374).

Let us try to react to the presented objectives and aims referenced above with no regard to political affiliation. What are we talking about? I shall not detail the content of the quotation's second part (it is about dealing with power conflicts), as it is such a self-explanatory expectation. Nevertheless, I must peremptorily mention that the Marxian carrier proves that it is possible to think and work independently from the existing political powers. Albeit, it requires enormous moral courage, commitment, and grit. As a result, surely not many people are capable of it. The first part of the sentence is important and exciting. What does he mean by the phrase "not being afraid of the results it arrives at"? When the researcher, who can be a philosopher or the representative of any other discipline, examines a thing, he proceeds with a concrete idea, or hypothesis. Then he continues the investigation as long as possible. He does not stop at the point in the investigation which proves his hypothesis. In other words, he is not tempted by his vanity; he consequently elaborates on the primarily obtained results. If he can consequently finish the analysis, there is a high probability that he has to revise his former hypothesis, or maybe he has to modify his initial conceptions. To put it differently, he is not afraid of his own data because he is capable of measuring his research critically and self-critically. Furthermore, he is able to do the necessary modification and ready to fundamentally change the way he thinks, his starting point, and his research itself. I reckon that such a self-correction step poses a similar challenge as coming into conflict with the existing political powers because one needs to fight a battle with oneself and not with some kind of external force. In that sense, I state that Marxian guidance does not lose from its validity, one can (should) take on that standpoint.

As I have mentioned before, philosophy cannot separate itself from contemporary scientific development. Philosophy should and must incorporate the newest and most important results of sciences because it can use them as a foundation. And now one can compliment this principle with the aforementioned thoughts. Following the new laws discovered and justified by disciplines on a certain level (nevertheless, one knows that the philosopher is not a professional scientist) is important, because with the help of this step—among others—he can revise and control the obtained results. Furthermore, he is able to rethink and restructure his research.

Based on the current state and direction of today`s science, one can regrettably remark that the reaction of both philosophy and pedagogy is not satisfying. It is a commonly known sequel that there is large-scale scientific and technological development; however, social adaptation to the world of computers, robots, and so-called smart televisions and phones becomes more and more demanding. It means that every kind of human activity can be modelled and can be described as an algorithm. It also puts the questions of philosophy and pedagogy that were regarded until now as traditional into a different context. In my opinion, philosophy and especially pedagogy have not elaborated on (maybe have not even found) fast and adequate responses to the latest scientific discoveries and inventions. It is also possible that there are and will be such drastic technological changes that one cannot do anything with them despite the proper reaction of philosophy and pedagogy. It is worth considering the seemingly astounding prognosis of a contemporary historian. “Today,” the famous contemporary historian Yuval Noah Harari writes, “our knowledge grows in an incredibly rapid pace (…) which leads to even larger and faster changes. Consequently, we will be able to interpret the present and predict the future less and less. (…) The more data one has, the more one understands history; the faster it changes its direction, the faster one`s knowledge becomes obsolete.” (2017, p. 57–58). The standpoint of the author can be contested; however,

one can reflect on his conclusions. Presumably, one has to rethink the relationship of philosophy and science. The classic role of philosophy was to follow and interpret the development of science and to take inspiration from it. It seems that in the near future the relationship will fundamentally change; philosophy might not simply mechanically follow sciences but might try to interpret and control the development of disciplines. At the same time, it might also offer an organizing principle which originates from its own perception about the world in order to understand knowledge in relation to the world or rather to interpret knowledge and the world in a critical and self-critical manner. This means that the significance of philosophy will not wither. It is very unlikely that philosophy will cease to exist, although education policy hastily thinks it. In consequence, many members in leadership at universities have a limited way of thinking. It would be worth revising the education of philosophy in tertiary education, especially in teacher training. In public education, in the case of the education of disciplines, it should be reconsidered if there is enough sensibility on a given level to the aptitude which allows somebody to make underlying ideological and philosophical correlations explicit. On the contrary, the role of philosophy will soon be extended according to all indications. The reason behind this is the process during which there is an increasing social need to balance the fast-paced economic, scientific, and technical transformations and people's sense of security. One can expect philosophy to be a theoretical orientation point which helps people find their real place, in the continuously and radically changing world, in the relations to be formed between them and their environment—or at least to be able to effectively react to the new challenges of life.

For me it is evident that the "traditional" critical function of philosophy (namely the "ruthless criticism of all that exists") will become stronger in the future. Without critical attitudes and thinking, the only thing one can reach is that one gets lost in the translucent world of chaotic changes from which one cannot escape, and gradually disappears in it.

It is inevitable for the theory and practice of pedagogy to face the new challenges of education. Pedagogy must give its answer to the question of how education should adopt to the positive and negative effects of the digital society. Humans tend to feel and enjoy the beneficial impact of new technologies at first. They do not see the dangers or simply do not want to take them into consideration. In relation to the latter symptoms, it is easy to think that the later one reacts to the negative consequences, or the less one takes them into consideration, the bigger the loss will be. Let me refer to the warnings of two contemporary researchers (communication specialists and philosophers) here.

Gabor Szécsi, a Hungarian philosopher and famous communication researcher, writes that "a mass medium does not simply provide the readers with information, but it also influences the interpretation of information" (2012, p. 79). In other words, whether one recognizes it or not, or likes it or not, a mass medium also serves to manipulate the users. As we witness the spectacular spread of mass media (smart television, internet, smartphones, social media), one can expect that education faces a considerable challenge; along with the education from parents and teachers, the child receives personality-forming impulses from media, such as the invasion of tabloids "causing mental deterioration," false and not credible information, fearmongering, crime triggering, and so on. It is obvious that similar phenomena have self-destructing and self-distorting consequences, and teachers should prepare children and young people to be able to properly react and to defend effectively against the dangers. The best defense (form and method) against the negative mental repercussions is the formation and strengthening of the formerly emphasized *critical attitude and approach*. As we will see, requiring critical reflexivity is not only beneficial for philosophy and sociology but for pedagogy too. Its application is not simply desirable, but also necessary in terms of pedagogical endeavors. According to my own hypothesis, that is far from the general conception, direction, and especially practice of pedagogy.

The other remark of Gábor Szécsi can be related more to the requirement of the formation and challenge of self-critical ability and self-control. One cannot really contest that children who watch television and surf on the net encounter information that should only be available to adults.

> Consequently, the borderlines between childhood and youth and between youth and adulthood become more and more blurred. (…) Children who watch television channels and browse on the internet more consciously use the same communication medium as adults but access more and more information than them. (…) All this inevitably leads to the weakening of the authority of adults originating from the traditional social situation and role. (Szécsi, 2013, p. 46–47)

The loss of authority of adults is really a new consequence, so it cannot be denied that education must be carried out in such a situation and such circumstances. But let me pose the question elaborating on the remark of the author: has pedagogy (sociology, psychology, ethics, social pedagogy, and jurisprudence) seriously faced this current situation, and has it drawn the conclusion concerning the loss of authority?

The other researcher to whom I would like to refer is Miklós Almási, an excellent Hungarian philosopher. Almási warns us, "The sociality of the individual is shaken, (…) the threads that lead from the other to the self are weakened. (…) In the digital age the emotional culture is irreversibly degrading" (2019, p. 22–23 and p. 141). I also reckon that emotional culture has withered, and unfortunately I should add that there are problems with mental culture, too. The internet and social media—despite their positive effects—are teeming with various kinds of superficial knowledge, stupid content that can easily and rapidly infect people, especially children and young women and men. That is only true, of course, if one cannot recognize the importance of sensible, independent, and critical thinking and even

neglects its development—or, what is even worse, if one works against the formation of critical reflexes. Unfortunately, it can happen.

The Mystery or *Ars Poetica* of Education

The latter quotations raise the question of the competence, existence, and mission of pedagogy and touch indirectly upon the problematic relationship of philosophy and pedagogy. An unfortunate result is that in the circles of both philosophers and pedagogues, one can experience a certain degree of antipathy towards each other`s finding. Because of their aristocratic affections, philosophers may think that it is derogatory to pose and deal with simple pedagogical questions. It is true the other way around as well: there are some pedagogical researchers and/or practicing teachers who consider discussing a pedagogical outlook too abstract, incomprehensible, and useless. In consequence, they do not want to show interest towards any philosophical dimension.

It is time to realize that these reluctant, indifferent attitudes make the cultures of both pedagogy and philosophy poorer. If the representatives of both practical and theoretical philosophy and pedagogy are open to the findings of one another, they will be able to unearth valuable resources which would not be accessible in another way. Both parties should strive for the creation of a more integral relation and they should not exclude one another from their own spheres. A more integral cooperation in accordance with my own conviction is a treasure, and the rejection of it would be foolishness and narrow-mindedness. Let me present some concrete aspects in relation to finding common points.

Firstly, mentioning philosophy for children seems to be obvious. I do not wish to detail the status of philosophy for children in Hungarian research and education (it could be the scope of another paper). However, examining the relationship between being a philosopher and existing as a child might offer a possibility to unearth new knowledge and connections. One can think of the witty realization of Gaarder: “the philosopher remains

sensitive all his life as a child." To put it differently, for children (the primary, though not the sole subjects of education), new knowledge remains an eternal miracle and discovery, and for the philosopher it remains a kind of mystery (I will reflect on this expression later). Being fascinated by the world motivates the philosopher and the little child at the same time. As Aristotle argues: "People (…) started to philosophise out of fascination" (2002, p. 41).

Another common trait between the small child and the philosopher is a sense of fascination and curiosity. Both of them pose questions with stubborn perseverance; the philosopher continuously interrogates the world, and the child poses its inquiring questions on his broader or narrower environment without any rest. Posing questions concerning phenomena and objects is ultimately a primary element or basic particularity of both the philosopher and children. As I said before, the philosopher cannot give convincing and incontestable answers in all respects, just as the child is not capable of fully understanding, of seeing through the answers, the "whys." He is only asking continuously. Consequently, the comparison of the American philosopher for children, Matthew Lipman, was just, namely that "children have the same motive for thinking as philosophers" (Douglas, 2011). György Tamássy, an important representative of Hungarian philosophy for children, elaborates on it as well when he states, "They are more courageous, motivated than adults, their aptitude for philosophy is stronger" (2010, p. 92).

The two latter quotations contain some exaggerated statements. Nevertheless, one cannot contest that the ceaseless desire for inquiry and manifestation is in the center of childhood existence. However, it is not identical with the critical thinking to which philosophy motivates people. Nevertheless, one should not underestimate the significance of asking questions. Let us not forget, as I have mentioned before, posing questions in itself is sensible and valuable. Seeking answers, no matter what they bring to light, is important. Remaining modest in relation to one`s cognitive activity is a sympathetic and desirable

conceptualization. One should be satisfied with the articulation of questions. Articulating one`s questions in a more and more punctual, differentiated manner is already a considerable result. Making it more conscious and practicing it and transforming it into skills and competences is the first level (condition) of forming a more superior way of thinking for children. In this case, it means the functioning of critical thinking. It is obvious for me that such a buzzword of philosophy cannot be indifferent to pedagogy. Educating children and youth towards thinking critically and independently is very desirable. Starting off this basis, the theory and practice of pedagogy could become more productive. From this point, it is desirable and practical to work out concrete and professional educational aims, forms, and methods.

Another important buzzword also exists in terms of which pedagogy is more competent, even in comparison with philosophy. It is a special virtue, goodness, or the endeavor to be good.

The research of goodness as a theme is primarily the task or responsibility of educational philosophy. An educational philosophical outlook, more precisely taking into consideration and processing the educational philosophical results, can be another example for the integral cooperation between philosophy and pedagogy.

Let me refer to the above-quoted book of Tőzsér. One can only welcome the idea of the author that a critical attitude and goodness are in some kind of connection. However, he does not investigate the problems of "the good," but he can motivate us to conduct a systematic and profound investigation. In this respect, especially pedagogy has debts; the fall back – I would like to emphasise it one more time - is not acceptable and comprehensible for me. Researchers of pedagogy, especially educational theory, face a serious hiatus because they intensively deal with many questions (such as socialization, community, education as a process, rightfulness, telling the truth, honesty, and decency, among other virtues), but the

definition and essence of goodness is not mentioned many times. This discrepancy increases even more if one poses the question of what the intrinsic content or superior particularity of education can be. One could say: What is the most fascinating impetus of education? What is its "sacred" mission? As one will see, this is nothing more sacred in education than the representation and realization of the virtue of goodness or at least the endeavor to do so. One single question primarily motivates the teacher: how can he make the child, the young man or woman, become a good person? To put it another way: how can he make the word better, at least on a small scale?

Without going into details concerning the educational political investigation in relation to this topic, let me mention some related viewpoints. The ideal of goodness as a virtue appears in the history of philosophy and in educational philosophy. Kant`s idea was that good as a virtue is actually "the power of men's maxim that lies in the fulfilment of duty. (…) Goodness is a duty" (1991, p. 509–510). It is a beautiful thought; however, it is an exaggeration. Good deeds are, of course, important, but cannot be prescribed. (I agree with the standpoint of György Lukács; see in the following sections.) Nevertheless, relating education and the conceptions of good is an idea worth remarking upon. Kant writes in another work that "the freedom of education is a requirement of the universal betterment of mankind" (2005, p. 636). This is a great realization: education in accordance with this viewpoint is really the universal betterment of the world, and the tutor is led by the endeavor for virtues and ideals.

A similar interpretation of education could bring us an additional useful piece of information, but, for the moment, referring to a contemporary educational philosopher will be sufficient. Richard Pring emphasizes, in harmony with the quotation of Kant, that the teacher's primary aim is to make people "whole." Namely, the question actually is, "How can one become a good person, a better person" (Pring, 2004, p. 22).

Goodness as an endeavor is an integral part of education; linking the ideal virtue of goodness to the essence of education is not an induced and aggressive process. Not only do they tolerate each other, but they mutually reinforce one another, so one might say that they live in symbiosis. The most obvious, punctual, and beautiful description of this connection cannot be read either in philosophy or in educational philosophy, and not even in pedagogy, but in an essay of a 20th century Hungarian writer, Milán Füst. I cannot resist mentioning this reference in his diary, a unique excerpt that can serve as an indispensable resource for all teachers. It is regrettable that such thoughts of Milán Füst have been disregarded by researchers on pedagogy (and maybe practicing pedagogues as well).

> They preach in school with no effect, there is none either when the priest, your mother or father tells you to be good, (…) you decide in your childhood you will be good, clean and unselfish for nothing… Life comes – and you have forgotten now, - you cheat, steal, live for pleasures. (…) You are tricky, pusillanimous. (…) But the education that I have got from my mother, the idealism ignorant of life that I received while being breastfed (…) But life is – unfortunately – not like this. (…) And do you believe your mother did not know life? She knew, - but still (…) she wanted to share the better of herself (…), faith risen up from her because her child can be – *must* be free and clean. (…) And when you will have a child: - you (…) will be careful (…) to reveal the horrible, … and you will point at life the way just like Moses did with the promised land to the hopeful. (Füst, 1976, p. 178–179)

I consider the above-mentioned text as a wonderful pedagogical creed. Life is full of injustice, fallibility, sin, evil, and, in addition, people do not experience, or at least not in a perceivable manner, that the world has become better and people have become nobler. Nevertheless, in spite of that, one does not lose the desire or the need to be good. One craves goodness and one can rightfully pose the question: what can be nobler than desiring to reach

this goal? And if sometimes adults commit bad things or fall into sin, there is still the axiomatic, natural hope that their children should become better adults than they are. Education is the mechanistic expression of goodness. In this manner, it is not an exaggeration at all to say the solemn ideal, the superior virtue of goodness creates the exceptional world of education and its veritable mystery.

Finally, I shall touch upon another correlation. An important philosophical or educational-philosophical dilemma described by György Lukács argues that if there is good, then evidently bad must exist. "If goodness occurs in us, then paradise shall have become reality. (…) Goodness is leaving ethics, (…) as ethics is universal and obligatory, (…) goodness is miracle and mercy, (…) 'obsession'. In the soul of those who are good, all psychological contents, every cause and consequence cease to exist" (Lukács, 1957, p. 540–541 and p. 543).

In other words, goodness is not universal and obligatory—as Kant professes—one "only" has to strive for it. Nevertheless, it is encouraging, and it is obvious that good people live among us.

Conclusion

It is obvious that the cultures of philosophy and pedagogy can do a lot for the formation and practice of independent and critical thinking and the virtue of goodness. Critical thinking requires the bravery of the intellect; goodness necessitates decency, the nobleness of the heart and soul. *One has to learn and understand both of these catchwords*, and one has to overcome many bad habits, misbeliefs, and educational struggle and failure. However, if one realizes it, it will recompense one for all the pain and hard work.

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