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The California Reading and Literature Project: Helping Teachers Raise the Academic Language and Literacy Levels of California's K-5 Student Population

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of the California Reading and Literature Project (CRLP-Region 8) Signature Program, RESULTS: Academic Language and Literacy Instruction K-6 (RALLI), on student comprehension of increasingly complex informational texts and on teacher efficacy. The theoretical framework underpinning this research was Shefelbine's (2007) proposed literacy framework for assessment and instruction. This study utilized mixed methods combining qualitative analysis to highlight teacher perceptions about RALLI training and quantitative methods to measure student pre- and post-assessment comprehension of informational texts after teachers implemented RALLI strategies. Qualitative data concerned the participants' confidence in teaching comprehension of complex informational texts. Quantitative methods were used to determine the impact that teachers trained through RALLI on the students' comprehension. Upon completion of the program, the researchers found the implementation of RALLI strategies improved student comprehension of complex informational texts and participating in RALLI positively influenced teacher efficacy.

Key Words: CRLP, RALLI, TEXT & TASK ANALYSIS TEMPLATE (TTAT), Backward Design Process.

Introduction

Research on teaching children to comprehend informational texts in the elementary classroom setting has increased significantly in recent years, stimulated, in part, by the 2013 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Framework calling for 50% informational passages by fourth grade, 55% by eighth grade, and 70% by twelfth grade (National Assessment Governing Board, 2013). Previous research in the field of childhood education suggests that early exposure to informational texts is imperative. Calo (2011), for example, found that early exposure to informational texts gave younger students an opportunity to learn about the world around them; while, Hall and Sabey (2007) reported that effective use of informational texts taught elementary students how to navigate through the difficulties associated with informational material. Difficulties associated with informational texts included vocabulary, text structure, and unique text features (Zhihui, 2008; Hall & Sabey, 2007). Because most students will face challenges when encountering informational texts, Cummins and Stallmeyer-Gerard (2011) called for well-defined explicit instruction due to the cognitive demands of informational material. Yopp and Yopp (2012) concluded that exposure to informational texts in the early years is necessary if students want to succeed in a world that required an ability to navigate genres that "dominated

the later years of schooling and adulthood” (p. 481). It has become evident that informational texts are here to stay.

In response to the academic literacy requirements for the 21st century, the California Reading and Literature Project in Region 8 (CRLP-Region 8) offered an institute featuring a signature professional development program, RESULTS: Academic Language and Literacy Instruction K-6 (RALLI) to elementary school teachers in Ventura, Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, and Kern Counties. RALLI is designed to provide teachers with the tools and skills necessary to analyze the academic language and literacy demands of complex informational texts and materials. RALLI supports teachers in designing effective instruction to help their students make meaning from complex grade-level text, whether read aloud to students or read by students with instructional support, and to use evidence from the text to demonstrate their comprehension. The intended outcome of the RALLI institute was to increase the capacity of participants to implement instructional strategies and routines to help make complex informational texts more accessible to all students, to increase students’ use of academic language, and to improve motivation and engagement.

Background

In a previous study, we examined the impact of CRLP-Region 8’s institute, *Reframing Teacher Leadership: Action Research Study Group*, on K-12 teachers’ attitudes and perceptions. This study is available for review (Myers & Dillard, 2013). However, a brief discussion is provided to contextualize the current study. In 2010, CRLP-Region 8 began a two-year longitudinal study to examine the impact that participating in an action research project had on 24 teachers’ leadership attitudes and perceptions about working in a collaborative environment. The theoretical foundation underpinning this study was Reeves’ (2008) *New Framework for Teacher Leadership*. Mixed-methods were used to analyze participants’ feedback through surveys and field notes. In the first year of the study, participants indicated that the CRLP-Region 8 Action Research Group helped them “to identify and apply classroom practices and changes in student learning” and “skills to use when working with teachers.” Of the 10 participants who provided responses to the 2010-11 Reframing Teacher Leadership Response Summary, all expressed that RALLI training improved their confidence in teaching complex informational texts (see Appendix A) and they expressed an interest in participating in the second year of the study.

Twenty-four teachers enrolled in the 2011-12 Action Research Group, including the ten participants from the previous year. Each participant was required to complete a pre-survey. The pre-survey results revealed that about half the participants had little or no direct exposure to action research. Of the 24 participants in the Action Research Group, 54% reported that they had never collaborated with other educators to develop and implement action research in their classroom or school while 45% said they had collaborated with others on action research projects.

Participation in the RALLI Action Research Group appeared to positively affect teacher pedagogy. According to the post-assessment, 54% percent of the participants developed a positive perspective on action research. Several participants described in some detail the beneficial impact that working with others collaboratively had on their pedagogy. After participating in the study, teachers found themselves feeling empowered to improve their pedagogy and student achievement.

The results confirmed the claim made by educational researchers that action research empowers teachers by increasing their sense of having a greater stake in curriculum and instructional decisions. Action research also appears to provide them with a framework to continuously improve their pedagogical practices. And while much has been written about action

research and its impact on teachers' perspectives, more research is necessary to determine what affect it had on student achievement and, in particular, student comprehension of informative texts. Thus, our primary intent in conducting this study is to determine the impact of using an action research methodology to implement CRLP's signature RALLI program on students' comprehension of complex informational text and how the implementation of RALLI influenced teacher efficacy.

Theoretical Framework

CRLP-Region 8 used Shefelbine's (2007) proposed literacy framework for assessment and instruction. The five major components of this framework are essential to developing literacy and academic English language proficiency and are the foundation for all of CRLP's signature programs. This framework is the basis for effectively differentiating language and literacy instruction in any content area, which will ultimately help students meet the demands of reading complex text. These five areas of the literacy framework are

- Motivation,
- Word recognition and spelling strategies,
- The automaticity component of fluency,
- Academic language, which includes background or topic knowledge and vocabulary knowledge, and
- Comprehension strategies, which include syntax (grammar), text structure, comprehension monitoring, and reorganizing text.

Students' overall reading ability is a composite of all five of these components working together. In other words, when students fail to comprehend literature, textbooks, and related reading materials, such as primary sources, the actual cause of their difficulties can be any one or combination of these components. By considering these five components, teachers are better able to diagnose areas of weakness and plan lessons to effectively differentiate classroom instruction.

Method

Research Design

This study utilized mixed methods combining qualitative analysis to highlight teachers' perceptions of how RALLI improved their confidence in teaching comprehension of complex informational texts with quantitative methods to determine the effect of RALLI on students' comprehension of informational texts. According to Creswell (2009), a mixed methods research design is a procedure for collecting, analyzing, and "mixing" both quantitative and qualitative research and methods in a single study to understand a research problem. Creswell (2005) considered a mixed methods design as exploratory and appropriate when a researcher wanted "to explore a phenomenon in-depth and then measure its prevalence" (p.75). This design required the researchers to explore the research topic first from a qualitative stance; the qualitative findings then guided "the development of items and scales for a quantitative survey instrument" (p.77). This study focused on students' pre-assessment and post-assessment results from K-5 classrooms.

Participants

The study participants were five kindergarten teachers, six 1st grade teachers, nine 2nd grade teachers, eleven 3rd grade teachers, one 4th grade teacher, four 5th grade teachers, six 2nd grade teachers, and one 4th/5th grade teacher. There were 43 participants.

Procedures

The study began in January 2013 and concluded six months later. The participants administered a pre-assessment to their students before they began using informational texts from

the *Common Core State Standards, Appendix B: Text Exemplars and Sample Performance Tasks*. Since some of the actual texts noted in the *Common Core State Standards, Appendix B: Text Exemplars and Sample Performance Tasks* were not accessible, texts written by authors referenced were used instead. For the pre-assessment, the participants were instructed to conduct a “cold” read in which they did not provide background information, vocabulary instruction, or comprehension monitoring during the reading. The students were not given any instruction to access the text. Kindergarten through second grade teacher participants were asked to read the text orally to their students, while third through fifth grade teacher participants had students read the text independently.

After the reading, the students were required to analyze the passage by determining the main idea and at least three details that supported the main idea in a brief paragraph. This expressive task demonstrated their comprehension of the text. Kindergarten and first grade students had the opportunity to draw or tell the main idea and supporting details to their teacher. The teacher participants then scored the expressive task using the Smarter Balanced Informative Writing Rubric as shown in Figure 1.

Smarter Balanced Informative-Explanatory Writing Rubric (Grades K-5)

Score	Statement of Purpose/Focus	Elaboration of Evidence
4	The response is fully sustained and consistently and purposefully focused: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Controlling idea or main idea of a topic is focused, clearly stated, and strongly maintained Controlling idea or main idea of a topic is introduced and communicated clearly within the context 	The response provides thorough and convincing support/evidence for the controlling idea or main idea that includes the effective use of sources, facts, and details: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of evidence from sources is smoothly integrated, comprehensive, and relevant Effective use of a variety of elaborative techniques
3	The response is adequately sustained and generally focused: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus is clear and for the most part maintained, though some loosely related material may be present Some context for the controlling idea or main idea of the topic is adequate 	The response provides adequate support/evidence for the controlling idea or main idea that includes the use of sources, facts, and details: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some evidence from sources is integrated, though citations may be general or imprecise Adequate use of some elaborative techniques
2	The response is somewhat sustained and may have a minor drift in focus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> May be clearly focused on the controlling or main idea, but is insufficiently sustained Controlling idea or main idea may be unclear and somewhat unfocused 	The response provides uneven, cursory support/evidence for the controlling idea or main idea that includes partial or uneven use of sources, facts, and details: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence from sources is weakly integrated, and citations, if present, are uneven
1	The response may be related to the topic but may provide little or no focus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> May be very brief May have a major drift Focus may be confusing or ambiguous 	The response provides minimal support/evidence for the controlling idea or main idea that includes little or no use of sources, facts, and details: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of evidence from the source material is minimal, absent, in error, or irrelevant
0	A response gets no credit if it provides no evidence of the ability to state the main idea and provide supporting details.	

Figure 1: Smarter Balanced Informative Writing Rubric. Note. The Smarter Balanced Informative Writing Rubric is from the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (2013)



1.4 – RESULTS Lesson Planning Steps for the Core Routines	
Before Reading	
1.	The Background Overview: Assessing Background Knowledge (Think-Pair-Share or Think-Write-Pair-Share)
2a.	The Background Overview: Building Background Knowledge (HGO) Create Hypothetical Graphic Organizer on separate piece of paper
2b.	Describe the logical sequence you will use to construct the HGO with your students
3.	Write the receptive task on the board and read to class
4.	Write the expressive task on the board and read to class
5.	Point out the text structures and features
During Reading	
6a.	Setting and Monitoring the Purpose for Reading
6b.	Self-Checking for Understanding
6c.	Employing Fix-Up Strategies
7.	Vocabulary “Step Asides”
8.	Levels of Organization- Story Grammar and/or Outlining
After Reading	
9.	Structured Language Practice with Functional Language Patterns
10.	Graphic Organizer for the Expressive Task
11.	Content Conversation Linked to the Expressive Task
12.	Provide Feedback to Students

TAB 1: Introduction, Rationale, and Outcomes

Figure 2: RESULTS Lesson Planning Steps for the Core Routines. *Note.* From *Results: Academic Language and Literacy Instruction K-6 Teacher’s Handbook* (p. 11) by M. Adams and J. Shefelbine. Copyright 2011 by California Reading and Literature Project, University of California. Reprinted with permission.

For the post-assessment, all students were provided direct instruction with the RALLI core instructional routines (see Figure 2) using RALLI strategies that helped teachers analyze the academic text their students will read or that will be read to them.

Participants used the Text & Task Analysis Template (TTAT), an important component of the Backward Design Process (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998) for lesson planning (see Figure 3). By employing the TTAT, teachers were alerted to qualitative factors that could contribute to text complexity and appropriateness as they planned their instruction. They learned how to conduct text analysis with an organizing principle that represented the foundational knowledge students had to have in order to meet both receptive and expressive tasks related to the reading. The TTAT supported teachers in establishing: (a) expressive task(s) for their students to demonstrate their comprehension of the reading; (b) the language that students were required to produce to carry out the expressive task(s); and (c) what vocabulary to teach before, during, and after reading.

4.2 – Lesson Text & Task Analysis Template

Text and Task Analysis Template Integrated Content and Language Focus					
Text Title:		Standard(s)		Reading Assignment – Pages or Passages:	
Organizing Principle (Content Objective) What is the “must know” of this selection of text and/or material? What is the big or main idea of the selection and the enabling knowledge - important ideas, details, and/or examples?					
Receptive Task How will I explain the purpose(s) for reading to help students think about (and meet) the organizing principle?					
Expressive Task How will I explain what students will do to demonstrate their understanding of the organizing principle? (Include information about content and format.) What cognitive levels will I prompt students to use?					
Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy (2001) and Corresponding Cognitive Tasks/Language Functions					
Remembering	Understanding	Applying	Analyzing	Evaluating	Creating
List	Interpret	Apply	Analyze/Deconstruct	Critique	Create
Recall / Retell	Infer	Experiment	Identify Cause & Effect	Evaluate / Judge	Plan/Construct
Sequence	Predict	Calculate	Compare & Contrast	Hypothesize / Formulate Questions	Produce
Describe	Summarize	Classify & Categorize	Identify Main Idea & Supporting Detail	Take & Support a Position	
Language Function(s) What Language Function(s) highlighted above will I take to practice for the Expressive Task?					
Accessing and Developing Background Knowledge Identify important topic-related concepts/vocabulary (mostly Tier 3) taught “Before” reading to achieve organizing principle. [Code NC or DC for New or Developing Concepts and NL for New Labels.]					
Vocabulary Taught “During” Reading (Tier 2 and 1 words taught as “step asides”) [Code “C” for Cognates or “M” for Morphology as appropriate for any words listed above.]					
Text Features That Support Comprehension (Headings, captions, illustrations, charts, graphs, etc.)			Text Structure (Organization of ideas, signal words, grammatical features) that will enhance and/or impede comprehension		



TAB 4: Purpose and Rationale for Using the Text and Task Analysis Template

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Figure 3: Lesson Text and Task Analysis Template. *Note.* From *Results: Academic Language and Literacy Instruction K-6 Teacher’s Handbook* (p. 155) by M. Adams and J. Shefelbine. Copyright 2011 by California Reading and Literature Project, University of California. Reprinted with permission.

Lesson planning followed the text and task analysis. The lesson plans contained core instructional routines and supplemental strategies. In support of the idea that “less is more,” the CRLP-Region 8 Director recommended selecting a number of research-aligned, “core” instructional routines to be used consistently in the “Before,” “During,” and “After” reading stages of instruction as shown in Figure 4, Figure 5, Figure 6, and Figure 7.

Subject: _____ Grade: _____ Title/Chapter/Page(s): _____

Preparation from TTAT: <input type="checkbox"/> Organizing Principle <input type="checkbox"/> Standards
BEFORE READING
Background Overview
1. Assess background knowledge (Think-Pair-Share or Think-Write-Pair-Share)
2a. HGO: Draw Hypothetical Graphic Organizer on separate piece of paper
2b. Describe the logical sequence you will use to construct the HGO with your students Describe the "instructional hook" you will use and explain how connections are made across important concepts and vocabulary, including specific definitions or examples that will be used to explain the NC, DC, and NL words.
Set the Purpose(s) for Reading
<input type="checkbox"/> 3. Write the receptive task on the board and read to class (See TTAT) <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Write the expressive task on the board and read to class (See TTAT) <input type="checkbox"/> 5. Point out text structures and features (See TTAT)
Motivation and Engagement are influenced by: Success, Pleasure, Relevance, and Purpose



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6.2 – Lesson Planner

Subject: _____ Grade: _____ Title/Chapter/Page(s): _____

Preparation from TIAT:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Organizing Principle	<input type="checkbox"/> Expressive Task(s)
<input type="checkbox"/> Receptive Task	<input type="checkbox"/> Vocabulary Taught "During Reading"
DURING READING	
Facilitate Comprehension	
<p>Comprehension Monitoring:</p> <p>6a. Setting and Monitoring the Purpose for Reading How does what you've just read (or heard) relate to your purpose for reading (listening)? (And other open-ended content-focused questions to foster instructional discussions about the topic)</p> <p>6b. Self-Checking for Understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you use your own words to say or retell what you just read (heard)? • Can you organize the information that you just read (heard)? • Can you summarize what you just read (heard)? <p>6c. Employing Fix-Up Strategies Which part(s) do you not understand and what fix-up strategies could you use? Teacher selects the fix-up strategy that best fits the problem:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rereading • Reading ahead • Deconstructing complex syntax • Identifying signal words • Finding out the meanings of key words through marginal glosses, the glossary, dictionary, or through structural analysis (morphology) • Finding a simpler text • Asking for help from teacher/peer <p>7. Vocabulary "Step Asides"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tier 1 and Tier 2 explanations • Text structure signal words • Cognates • Morphology <p>8. Levels of Organization – Story Grammar and /or Optional Scaffolded Outlining for 3-6</p>	
Motivation and Engagement are Influenced by: Success, Pleasure, Relevance, and Purpose	



Figure 5: During Reading Lesson Planner. Note. From *Results: Academic Language and Literacy Instruction K-6 Teacher's Handbook* (p. 178) by California Reading and Literature Project. Copyright 2011 by California Reading and Literature Project, University of California. Reprinted with permission.

7.1 – Lesson Planner

Subject: _____ Grade: _____ Title/Chapter/Page(s): _____

Preparation from TTAT:

- ☐ Expressive Task(s)
☐ Language Functions/Cognitive Tasks

AFTER READING

Scaffolding the Expressive Task

9. Structured Language Practice with Functional Language Patterns

- What language patterns will you teach or review to scaffold the expressive task(s) linked to the language function? (Use worksheet 7.2)
- What familiar topic will you use to practice the patterns?

10. Graphic Organizer for the Expressive Task

Scaffold the expressive task by adding important information to the original HGO or by constructing a new graphic organizer:

11. Content Conversation Linked to the Expressive Task

- Post the expressive task from the TTAT and have students practice linking topic-specific vocabulary from the graphic organizer(s) with the functional language patterns they practiced in Step 9, first orally and then in writing (as appropriate)
- Write out the evaluative criteria you will share with students:

After Completion and Evaluation of the Expressive Task

12. Provide Feedback to Students

Evaluate student work and write out the feedback you will give to the class and/or subgroups, with strengths and instructional needs:

Motivation and Engagement are Influenced by: Success, Pleasure, Relevance, and Purpose

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TAB 7: After Reading

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Figure 6: After Reading Lesson Planner. Note. From *Results: Academic Language and Literacy Instruction K-6 Teacher's Handbook* (p. 185) by California Reading and Literature Project. Copyright 2011 by California Reading and Literature Project, University of California. Reprinted with permission.

7.2 – Functional Language Patterns Worksheet

Text: _____ **Target Function:** _____

Comprehension question(s) or other student output expectations – <i>What do you want students to <u>do</u>?</i>		
DIFFERENTIATED TEACHER PROMPTS		
Beginning/Early Intermediate	Intermediate	Early Advanced/Advanced
DIFFERENTIATED STUDENT RESPONSES TO TEACHER PROMPTS		
Beginning/Early Intermediate	Intermediate	Early Advanced/Advanced
LANGUAGE PATTERNS BASED ON DESIRED STUDENT RESPONSES		
Beginning/Early Intermediate	Intermediate	Early Advanced/Advanced
PRACTICE VOCABULARY TO USE WITH LANGUAGE PATTERNS		

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TAB 7: After Reading 

Figure 7: Functional Language Patterns Worksheet. *Note.* From *Results: Academic Language and Literacy Instruction K-6 Teacher's Handbook* (p. 186) by California Reading and Literature Project. Copyright 2011 by California Reading and Literature Project, University of California. Reprinted with permission.

Results

Qualitative Analysis

The following questions analyzed five qualitative categories of strategies, impact, teacher comprehension, student comprehension, and administrator feedback.

1. What RALLI strategies (S) worked well in your classroom?
2. What impact (I) did participating in RALLI have on student achievement?
3. Did going through the RALLI training improve your confidence in teaching comprehension (TC) of informational text?
4. How did RALLI lessons affect your students' comprehension (StC) of informational text?
5. Administrator (A) feedback (Did you feel, as an administrator, that attending RALLI training with your team was beneficial to the implementation of the RALLI strategies?)

Below is a summary of teachers' qualitative responses that reflect the overall patterns in Table 1 (the complete analysis matrix is in Appendix B). The most frequently mentioned strategies that worked well were using the Hypothetical Graphic Organizer (HGO) and sentence frames. The most frequently mentioned impacts on student achievement were reading comprehension and writing. In the category of teachers' confidence in their comprehension, the participant teachers noted informational text, planning, and vocabulary most frequently. Student comprehension centered on reading comprehension and vocabulary. For administrators, collaboration clearly was the most salient aspect of RALLI.

Category	Most frequent response	Second most frequent response
Strategies	Hypothetical Graphic Organizer (HGO)	Sentence Frames
Impact	Reading comprehension	Writing
Teacher comprehension	Informational Text	Planning; Vocabulary
Student comprehension	Reading comprehension	Informational Text
Administrator	Collaboration	

Table 1: Analysis of Teachers' Qualitative Data

Quantitative Analysis

The teacher participants used the Smarter Balanced Informative Writing Rubric as shown previously in Figure 1 to assess their students' comprehension of the text. The highest score on the rubric was 4. To earn a score of 4, the student's written response had to include a main idea that was focused, clearly stated, and strongly maintained with evidence from sources that were smoothly integrated, comprehensive, and relevant.

The teacher participants who taught kindergarten had 140 students take the pre-assessment. Only eight students scored 3 of 4 points possible, and four students scored 4 of 4 points possible. After implementing RALLI core instructional routines, the kindergarten teachers saw some improvement in their students' scores on the post-assessment. The kindergarten teachers had 136 students complete the post-assessment. Four students were absent on the day students took the post-assessment. After scoring the post-assessment, 23 kindergarten students scored 3 and 11 kindergarten students scored 4 (see Figure 8).

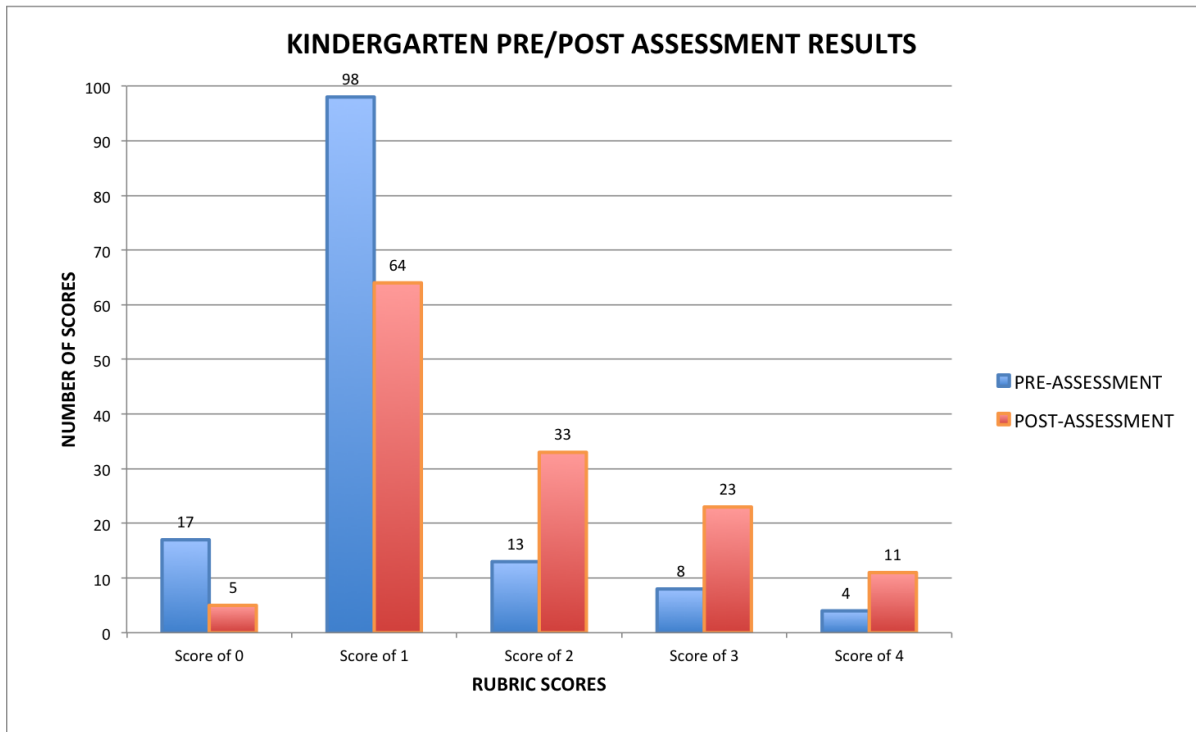


Figure 8: Kindergarten pre- and post-assessment scores.

One hundred twenty-one first grade students completed the pre-assessment. Eight students were absent on the day that students completed the pre-assessment. The pre-assessment results revealed 21 students scored 3 and four students scored 4. One hundred twenty-nine students completed the post-assessment. Forty-one students scored 3 and 10 students scored 4 on the post-assessment (see Figure 9).

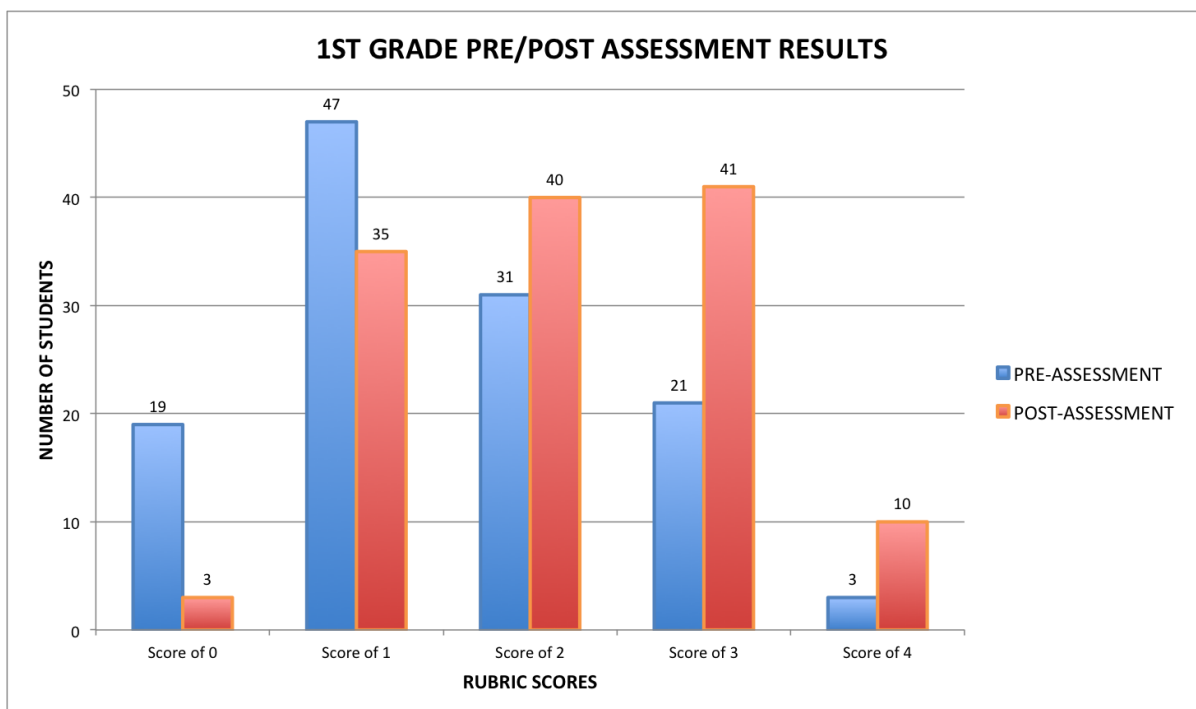


Figure 9: First grade pre- and post-assessment scores.

There were 193 second grade students who completed the pre-assessment. Twenty one students scored 3 on the pre-assessment and no students scored 4. The post-assessment results revealed 58 students scored 3 and 55 students scored 4. All students were present for the pre- and post-assessment (see Figure 10).

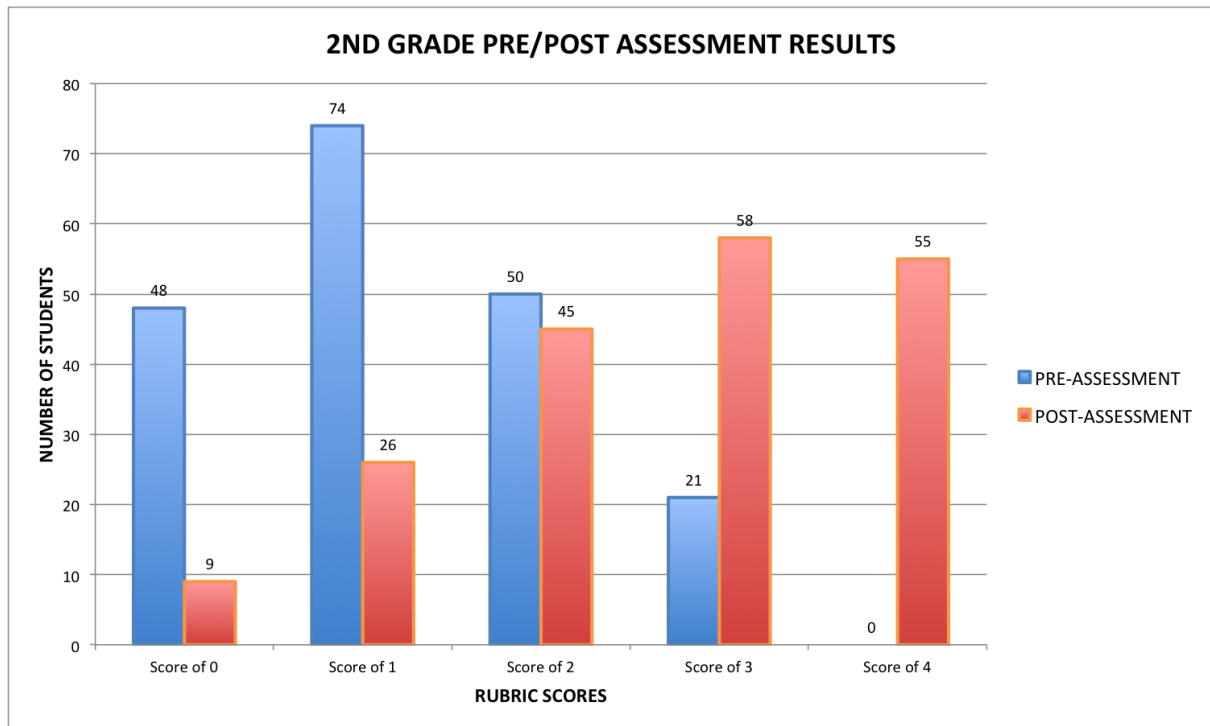


Figure 10: Second grade pre-and post-assessment scores.

Two hundred seventy third grade students completed the pre-assessment. Two students scored 4 and 41 students scored 3 on the pre-assessment. Two hundred fifty-nine third grade students completed the post-assessment. The post-assessment results revealed 94 students scored 3 and 39 students scored 4. Eleven students were absent on the day that students completed the post-assessment (see Figure 11).

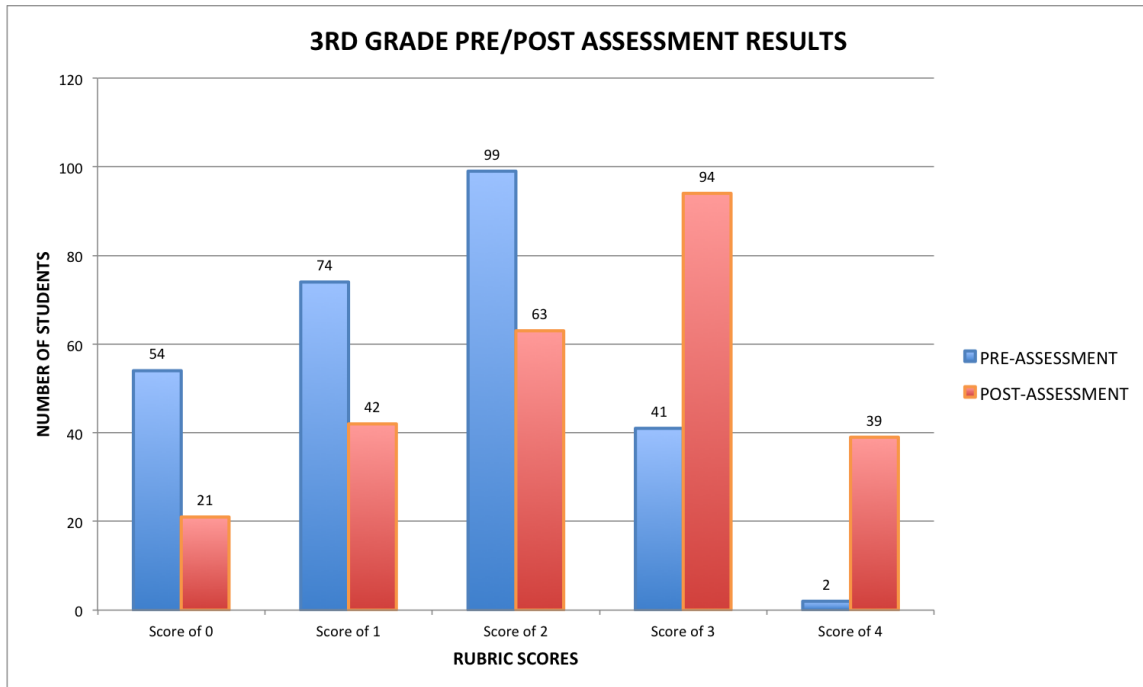


Figure 11: Third grade pre-and post- assessment scores.

One hundred thirty-four fourth and fifth grade students completed the pre-assessment. Two students scored 4 and 23 students scored 3. One hundred twenty-eight students completed the post-assessment. The post-assessment results revealed 36 students scored 3 and 32 students scored 4. Six students were absent on the day that students completed the post-assessment (see Figure 12).

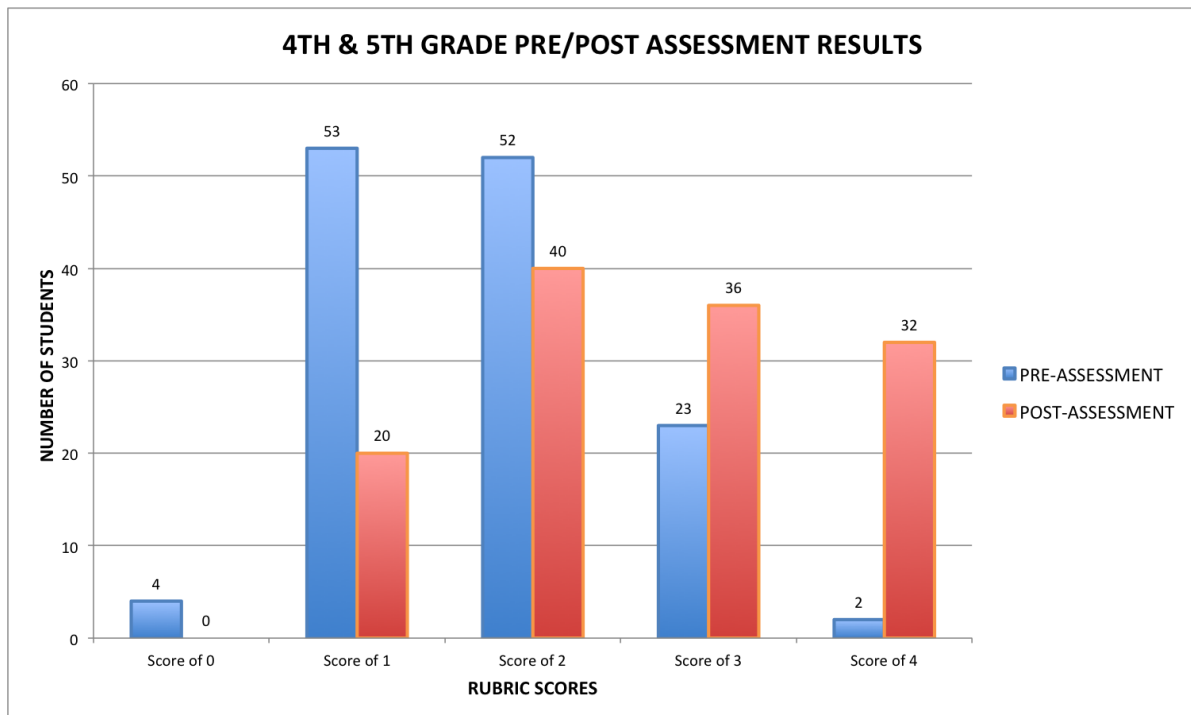


Figure 12: Fourth and Fifth Grade pre-and post-assessment scores.

Discussion

Upon completion of the RALLI institute, CRLP-Region 8 participants revealed through a qualitative survey that RALLI provided them with a comprehensive literacy framework that enabled them to identify specific factors that affected their students' overall literacy. RALLI also showed them how to effectively integrate academic language and literacy instruction throughout the instructional day and how to implement instructional strategies and routines that made complex informational text more accessible to their students. One participant wrote, "RALLI training improved my confidence in teaching comprehension of informational text." Another participant wrote, "RALLI forced me to step back and really analyze and dig deep into the subject matter/grade level material." To sum it up, one participant wrote that she not only "learned new strategies for teaching informational text," but she also "noticed a difference in students' ability to answer questions regarding the text."

In addition, students' post-assessment results show that RALLI strategies improved student's comprehension of complex text. All grade levels showed decreases in scores of 0 and 1 from pre- to post- assessment. Scores of 2 varied across grade levels from pre- to post- assessment. More kindergarten and first grade students scored 2 in the post-assessment compared to the pre-assessment while students in grades two through five showed decreases in scores of 2 from pre- to post- assessment. Furthermore, the improvements in scores of 3 and 4 from pre- to post-assessment are apparent across all grade levels. In all grade levels, more students scored 3 or 4 in post-assessment compared to students' pre-assessment, revealing RALLI strategies had a substantial impact on students' comprehension of complex informational texts.

Based on the participants' responses to the post-survey and students' post-assessment scores, we concluded that the implementation of RALLI strategies improved students' comprehension of complex informational texts and participating in RALLI positively impacted teacher efficacy.

Conclusion

Elementary school teachers in CRLP-Region 8 face many challenges, not the least of which is the diversity of languages and socio-economic backgrounds of their students. This diversity particularly impacts reading and literacy skills, a challenge that is only compounded given the rigorous expectations of California's mandated Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The College and Career Readiness Anchor Standard for Reading is one of the key requirements of the CCSS. It states that all students must be able to independently read and comprehend texts of steadily increasing complexity as they progressed through school. To address this comprehensive standard, RALLI focuses on routines that participants are able to apply to grade-level text, including literature and content area informational text. Given the beneficial effects on student reading comprehension and teacher empowerment as indicated by this study, CRLP-Region 8 plans to continue to enroll teacher participants in annual Action Research Group cohorts. We believe this program merits institutionalization as a model for sustained teacher collaboration in grade level teams that support the implementation of strategies and routines learned in the RALLI institute.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

Did going through RALLI training improve your confidence in teaching complex informational texts?

Teacher's pseudonym	Teacher's grade	Years teaching	Response	Elaboration
Participant 1	1	11	Yes	Learned new strategies for teaching informational text; noticed a difference in students' ability to answer questions regarding the text
Participant 2	1	15	Yes	Forced me to step back and really analyze and dig deep into the subject matter/grade level material
Participant 3	3	5	Yes	Think about my teaching goals and what I wanted my students to learn
Participant 4	5	19	Yes	RALLI training improved my confidence in teaching comprehension of informational text.
Participant 5	3	2	Yes	RALLI training gave me new and effective strategies to engage my students in lessons. I feel that I was able to teach informational texts with more confidence.
Participant 6	3	8	Yes	I feel more confident teaching informational text.
Participant 7	2	23	Yes	RALLI training came at a time when we were looking at the common core standards and it tied well.
Participant 8	3	21	Yes	It gave me techniques I didn't use such as sentence frames.
Participant 9	4/5	23	Yes	Lots of the strategies were ones I've heard before, but it put it all together and gave teaching a more focused and logical process. HGO step gave my students confidence before even reading the text.
Participant 10	3	7	Yes	I liked the idea of using an HGO to preview the lesson.

Appendix B

Coding and Qualitative Data Analysis of Teacher Responses

	I D	What RALLI strategies (S) worked well in your classroom?	Verbatim Responses
S	6	BK	My entire language arts class is basic, below basic, or far below basic in language, and about 45% of my students are ELs, so building background knowledge, discussing vocabulary, using sentence frames, and providing a variety of visual aids was very beneficial for all of my students.
S	1 3	GrOrg	The graphic organizers and the way the lessons were rich with content and vocabulary was really beneficial to my students.
S	1	HGO	I really loved the HGOs. My students referred back to many of them throughout the year.
S	3	HGO	The HGO was very helpful. It sparked their interest, and the vocabulary that was taught increased their understanding of the text.
S	1 2	HGO	The use of the HGO and realia was a great way to introduce vocabulary and generate enthusiasm about the written text. Lots of oral practice within the language function increased academic language. Charting information as we read was helpful as well.
S	1 4	HGO	My students loved the HGO. They really, really appreciated the time that it took me to draw out and uncover what they were going to be learning. After I introduced the HGO for this last RALLI assignment, I had a student come up to me and say, "I'm glad you're my teacher." Kids get excited and love to learn when we are excited and love teaching. The HGO really brings learning to life.
S	1 5	HGO	The HGO was a great resource for my students to be able to refer back to as they progressed through the lesson. Students were much more familiar with the academic vocabulary necessary to complete the lessons.
S	1 6	HGO	The use of HGOs helped to engage my students in the topics I taught. They peaked their interest and kept them wanting to know more. I also noticed that by introducing the topic before reading the story and giving them background knowledge about the story really helped to engage them while they read or I read to them.
S	4	InfTxt	Students were engaged with the informational text. They were able to identify text features and effectively communicate their learning in complete sentences.
S	1 1	LangFun	I really liked the Language Functions. They gave a scaffold for the students to use in their oral conversations. Lots of higher-level discussion going on.
S	7	Lplans	The RALLI lesson plans made me really think about my teaching goals, which was beneficial because it gave my teaching a very specific and meaningful purpose.
S	2	RecEx	I loved the receptive/expressive tasks. My students were more engaged in their learning. There were less questions about what

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			we were going to do and a greater focus on what we were reading.
S	6	Sframes	My entire language arts class is basic, below basic, or far below basic in language, and about 45% of my students are ELs, so building background knowledge, discussing vocabulary, using sentence frames, and providing a variety of visual aids was very beneficial for all of my students.
S	8	Sframes	The sentence frames (language patterns) were very beneficial. The students liked using them, and it gave all levels of students' vocabulary to build complex sentences.
S	9	Sframes	Using the language functions section of the binder and displaying sentence frames for our class discussions made all the difference. I think that having a strong purpose for the lesson in the organizing principle was important for me as well.
S	10	Think/Pr/Sh	I liked the opportunity to do Think/Pair/Share. It was a great reminder that our children have to talk about what they are learning. Doing worksheets is just busy work. They were so excited to have the opportunity to talk about what they were learning, and it helped with their comprehension.
S	6	VisAids	My entire language arts class is basic, below basic, or far below basic in language, and about 45% of my students are ELs, so building background knowledge, discussing vocabulary, using sentence frames, and providing a variety of visual aids was very beneficial for all of my students.
S	5	Voc	Building background vocabulary helped my EL students feel more involved in the learning process.
S	6	Voc	My entire language arts class is basic, below basic, or far below basic in language, and about 45% of my students are ELs, so building background knowledge, discussing vocabulary, using sentence frames, and providing a variety of visual aids was very beneficial for all of my students.
I	x	What impact (I) did participating in RALLI have on student achievement?	
I	3	+	All of my students did better with have RALLI instruction.
I	12	+	Students really enjoyed the lessons and were very engaged. I enjoyed presenting the lessons and they got more from that.
I	4	Memory	My students seemed to retain more information after using the RALLI strategies.
I	2	ReadComp	Participating in RALLI made me more aware of what I needed to do to prepare my students for texts that they were going to read or listen to. As a result, their comprehension scores improved.
I	5	ReadComp	I think that my students had a sense of confidence after the lesson. They were able to understanding the text and could talk about it in an intelligent way.
I	10	ReadComp	My students were able to improve in many areas of their reading comprehension. They were exposed to high level vocabulary, and I felt that I was able to provide them with several opportunities to engage in high level conversations with their peers. With the strategies I learned at RALLI, I hope to continue preparing them to be competent in the 21st century.

I	1 1	ReadComp	Students became more active readers, and consciously read for a purpose.
I	7	Reading	I think using these strategies has given the children more confidence as readers.
I	8	Voc	The impact (of RALLI on student achievement) was clearly during the expressive task. The vocabulary and information they were able to dictate to me was very high level.
I	1	Voc	I feel my students have a deeper understanding of vocabulary because now I am more aware of teaching it more specifically.
I	6	Writing	Practicing the language functions orally really improved their writing on the subject.
I	9	Writing	Lots of oral practice embedded the skills and vocabulary, before students started writing. All students made growth with the paragraph assessment.
I	1 3	Writing	My students truly benefitted from RALLI. I have implemented RALLI strategies in every content area, and it has affected my students' perception of informational text. They love when they see an HGO coming up, are interested in checking out more informational texts (because of positive experiences in class), and it has helped their writing incredibly.
TC	x	Did going through the RALLI training improve your confidence in teaching comprehension (TC) of informational text?	
TC	7	Comcore	I think going through the RALLI training was helpful because it comes at a time when we are looking at the common core standards, and it ties in well.
TC	5	Engage	I feel that RALLI training gave me new and effective strategies to engage my students in lessons.
TC	1	InfoTxt	I learned new strategies for teaching informational text and definitely noticed a difference in my students' ability to answer questions regarding the text. My students were using the correct vocabulary and able to write detailed sentences staying on topic.
TC	4	InfoTxt	RALLI training improved my confidence in teaching comprehension of informational text. I felt better prepared to organize the information that allowed students to comprehend the material to a higher degree. Students were more focused during the reading.
TC	6	InfoTxt	I feel more confident teaching informational text. I do believe my students have a better understanding, and they were more confident with the expressive task.
TC	1 0	InfoTxt	Going through RALLI training has definitely improved my ability to successfully teach comprehension of informational text. I found that the process of planning for my lessons was really clear, and it allowed me the opportunity to analyze the different components from another angle. The proof was when I saw my students' faces light up when exposed to the new information.
TC	3	Plan	It really made me think about my teaching goals and what I wanted my students to learn. It also gave me a very clear and well

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			prepared format to follow.
TC	9	Plan	I love being able to collaborate and plan with other teachers. The strategies did improve my confidence as a teacher to increase student learning.
TC	1 2	Purpose	RALLI made me aware of how important a purpose is for the students to have before reading any text.
TC	1 1	SentFr	RALLI gave me more tools to use in order to make the text more meaningful and interesting for my students. It also gave me a lot of opportunities to check for understanding. The think-pair-shares let me know if my class was on target with understanding the information. The topic focus (as something to keep referring to) helped me stay on track. The HGOs put information in a very easy (visual) way for my kids to understand the vocabulary and text structure. It was also a good tool to check for understanding after the reading. The sentence frames really helped my children use academic language and having different levels of sentence frames helped all of my children feel confident and challenged when discussing (rest did not copy clearly).
TC	2	SubjLevel	It forced me to step back and really analyze and dig deep into the subject matter / grade level material being taught.
TC	8	Voc	Now I can easily point out text features, significant academic vocabulary, etc. during the pre-read. Also, I am sold on the power of the HGO as a teaching / learning tool.
TC	1 1	Voc	RALLI gave me more tools to use in order to make the text more meaningful and interesting for my students. It also gave me a lot of opportunities to check for understanding. The think-pair-shares let me know if my class was on target with understanding the information. The topic focus (as something to keep referring to) helped me stay on track. The HGOs put information in a very easy (visual) way for my kids to understand the vocabulary and text structure. It was also a good tool to check for understanding after the reading. The sentence frames really helped my children use academic language and having different levels of sentence frames helped all of my children feel confident and challenged when discussing (rest did not copy clearly).
StC	x	How did RALLI lessons affect your students' comprehension (StC) of informational text?	
StC	4	Comp	The lessons helped my EL's organize their ideas, it helped build their vocabulary. It helped all students see that there is a purpose for writing.
StC	7	Comp	It improved their comprehension. They were able to orally express their comprehension to me and their classmates, as well as write about it in the expressive task.
StC	9	Comp	The students were more confident and really felt like they knew what they just read. Also, transferring what they read to the writing was easier. The students had all the info that they needed to make for complete paragraphs in their writing.
StC	1 0	Comp	My students truly benefitted from the RALLI lessons. Their comprehension went up drastically, they were more engaged in the lesson, wanted to learn more after the lesson was complete, and their ability to write about the topic was unparalleled. Their

			learning truly came out in their writing. They used the key vocabulary, remembered complex information, and overall, wrote more than they typically were able to produce. Also, besides for writing, I also had them draw when they were done. It was amazing, their pictures had detail that reflected the HGO and text that they were now very knowledgeable about.
StC	8	Engage	My students were very engaged throughout all of the lesson. They enjoyed the challenges I provided them with the support.
StC	1	InfoTxt	I feel my students have a greater understanding of informational text after using RALLI strategies. I notice a huge difference when I do not teach with RALLI strategies and when I do.
StC	3	InfoTxt	Doing RALLI lessons with my students gave them a large boost of confidence in discussing and engaging with informational text. I loved seeing their engagement and excitement with the whole group lessons.
StC	5	InfoTxt	My students love informational text. They are always looking for the things we have learned. They share with each other and are always excited for more.
StC	6	InfoTxt	The students approached the informational texts with more tools to help them understand the passage – as in vocabulary, how to use text features, sentences frames.
StC	2	Memory	Overall, my students seemed to retain learning/information better after RALLI strategies were implemented.
A	x	Administrator (A) feedback (did you feel, as an administrator, that attending RALLI training with your team was beneficial to the implementation of the RALLI strategies?)	
A	x	.	Yes, definitely it was beneficial.
A	1	Collab	Teachers need to see that we're learners as well.
A	2	Collab	As an administrator you learn and understand what the teachers are as well so there can be that common understanding and support. This provides the opportunity for good rich conversations.
A	3	Collab	In order to move your faculty in a new direction or new learning, you must have the same knowledge and skills so you need the training.
A	4	Collab	By learning with your teachers, you no longer are just an evaluator. You become a partner in learning and can be a second set of eyes in the classroom for productive feedback.
A	5	Collab	Yes. Attending the training has given me the opportunity to work side by side with my teachers and has provided me with the tools necessary to support them. It is imperative that administrators attend staff development trainings with their staff.
A	x	Administrator feedback (Did you see a boost in confidence in you RALLI Action Research	

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		Team after they completed RALLI training?)	
A	6	Collab	Absolutely! They are using what they learned and are sharing with other staff members who didn't have the opportunity to attend the RALLI training. They invite me to their classrooms to see their lessons and are eager to share lesson plans they have created for RALLI.

Twitter as a Professional Learning Tool: Implications for Practice and Further Research

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Abstract

This paper presents the results of research into how Twitter is being employed by educators to support their professional learning. This question was addressed through an exploratory case study, which comprised three phases of data collection and analysis. A content analysis of a sample of blog posts ($n=600$) was undertaken (Phase 1) in order to discover the types of interactions that occur in microblogging. Findings from the content analysis were further explored in Phase 2 with an online survey ($n=121$), which addressed why educators participate in Twitter and the value they place on that participation. Finally, in Phase 3, one-on-one interviews were held with a purposively selected group of educators ($n=9$) in order to further investigate the findings from the online survey and to address the question of how Twitter can support professional learning.

This research uncovered various uses of Twitter to support professional learning and established the value of Twitter within professional learning networks (PLNs). Additionally, it was revealed that the time-efficacy of writing and reading posts of 140 characters makes Twitter an ideal medium for professional learning. Based on the research results, this paper outlines the advantages of Twitter as a professional learning tool and the implications this has for practice and for further research. Best practice methods of introducing Twitter to other educators as a tool to support their professional learning are presented. The paper also addresses a number of questions emerging from the study which warrant further research. The full study can be accessed at eprints.qut.edu.au/65854/

Key Words: Microblogging, PLN, professional learning, Twitter

Introduction

For much of the industrialised world, information and communication technology (ICT) is now a ubiquitous tool in the workplace and at home, impacting on personal communication, organisation of activities, information management and learning (Go & van Weert, 2004). Sorensen and Murchú (2006) noted that learning through digital technology is a global reality and that technology in the 21st century is without boundaries, that is, it is not limited by location or time. Reinforcing this notion, the OECD (2005) stated that:

Information and communication technology has the potential to transform the way people work together (by reducing the importance of location), access information (by making vast amounts of information sources instantly available) and interact with others (by facilitating relationships and networks of people from around the world on a regular basis). (p. 11)

The formation of such relationships and networks has been particularly enabled by the emergence of online social networking. Online social networking sites such as Six Degrees, Friendster and MySpace began to appear in 2002 and were initially designed to foster the development of explicit

ties between individuals as “friends”. There are a variety of online social networking sites that link individuals virtually and enable rapid exchange of knowledge, high levels of dialogue and collaborative communication through text, audio and video (Siemens, 2006). Microblogging is a form of online social networking that allows users to post short messages of 140 characters or less on the Web and viewing of these messages may be restricted to chosen individuals or made public to anyone with access to the Web. Microblogging is used to communicate actions and projects, to put questions, to ask for directions, support, advice, and to validate open-ended interpretations or ideas (Grosseck & Holotescu, 2008). Some common contemporary microblogging services are Twitter [www.twitter.com] on which this study was based, Plurk [www.plurk.com] and Yammer [www.yammer.com].

Background

The focus of this study was the use of Twitter for self-directed professional learning by educators who wrote their posts in the English language. While individuals with a wide variety of ages and backgrounds participate in Twitter, this study focused on the activities of educators who currently use Twitter. Participants in the study included teachers, teacher educators, school principals, university lecturers and technology support officers. Although each of these types of “educators” work in different educational institutions with different aims, and have different concerns and practices, they have in common that they are involved in the education of others and they have individual professional learning needs. In studying this particular group of individuals and their involvement with Twitter, questions regarding how these individuals related and collaborated were explored.

Professional Learning Networks (PLNs)

Educators, like other professionals, can no longer rely on their original professional training and are required to maintain dynamically changing network connections (Hakkarainen, Palonen, Paavola, & Lehtinen, 2004). Networking is not new to educators, who have networked for many years in order to share practice; valuing contact with colleagues in similar and different settings. What is new, is the fact that the Web can facilitate networking across the world and individuals are personalising their own social networks with the help of the Web (Wellman, Boase, & Chen, 2002). Not only are these online social networks being used for social connections, they also provide tools for personalising learning (Ala-Mutka, 2009) and have the ability to facilitate personal learning networks (PLNs) (Grosseck & Holotescu, 2008).

The concept of learning networks was presented by Illich (1971) when he posed the question, “What kinds of things and people might learners want to be in contact with in order to learn?” (p. 78). Illich noted that information could be stored in things and in people, and that in order to learn, one needs both information and critical response to its use from somebody else. The origin of the term professional (or personal) learning network (PLN) is difficult to ascertain and it is challenging to find a definition for the concept of PLN. The term appears to have been first used by Tobin (1998) who described a PLN as “a group of people who can guide your learning, point you to learning opportunities, answer your questions, and give you the benefit of their own knowledge and experience” (para. 1). More recently, professional learning networks have been variously described in the literature as: a collection of people and resources that guide learning, point one to learning opportunities, answer questions, and give one the benefit of their knowledge and experience (Nielsen, 2008); a place where one creates their own classrooms, curricula and textbooks for study of whatever

one is passionate about (Richardson, 2008); a system of interpersonal connections and resources that support informal learning (Trust, 2012); and a technology-supported community of people who help each other better understand certain events and concepts in work or life (Koper, 2009).

It is to be noted that the borders between personal and professional learning networks are blurred (Ivanova, 2009) and PLN is variously used to mean personal or professional learning network in the literature. For the purposes of this study, PLN was taken to mean one's professional learning network.

Twitter

Twitter is a form of online social networking which enables people to share limited information about themselves via their profile and share their activities in short posts of up to 140 characters. Posts are made in response to the general question "What are you doing?" and the answers include messages of context, invitation, social statements, inquiries and answers, news broadcasts and announcements. Many posts are responses to other postings, pointers to online resources that the user found interesting, musings or questions (Educause, 2007). Twitter was launched on July 13, 2006 and allows users to post entries through a website or a mobile device.

The Study

This study examined the use of Twitter for self-directed professional learning amongst educators and investigated the value that educators place on Twitter as a professional learning tool. The study examined how distributed groups support each other and learn together using Twitter.

Significance

The significance of this study lay in its investigation of the use of an online collaborative tool (Twitter) for professional learning purposes. While there is a vast amount of literature relating to the use of computer-mediated conferencing in instructional learning environments, much is still unclear about the use and role of online social networking in general, and Twitter in particular, for professional learning. Millen and Patterson (2002) identified that there was a growing body of research investigating various aspects of online communities but that much of this research has been descriptive and focused on the nature of the social interaction and reported about the various activities of the members and visitors. Several studies have investigated the use of online social networking for the purpose of strengthening a community (Prell, 2003) but there have been few studies into the formation of professional learning networks through online social networking; notable examples of which are Alderton, Brunsell, and Bariexca (2011), Grosbeck and Holotescu (2011), Lalonde (2011) and Veletsianos and Kimmons (2013).

Furthermore, in examining online social networks, researchers have been particularly concerned with how people make friends, how many friends they have and the reliance on social networks for social support (Golder, Wilkinson, & Huberman, 2007). Ala-Mutka (2009) noted that there was a lack of awareness of the potential for learning in online networks and advised that educational institutions should acknowledge the important role of these informal online networks and prepare people to take part in them. In relation to research into the use of social networking as a tool to support learning, Alderton, et al. (2011) advised that:

Additional studies looking at how other online learning communities may be used as professional development venues would be beneficial and add to the knowledge base of online learning, professional development, and learning networks. (p. 1)

Methodology

The study employed a qualitative research design in the form of an exploratory case study, which comprised three phases of data collection and analysis. A content analysis of a sample of Twitter posts ($n=600$) was undertaken (Phase 1) in order to discover the types of interactions that occur. Findings from the content analysis were further explored in Phase 2 with an online survey ($n=121$), which addressed why educators participate in Twitter and the value they place on that participation. Finally, in Phase 3, one-on-one interviews were held with a purposively selected group of educators ($n=9$) in order to further investigate the findings from the online survey and to address the question of how Twitter can support professional learning. An overview of data gathering through three instruments in three sequential phases is illustrated in Figure 1 and further described below.

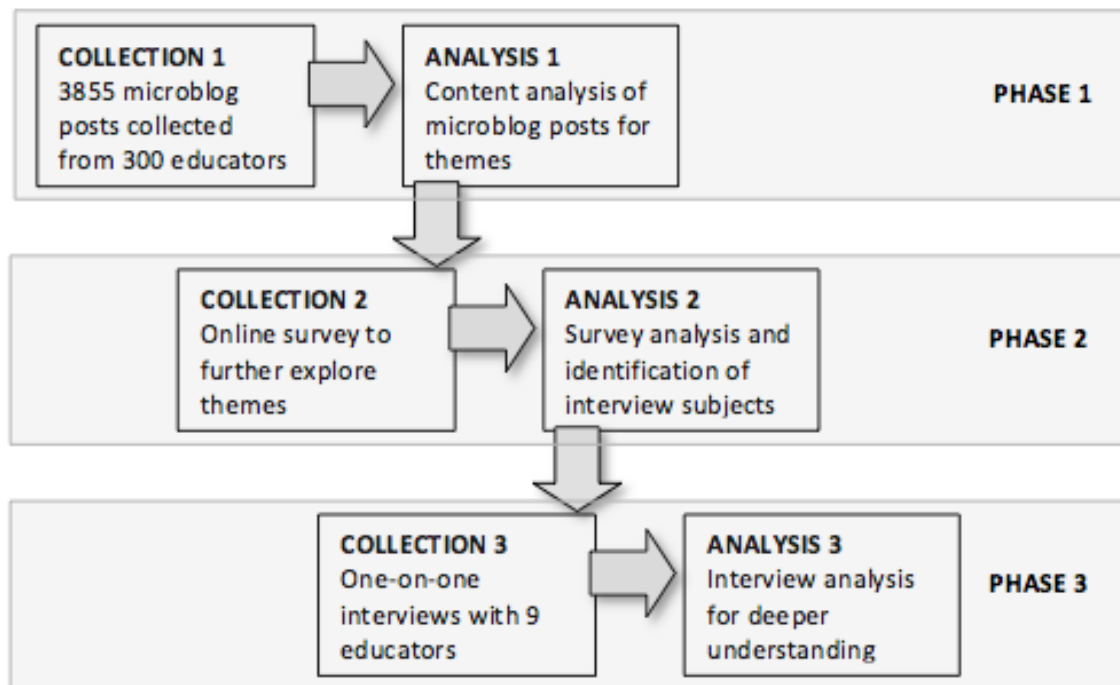


Figure 1: Sequence of data collection and analysis

Phase 1: Content Analysis. designed to discover the types of interactions that occur in Twitter. Twitter posts ($n=3855$) from a 24-hour period were collected and a sample ($n=600$) were analysed to determine the types of messages that were being posted. The *Community of Inquiry* (CoI) framework (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000) was used to analyse the posts. The CoI framework assumes that learning occurs within the community through the interaction of three core elements, that is, cognitive presence, social presence, teaching presence, which interact to influence and shape educational experiences. Analysis using the CoI framework allowed the researcher to categorise the types of interactions and identify themes, which would be further explored in Phase 2 of the study.

Phase 2: Online survey: designed to discover why educators participate in microblogging and the perceived value of their participation in Twitter. In this study the survey was used as a qualitative research tool for gathering data with the intention of describing the nature of existing conditions (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). The survey comprised fourteen questions, which were organised around four themes: demographics, microblog usage, microblog behaviour, and PLN use. From the survey respondents ($n=121$), nine participants were purposively chosen to participate in the third phase of the data gathering, namely, one-on-one interviews.

Phase 3: One-on-one interviews: designed to further investigate how Twitter can support professional learning. The interview subjects ($n=9$) were selected from the pool of survey respondents who had indicated that their PLN was “extremely” important in their overall professional learning ($n=66$); that microblogging was “extremely” important in their PLN ($n=49$); that they considered participation in microblogging to be a meaningful form of professional learning ($n=104$) and they were willing to participate in the interview process ($n=63$). During one-on-one interviews these educators were asked a series of six semi-structured and open-ended questions that were designed to capture their subjective experiences and attitudes towards microblogging. The interview recordings and researcher notes were analysed to determine common themes which had emerged from the content analysis of Twitter posts (Phase 1) and the online survey (Phase 2), and to provide a deeper understanding of why individuals participate in Twitter and the value they perceive in that participation.

Findings

The online survey of educators who use microblogging ($n=121$) revealed that the majority use Twitter ($n=112$, 94.1%), have been using microblogging for 1-3 years ($n=60$, 50.4%) and spend 4-6 hours per week using microblogging ($n=38$, 31.9%). The largest category of respondents ($n=54$, 45.4%) belong to 4-6 social networking communities (including microblogging), while a small number ($n=8$, 6.7%) belong to more than 10 social networking communities.

Twitter Behaviours and Activities

The study revealed that most educators engage in a variety of Twitter behaviours at some time with the most frequent being:

- sharing a resource, for example, a website, book, or video;
- on-sharing a resource posted by someone in their network;
- sharing information from a conference/workshop using a hashtag;
- saving a resource posted by someone in their network;
- going back to a saved resource posted by someone in their network;
- following a link posted by someone in their network;
- using hashtags;
- engaging in a conversation with someone in their network;
- searching for content;
- asking for a resource on a specific topic;
- reading activity updates of others in their network; and
- acting on something they had read in a Twitter post.

Value of Twitter as a Professional Learning Tool

Participants in the study identified several advantages of using Twitter as a professional learning tool. The themes that emerged were:

- access to timely information;
- making diverse and global connections;
- access to valuable resources;
- access to advice and support;
- ability to attend a conference “virtually” by following the hashtags posted by others;
- engaging in conversations and discussions;
- access to experts;
- keeping up with current trends;
- extending their networks beyond their local area;
- reciprocity; and
- learning.

Although the participants in this study were enthusiastic about Twitter and believed that it contributed to their professional learning and positively impacted on their teaching practice, they described some disadvantages. The problem common to all educators in this study was the large amount of information they received from others in their Twitter network. It was found that some educators had effective strategies for dealing with this, while others did not. Another disadvantage noted was the amount of time spent posting. Two educators, who had been using Twitter for less than three years, used the word “addictive” and said that they felt they had to constantly check their Twitter streams in case they missed valuable information.

Implications for Practice

This study showed that Twitter could be a valuable tool for professional learning; therefore, it is desirable that effective ways are employed for introducing it to educators in general. The first hurdle to be overcome is the common perception of Twitter as a stream of unremitting triviality about what you are making or eating for dinner (McFedries, 2007). Once an educator overcomes this perception and decides to join Twitter, they need to know how to open an account and start building their network. Effective professional learning through Twitter involves participating in the network by sharing resources and information, and engaging in dialogue with other educators. If new members do not know how to go about finding relevant educators with whom to link, their dialogue will fall short of expectations and they will not find Twitter an effective professional learning tool.

Brown, Collins and Duguid, (1989) cautioned against adopting tools without adopting their culture and advised that a new user must enter a community and its culture with care. Additionally, although Twitter provides opportunities for learning, not all individuals are equipped with the skills or knowledge to benefit from these learning opportunities (Ala-Mutka, Punie, & Ferrari, 2009). In order to participate in Twitter there is certain knowledge and understanding of conventions required that, while obvious to experienced users, may not be known to new or intending users. I advise that educators are introduced to Twitter by an experienced user, who constructs a learning scenario in which they can participate. New users need to be immersed in the sharing of ideas and discussion from the outset. A common practice of experienced Twitter users is to expose new users to the network, in general, or to specific educators that they think the new user would find valuable. This is

done either by retweeting a post made by the new user, thus exposing them to the network of the experienced Twitter user, or by introducing educators to one another directly.

Once an educator begins using Twitter to support their professional learning, there are still pitfalls to be considered. Drexler (2010) warned that the learning potential exists in a PLN in what the learner does with the compilation of content and how it is synthesized. The educators in this study reported that the amount of information exchanged within their network could be problematic, and they did not all have effective techniques for dealing with it. It appears, from the descriptions of interview subjects, that the most effective way of dealing with these large amounts of information is to save it to another application and tag it so that it can easily be searched at a later date. This technique should be introduced to educators when they begin using Twitter to ensure that they are effectively managing the information they receive from their expanding network.

Another implication for practice comes from the issue of recognition of microblogging as a legitimate form of professional learning. Several educators related that using Twitter was a significant part of their informal professional learning, and despite evidencing this by documenting that learning reflectively, for example in a blog, this was not accepted by employers as legitimate professional learning. Twitter represents a significant shift in pedagogic approach, and should be seen as a completely new form of communication that can support informal learning beyond classrooms (Ebner, Lienhardt, Rohs, & Meyer, 2010). It is important that institutions understand that knowledge is distributed through different communities (and networks) and, central to such an understanding is placing control of learning in the hands of learners themselves and providing learners with the skills and competences to manage their own learning (Attwell, 2006). However, it may be some time before Twitter is accepted universally as a legitimate professional learning tool.

Implications for Further Research

While caution needs to be exercised in generalising the findings of this study, the outcomes may be used to guide further research in this area. The study uncovered various uses of Twitter to support professional learning and established the value of Twitter within PLNs. However, it also raises a number of questions which researchers may wish to explore in future studies.

1. The data revealed that the more experienced Twitter users behaved differently from educators who were new to Twitter. The question arises as to whether this is a sequential path along which all Twitter users move and if there is any benefit in accelerating new users along this path.
2. It was found that participants believed they were learning through Twitter and that this learning was evident in their practice. This is an area that warrants further investigation in order to ascertain a stronger link between Twitter, learning and evolving practice. Alderton et. al. (2011) also suggested this type of study in order to understand how learning in professional networks is transferred into practice.
3. As noted, the phenomenon explored by this study involved a specific technology (Twitter) being used by a specific group of people (educators) for a specific purpose (professional learning). It would be beneficial to conduct comparative research in other professions to investigate if the use of Twitter for professional learning was widespread in professions beyond education and, if so, how and why it was used.
4. Finally, it is recognised that a precondition for successful adoption of a technology tool is a positive attitude towards its potential (Honeycutt & Herring, 2009). The participants in this study had a positive attitude towards Twitter and could be considered early adopters. Further

research into the attitudes of non-users and why they are not using Twitter for professional learning would be useful.

Conclusion

The study showed that educators who participate in Twitter consider it to be a meaningful form of professional learning and that access to information, resources, advice and support from a diverse global network was highly valued and enriched their learning experiences. The inclusion of Twitter in a PLN gives educators access to resources and information exchanges with other educators that they would not otherwise have. The ability to engage in dialogue with peers and experts outside their geographic area allowed these educators to seek advice and support from others with a wide range of experience and knowledge, and thus extend their thinking. Given the findings of this study, more research is needed to expand the understanding and use of Twitter as a professional learning tool.

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Public Opinion on Health Care Policies in the 21st Century

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Abstract

Since the advent of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, health care and public opinion on health care policies became important subjects of study in the 21st century. Broad literature examining the relationship between public opinion on redistributive policies and the level of income inequality exists, but not with a focus on health care policies. A debate between two contrasting views appears in previous literature on how the public reacts to rising income inequality. This study empirically tests where health care policies reside in this debate. Using the General Social Survey and Census reports, I examine how both the actual level of income inequality and perceptions of income inequality impact respondents' preferences towards governmental health care provisions. I include other factors as control variables that the previous literature has found to be relevant predictors of public opinion. Running ordinary least squares regressions, I find a positive relationship between the actual level of income inequality and public opposition to health care policies. In contrast, there exists a negative relationship between the perception of income inequality and respondents' opposition to health care policies. Based on previous literature, I gather from these outcomes that a rise in income inequality, along with less concern for inequality, makes people less supportive of health care provisions. This interpretation suggests that the social fragmentation theory holds in the case of health care policies; growing inequality causes more fragmentation between the insured and the uninsured.

Key Words: Public Opinion, Income Inequality, Health Care Policies

Introduction

Before the advent of The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, popularly known as "Obamacare," the United States had been unique among wealthy industrialized nations for not providing centralized health insurance plans to all of its citizens (Biedenbach, 2008). Obamacare, despite its enactment in March 23, 2010, still faces intense public opposition from many Americans (Blackman, 2013; Hoff, 2010). As a result, topics related to governmental provision of health care have become an important subject in the social sciences.

Obamacare is not the first governmental effort to reform the health care system in the US. Before the 21st century, there had been a number of centralized attempts to increase governmental involvement in health care, including those of the Clinton administration in 1994 (Anderson, Reinhardt, Hussey, & Petrosyan, 2003). Expansion in the health care system from the public sector, as opposed to the private sector, is often initiated to assure access across all socioeconomic groups (Alexander, 2009; van Doorslaer, Wagstaff, van der Burg, Christiansen, & et al, 1999). In other words, recent governmental health care interventions in the US, including Obamacare and the Clinton

Administration's plan that preceded it, align in their redistributive objectives to minimize the inequality in health care access among citizens.

A large body of literature has studied public opinion on redistributive policies, but not necessarily with a focus on health care (Alexander, 2009). Since health care policies in the US can be put under the category of redistributive policies, some fundamental approaches can be borrowed. This paper adopts an approach that explains how the level of income inequality in a society affects its people's opinion on redistribution. Growing income inequality among Americans has been a national concern, culminating in the 21st century (Kenworthy & McCall, 2008; MacRae, 2004; Oxendine, 2007). Conflicting views explain how the public reacts to this rising trend of income inequality: whether they support or oppose governmental intervention. Determining where health care policy preference stands in this debate may help guide the U.S. health care system in the 21st century.

While this debate also applies to health care policies, one cannot directly assume that the public will react to health care policies in the same way they do to redistributive policies in general. Thus, it is necessary to focus exclusively on governmental health care provisions and inquire more deeply into how public opinion responds to the state of income inequality. Taking the inquiry a step further than examining an underexplored area of redistributive policies, this work includes an analysis of the opinions of a particular socioeconomic cohort—insured Americans—within U.S. communities.

To summarize, this study quantitatively examines how Americans react to income inequality in terms of their preferences toward health care policies. I empirically test the impacts that the actual level and the perceived level of income inequality have on public opinion about health care policies by surveying the relevant literature and identifying possible factors that shape public opinion on redistributive policies. These factors, including the level of income inequality, serve as a basis for my regression models. Estimates from ordered logistic regressions suggest that rising income inequality in the US and Americans' lack of concern about inequality altogether heighten public opposition to governmental health care policies. This analysis provides some important policy implications for the U.S. health care system, as public opinion may be a key factor in shaping the future of Obamacare and other health care reform movements (Anderson, Reinhardt, Hussey, & Petrosyan, 2003; Panayotova, 2001).

Literature Review

Social Fragmentation Theory

Researchers have found a general trend of increasing income inequality in the US from the early 1900s to the present (Kenworthy & McCall, 2008; MacRae, 2004; Oxendine, 2007); however, there are conflicting interpretations of how Americans react to this rise in income inequality. One of the most dominant views is that perceived apathy among Americans regarding the problem of income inequality is increasing (McCall & Kenworthy, 2009). This can be explained through the "social distance" model suggested by MacRae (2004), which argues that a growing income gap between people encourages social fragmentation instead of egalitarian sympathy in U.S. communities (MacRae, 2004; Oxendine, 2007). With fragmentation, taxpayers with higher incomes become less concerned about the transfer recipients and less supportive of redistributive policies in the US.

The view that rising inequality engenders social fragmentation and therefore less support for redistributive policies is validated by looking at other empirical studies. Kenworthy and McCall (2008) empirically tested the survey responses of Americans in the late 1980s and the early 1990s regarding their opinions on inequality and redistributive policies, finding that a rise in inequality shows no

heightened support for redistribution. Furthermore, Rehm, Hacker, and Schlesinger (2012) argued that social fragmentation is accelerated when people with economic disadvantages (low income) also face economic insecurity (high risk employment status). Their study concludes that the two groups—the disadvantaged and the insecure—are not distinct but becoming highly correlated as income gap grows in the US (Western, Bloome, Sosnaud, & Tach, 2012). The trend and the characteristics of U.S. income inequality altogether create and accelerate social fragmentation among Americans, making them less interested in the need for redistribution.

Alternative Explanations

The social fragmentation theory depicts Americans as ethically unconcerned and having policy preferences largely dependent on personal economic benefits. The other side of the literature disagrees. Through empirical analyses, Panayotova (2001) suggested that an individual's perceived level of social status and rank has no significant effect on redistributive policy preferences. More recently, Brooks and Manza (2013) supported this view by arguing that economic incentives do not affect individuals' policy preferences.

As seen in section 2.1, Kenworthy and McCall (2008) acknowledged that a rise in inequality heightens opposition to redistributive policies; however, their more recent study (2009) offers alternative explanations. They first propose that Americans may be uninformed about the state of income inequality and may be swayed by contemporaneous debates on redistributive policies. They also propose the possibility that Americans are concerned about inequality, but do not express their concerns through support for redistributive policies; people do not want income redistribution, but demand other avenues to solve the problem of inequality such as pursuing equal opportunity through government spending on education. These explanations will be further discussed in the context of health care provisions in the US.

Application to Health Care Policy Preferences in the US

This paper borrows a common approach taken from the literature of redistributive policies, seeking how rising inequality affects public opinion on policies, because there is little research focusing on health care policies in particular. Research on redistributive policies reveals two conflicting views: the social fragmentation theory suggests public opposition to redistributive policies in response to rising inequality, while others explain that such policy preferences are unrelated to the economic motivations embedded in the social fragmentation theory. This paper expands the discussion to an underexplored, but extremely important policy domain; I examine whether or not public opinion on health care policies can rest on social fragmentation theory.

Before discussing the validity of the social fragmentation theory for health care policies, it is important to distinguish between the taxpayers and the transfer recipients of the program—the two groups that fragment as income inequality rises. Reports on health care policies make a distinction between the insured and the uninsured under the U.S. health care system (Curtis, 2005; DeNavas-Walt, Proctor, & Smith, 2013; Jecklin, 2007; Kaplan & Inguanzo, 2011). The cost of care for the uninsured is disproportionately imposed on individuals with higher income, who are more likely to be already insured and thus uncompensated for what they pay (Curtis, 2005). Exploiting this distinction between the insured and the uninsured, this research explores whether or not rising income inequality will cause fragmentation between the two populations. If the insured feel unconcerned about the uninsured and prefer not to pay for their benefits, then the social fragmentation theory will hold, and vice versa.

In the US, the profile of the insured can be explained in four socioeconomic categories: income level, employment status, marital status, and race. The uninsured rate was significantly lower among people with higher income and full-time year-round working status when compared to low-income individuals working less than full-time (DeNavas-Walt, Proctor, & Smith, 2013). This is due to the fact that a majority of the U.S. population generally relies on employers to gain access to health insurance (Savage, 2012). Under employer-provided insurance, it is likely that family members of the employees also gain health insurance coverage; thus, people's marital status, apart from their own employment status, also plays a big role in their insurance coverage (Jecklin, 2007). In terms of race and ethnicity, Hispanic and Latino communities face a considerably higher uninsured rate compared to that of non-Hispanic whites (Kaplan & Inguanzo, 2011). Based on these reports, the analysis specifies four shared socioeconomic characteristics of the insured Americans: high-income, full-time employed, married, and racially white.

Other Socioeconomic Factors

In accordance with previous literature, this study focuses on the level of income inequality and the four characteristics of the insured (income, working status, marital status, and race) when analyzing public opinion on health care policies. In addition to these factors, it is important to identify other possible predictors of public opinion to isolate the impact of rising inequality. Consulting previous empirical studies on redistributive policies, I detect relevant predictors of public opinion that serve as control variables in my analysis.

First, political party identification strongly influences an individual's policy preference (Alexander, 2009; Anderson, Reinhardt, Hussey, & Petrosyan, 2003; Barany, 2009; Lee, 2006). Obamacare, for instance, is associated with the Democratic Party as suggested by its nickname. Americans who strongly identify as Republican may disapprove of redistributive policies in general. Barany (2009) finds that individuals with political inclination to the Right become more hostile to redistribution.

Previous literature also included additional demographic and personal information in their analysis of redistributive policies, such as age, sex, and educational degree (Alexander, 2009; McCall & Kenworthy, 2009; Kenworthy & McCall, 2008; Panayotova, 2001). Older generations tend to be more health conscious and vulnerable to health problems (Yamada, 2005), implying differing degrees of concern for health care policies across age groups. In terms of education, Panayotova (2001) finds that Americans with a higher degree of education tend to be less favorable toward redistributive policies. Therefore, other factors—political identification, age, health status, sex, and educational degree—are included in order to eliminate noise in observing the relationship between income inequality and public opinion on health care policies.

Research Design and Methods

This study employs quantitative methods in order to investigate the relationship between the degree of income inequality and public opinion on health care policies. The research question asks how rising income inequality in the US affects people's preference for governmental health care provisions. To explore this relationship, data are drawn from the General Social Survey (GSS), which contains a nationally representative sample of Americans, and from the Census. The GSS provides a useful dataset to perform the regressions in this study, because it contains survey responses regarding Americans' social policy preferences and their perceptions of income inequality, as well as other demographic and socioeconomic information about the respondents that are used as controls. Due to

data availability for one of the independent variables (see INCGAP below), only data collected in years between 1987 and 2008 are used.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable for my regression models is public opposition to redistributive health care policies, coded as “NOGOVHLTH.” This public opinion data comes from the GSS. The survey question I use to gauge public opposition is:

“In general, some people think it is the responsibility of the government in Washington to see to it that people have help in paying for doctors and hospital bills. Others think that these matters are not the responsibility of the federal government and that people should take care of these things themselves. Where would you place yourself on this scale?” (Smith, Marsden, Hout, & Kim, 2013).

The response choices are on an ordinal scale of 1 to 5, where 1 corresponds to “government should help,” 3 to “agree with both,” and 5 to “people should help themselves.” A higher score in NOGOVHLTH indicates a stronger opposition to government provision for health care. This question was asked on a biyearly basis, but data are used only from a limited number of years due to the data availability of other variables.

Previous research (Kenworthy & McCall, 2008; McCall & Kenworthy, 2009) that applies a similar empirical method use a different survey question from the GSS to capture public opinion on health care policies. This survey question asks the following: “We are faced with many problems in this country, none of which can be solved easily or inexpensively. Are we spending too much, too little, or about the right amount on improving and protecting the nation's health?” (Smith, Marsden, Hout, & Kim, 2013). However, by addressing the improvement of health in the abstract, this survey question only gives partial insight into the level of public support for health care policies. Improving and protecting the “nation's health” does not coincide with redistributing health care benefits. Instead, the survey question may include governmental efforts in advancing the country's health in general, such as funding medical research and investing in the medical industry. For this reason, compared to other survey questions, NOGOVHLTH best captures the public opinion on the redistributive nature of health care policies and is used in this study.

Independent Variables

This study operationalizes two main independent variables to examine the effect of income inequality on public opinion about health care policies over time: the actual level of income inequality and the respondents' perception of income inequality. The first independent variable, coded as “GINI,” comes from Gini coefficients and indicates the actual degree of income inequality in the US. The Gini coefficients, which I extract from the Census (2011), measure the degree of inequality in the distribution of family income in a country (Central Intelligence Agency, 2013). GINI ranges from 0 to 1 (rounded up to the thousandth), where a higher GINI indicates a more unequal distribution of income in the US. GINI is calculated on a yearly basis, and has only one value for any given year. Thus, all the other GSS survey responses from the same year are assigned the same value of GINI.

The second independent variable is the respondents' perceptions of income inequality. The GSS asks respondents: “Do you agree or disagree? Differences in income in America are too large”

(Smith, Marsden, Hout, & Kim, 2013). Responses to this question will be coded as “INCGAP,” on an ordinal scale of 1 to 5, where 1 corresponds to “strongly disagree,” 3 to “neither agree nor disagree,” and 5 to “strongly agree.” A higher score in INCGAP indicates the perception of a greater income inequality in the US. This question was asked and collected in years 1987, 1996, 2000, and 2008.

The inclusion of INCGAP to the regression models is important for two reasons. First, changes in the actual level of inequality are not immediately translated into changes in American’s perception of inequality. In other words, individuals may have imperfect information about the true level of inequality. Although some research (Kenworthy & McCall, 2008) confirms that Americans have a good understanding of the actual trend of inequality taking place in the US, it is more statistically accurate to utilize the perceived level of inequality provided by the survey respondents.

The second reason to include INCGAP is to capture the respondents’ opinion about the level of income inequality. Even individuals who observe the same degree of inequality may express different opinions. In other words, INCGAP can represent individuals’ opinions about income inequality depending on their tolerance or justification for income inequality. In this case, responding with a 5 for INCGAP may denote a stronger concern for income inequality when compared to a response of 1, regardless of the income gap they observe.

The figures below illustrate how the mean values of the dependent and independent variables change over the years between 1987 and 2008. Opposition to health care policies, NOGOVHLTH, is fluctuating over the years. The actual level of income inequality, GINI, is steadily increasing at a relatively consistent pace. The perception of income inequality, INCGAP, also follows a generally increasing trend. Accordingly, in Table 1, the correlation between GINI and INCGAP is positive and statistically significant; in other words, at least on the superficial level, respondents’ perception corresponds to the actual level of income inequality.

Table 1: Correlation between the Dependent and Independent Variables

	Variables	Y	X_1	X_2	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Y	NOGOVHLTH	1.0000			2.4210	1.2061	1	5
X_1	GINI	0.0108 (0.1360)	1.0000		0.4536	0.0152	0.426	0.47
X_2	INCGAP	-0.2348* (0.0000)	0.0747* (0.0000)	1.0000	3.6656	1.1181	1	5

Note: significance levels in parentheses, indicated by * $p < 0.001$.



Figure 1: trend of the dependent variable (NOGOVHLTH) between 1987 and 2008

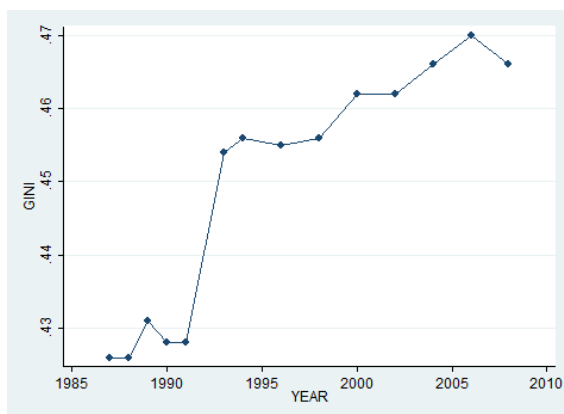


Figure 2: trend of the first independent variable (GINI) between 1987 and 2008

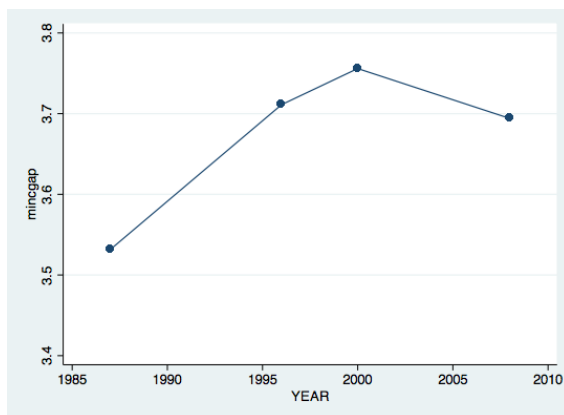


Figure 3: trend of second independent variable (INCGAP) between 1987 and 2008

Control Variables

The regressions include a list of controls for individual characteristics as detected by other empirical studies. Respondents' age ("AGE"), sex ("SEX"), race ("RACE"), family income ("INCOME"), highest degree of education ("DEGREE"), marital status ("MARITAL"), political identification ("PARTYID"), and employment status ("WRKSTAT") are all included. In addition to these commonly used control variables, my regression also includes the condition of the individual's health ("HEALTH"). Individuals' health condition may determine their demand for health care access and therefore their opinion about health care policies. Finally, the year when variables were collected is included ("YEAR") because of its high correlation with GINI: 0.9138 with p-value smaller than 0.001. The effect of the steadily increasing GINI over time should not be mistaken with any other trends that also draw a steady increase over time. All of these control variables were collected from the GSS.

Regression Models

I use ordinary least squares regression models to estimate the relationships between the dependent variable and the independent variables. Correlations between the variables found in Table 1 cannot capture the true relationship due to complex interventions of other factors. Ordinary least squares regressions isolate the effect of independent variables on the dependent variable by controlling for these other factors. All outcomes are coded so that positive coefficients on independent variables indicate greater opposition to health care provided by the government. A total of three sets of regression models are used in the study.

The first set of regression models utilizes the first independent variable, GINI. I estimate the relationship between public opinion on health care policies and the actual level of income inequality (Model 1.1). In addition to this simple model, YEAR is used to control the constant and steady increment of GINI, allowing for a more accurate estimation of the impact of GINI on public opinion (Model 1.2). Again, the sample years for all models are restricted between 1987 and 2008 to render regression outcomes comparable to models using INCGAP.

$$NOGOVHLTH_i = \beta_1 GINI_y + \beta_2 controls_i + \alpha_0 + u_i \quad (1.1)$$

$$NOGOVHLTH_i = \beta_1 GINI_y + \beta_2 controls_i + \beta_3 YEAR_y + \alpha_0 + u_i \quad (1.2)$$

The second set runs similar models using the second independent variable, INCGAP. First, I regress the perception of inequality on public opinion, the same method earlier applied to GINI.

$$NOGOVHLTH_i = \beta_1 INCGAP_i + \beta_2 controls_i + \alpha_0 + u_i \quad (2.1)$$

However, there is a big difference between GINI and INCGAP, because respondents from the same sample year are assigned the same GINI whereas each respondent give his or her own INCGAP independent of the sample year. The value of GINI is thus interrelated with the time trend. On the other hand, INCGAP alone cannot capture the time trend, as responses from different sample years can share the same INCGAP value. As a result, to capture the time trend for INCGAP, I rerun Model 2.1 for each separate year sample. By comparing the coefficients over the sample years, I can estimate

how the impact of the perception of income inequality on public opinion changed over time. Due to the data availability of INCGAP, data from years 1987, 1996, 2000, and 2008 are used.

$$NOGOVHLTH_{i,y} = \beta_1 INCGAP_{i,y} + \beta_2 controls_{i,y} + \alpha_0 + u_{i,y} \quad (2.2)$$

The final set of regressions restricts the sample to survey respondents who represent the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the insured population in the US. The profile of the insured is identified to have four common characteristics: high-income, full-time employed, married, and racially white. This research defines the listed characteristics as “family income of \$25,000 or over” (the highest income level category provided by the GSS) for INCOME, “working full time” for WRKSTAT, “married” for MARITAL, and “white” for RACE. The restricted sample will either have all four characteristics or have any of the four characteristics listed above. By examining the restricted samples’ regression outcomes, these models can explain whether a fragmented society with groups of different health care policy preferences exists or not in the US.

$$NOGOVHLTH = \beta_1 GINI + \beta_2 YEAR + \beta_3 controls + \alpha_0 + u \quad (3.1)$$

$$NOGOVHLTH_i = \beta_1 INCGAP_i + \beta_2 controls_i + \alpha_0 + u_i \quad (3.2)$$

Data Analysis

Actual Level of Income Inequality

The estimates for the first set of the regression models (see Table 2 below), which use the actual level of income inequality as the independent variable, indicate a positive relationship between income inequality and opposition to governmental health care provision. Model 1.1 shows a lack of robustness in the relationship. However, controlling for the constantly and steadily increasing GINI with the YEAR variable, Model 1.2 alternatively yields statistically significant outcomes; even when control variables are included, the coefficient stays positive and significant. I can therefore conclude that rising income inequality taking place in the US, measured by Gini coefficients, heightens public opposition to health care policies.

All control variables, except for DEGREE, in Model 1.2 are statistically significant. Among them are INCOME, WRKSTAT, MARITAL, and RACE, all displaying positive coefficients. This is especially noteworthy considering the profile of the insured in the US. Respondents’ income, working status, marital status, and race were all coded so that a higher value would imply that respondents are closer to the profile of the insured: high-income, full-time employed, married, and white. The positive and statistically significant relationship between the listed control variables and respondent opinion on health care policies suggests that people possessing the characteristics of an insured individual tend to be less supportive of health care provision.

Table 2 Estimated Effects of GINI on Public Opinion about Health Care Policies—Model 1

Independent Variables	Model 1.1		Model 1.2	
	Without controls	With controls	Without controls	With controls
GINI	1.707* (0.7316)	0.033 (0.7158)	8.110*** (1.9072)	6.360*** (1.8253)
YEAR			-0.017*** (0.0047)	-0.017*** (0.0040)
AGE		0.007*** (0.0008)		0.007*** (0.0008)
SEX		-0.080*** (0.0224)		-0.079*** (0.0224)
RACE		0.099*** (0.0208)		0.095*** (0.0208)
INCOME		0.023*** (0.0051)		0.024*** (0.0051)
DEGREE		0.003 (0.0104)		-0.004 (0.0103)
PARTYID		0.1323*** (0.0055)		0.133*** (0.0055)
HEALTH		0.097*** (0.0145)		0.095*** (0.0145)
MARITAL		0.105*** (0.0242)		0.103*** (0.0242)
WRKSTAT		0.041* (0.0179)		0.039* (0.0179)
Observations	11484	10955	10955	10955

Note: standard errors in parentheses; p-value indicated by *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05.

Perceived Level of Income Inequality

In the second set of the regression models, the perceived level of income inequality also shows a statistically significant relationship with the respondents' health care policy opinions, but in an opposite direction. In Model 2.1 in Table 3, we see that the perceived level of income inequality gives a statistically significant and negative coefficient. Even when controlling for other spurious factors, the coefficient does not significantly change, p-value remaining the same (0.000); robustness of the regression outcomes is assured. The greater a respondent perceives the level of income inequality in the US, the more he or she will support health care policies. Other control variables—RACE, INCOME, PARTYID, HEALTH, and MARITAL—were statistically significant as well. The positive relationship between the listed control variables and respondent opinion on health care policies suggests a stronger opposition among insured people.

Moving on to the yearly trend of the impact of INCGAP, Model 2.2 in Table 4 shows that the impact of perception of income inequality does not follow a consistent trend, with a noticeable anomaly in 2000. Furthermore, the coefficient for the year 2000 loses statistical robustness when including control variables in the regression; however, estimates for all other years remain significant and robust. Excluding 2000 and taking only statistically significant outcomes into account, the impact that perceived level of income inequality has on public opinion is generally growing stronger over time. To summarize, negative coefficients in Model 2.1 and 2.2 suggest that respondents who perceived greater level of income inequality tend to pose less opposition to health care provision. This negative relationship between INCGAP and NOGOVHLTH is strengthening over time.

Table 3: Estimated Effects of INCGAP on Public Opinion about Health Care Policies—Model 2.1

Independent Variables	Model 2.1	
	Without controls	With controls
INCGAP	-0.249*** (0.0205)	-0.201*** (0.0202)
AGE		0.007*** (0.0016)
SEX		0.023 (0.0443)
RACE		0.096* (0.0422)
INCOME		0.030** (0.0095)
DEGREE		-0.032 (0.0201)
PARTYID		0.114*** (0.0108)
HEALTH		0.093*** (0.0281)
MARITAL		0.144** (0.0480)
WRKSTAT		0.012 (0.0351)
Observations	2699	2699

Note: standard errors in parentheses; p-value indicated by *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05.

Table 4: Estimated Effects of INCGAP on Public Opinion about Health Care Policies—Model 2.2

Independent Variables	Model 2.2							
	Year 1987		Year 1996		Year 2000		Year 2008	
	Without controls	With controls	Without controls	With controls	Without controls	With controls	Without controls	With controls
INCGAP	-0.235*** (0.0297)	-0.200*** (0.0293)	-0.276*** (0.0447)	-0.212*** (0.0446)	-0.147* (0.0662)	-0.045 (0.0675)	-0.313*** (0.0441)	-0.247*** (0.0443)
AGE		0.009*** (0.0023)		0.005 (0.0042)		0.008 (0.0049)		0.004 (0.0034)
SEX		0.096 (0.0616)		-0.017 (0.1105)		-0.244 (0.1310)		0.045 (0.0992)
RACE		0.050 (0.0622)		0.087 (0.1036)		0.046 (0.1278)		0.191* (0.0847)
INCOME		0.030* (0.0128)		-0.021 (0.0288)		0.044 (0.0311)		0.050* (0.0219)
DEGREE		-0.051 (0.0301)		0.058 (0.0502)		-0.104 (0.0585)		0.001 (0.0416)
PARTYID		0.103*** (0.0152)		0.149*** (0.0286)		0.127*** (0.0328)		0.120*** (0.0238)
HEALTH		0.072 (0.0393)		0.194** (0.0734)		0.128 (0.0881)		0.074 (0.0601)
MARITAL		0.167* (0.0684)		0.104 (0.1176)		0.334* (0.1449)		0.058 (0.1054)
WRKSTAT		0.068 (0.0505)		0.012 (0.0945)		-0.082 (0.1065)		-0.051 (0.0701)
Observations	1368	1368	406	406	327	327	598	598

Note: standard errors in parentheses; p-value indicated by *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05.

Restricted Sample

Finally, I look at the regression outcomes using samples that are restricted to survey respondents who display either all or at least one of the four representative characteristics of the insured in the US. The regressions using GINI as the independent variable, Model 3.1 in Table 5, indicate that the effect of GINI is positively stronger for the restricted sample. The coefficient for GINI is 6.360 in the entire sample for Model 1.1 in Table 2, whereas samples that have all or any of the insured characteristics have greater coefficients, respectively 8.015 and 6.996 (Table 7). These coefficients are both statistically significant. Compared to the entire sample, the restricted group of respondents tends to oppose more (higher NOGOVHLTH) to health care provisions when GINI is higher. This positive relationship only gets stronger for the groups with people having all the characteristics of the insured.

The restricted sample model that examines the effect of INCGAP shows the opposite. In the model using the whole sample, the coefficient for INCGAP is -0.201 in the entire sample for Model 2.1 in Table 3. This is a bigger coefficient compared to those of the restricted sample: -0.254 and -0.210 for Model 3.2 in Table 5. These outcomes are also statistically significant. In other words, in comparison to the entire sample, the restricted sample shows less opposition to health care policies when the perception of income inequality is higher.

Table 5: Estimated Effects of GINI/INCGAP on Restricted Sample's Opinion about Health Care Policies—Model 3

Independent Variables	Model 3.1		Model 3.2	
	All four characteristics	Any of the four characteristics	All four characteristics	Any of the four characteristics
GINI	8.015* (3.9001)	6.996*** (1.8083)		
INCGAP			-0.254*** (0.0074)	-0.210*** (0.0205)
YEAR	-0.241* (0.0097)	-0.018*** (0.0044)		
AGE	0.008*** (0.0024)	0.008*** (0.0007)	0.007 (0.0048)	0.007*** (0.0014)
SEX	--0.077 (0.0490)	-0.094*** (0.0219)	0.087 (0.0960)	-0.010 (0.044)
DEGREE	-0.015 (0.0203)	-0.018 (0.0098)	0.005 (0.0411)	-0.013 (0.0193)
PARTYID	0.165*** (0.0119)	0.140*** (0.0053)	0.135*** (0.0242)	0.115*** (0.0106)
HEALTH	-0.110** (0.0358)	0.111*** (0.0142)	0.124 (0.0677)	0.094*** (0.0283)
Observations	1368	406	327	598

Note: standard errors in parentheses; p-value indicated by *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05.

Conclusion

My regression analysis reveals opposite outcomes for the two independent variables: while the actual level of income inequality (GINI) has a positive relationship with respondents' opposition to health care provision, the perceived level of inequality (INCGAP) has a negative relationship. Both relationships remain statistically significant and robust throughout different years. Considering the positive correlation between INCGAP and GINI (Table 1), it is unexpected that INCGAP and GINI

would have different effects on respondents' preferences toward health care policies. The positive correlation implies that as GINI increases, the average value of INCGAP for a given year moves in the same direction at least on the superficial level. However, the estimated coefficients that account for the effects of other control variables show that they impact the outcome variable in different directions.

Revisiting the reasons for including the perceived level of inequality, it is plausible to conclude that such mixed results support the social fragmentation theory. INCGAP can be interpreted in two ways, the first being the respondents' information about income inequality and the second being the subjective opinion about income inequality (higher value of responses indicating higher levels of concerns). The second interpretation of the variable can translate the results as: less concerned people are also inclined to oppose governmental health care policies more. This interpretation is more compatible with how the measured income inequality in the US is rising, and the rise in income inequality negatively affects public opinion on health care policies. As seen in Model 2.2 in Table 4, respondents with less concern for income inequality have increasingly negative opinions on health care policies over time.

In Model 1 and 2, the effect of having the characteristics of the insured is straightforward. Positive coefficients for GINI, RACE, INCOME, MARITAL, and WRKSTAT in the regression models suggest that being high-income, full-time employed, married, white individuals—representative characteristics of the insured—make people more likely to oppose to health care provisions. Model 3, the restricted sample of those displaying the characteristics of the insured has stronger opposition to health care policies in relation to rising GINI, while stronger support for health care policies in relation to increase in INCGAP. This further supports the social fragmentation theory of how the insured population has stronger opposition to health care policies as income inequality rises.

Limitations

A number of statistical limitations exist in the analysis. First, the reason this study relied on the four key characteristics to define the insured in the US is because of the missing information regarding the respondents' health care coverage. If available, the coefficients for the health care coverage variable would have more definitively shown whether or not the insured more strongly oppose health care policies. In such a case, a more clear-cut judgment of the validity of the social fragmentation theory could have been made. While GSS started collecting information on health care coverage in 2008, it is impossible to conduct a time trend analysis with data for only one year. In addition to the impossibility of tracking time trends, the number of responses was too small to retrieve a robust regression outcome even for the 2008 cohort. The problem related to the small sample size is also a problem for the 2000 cohort in Model 2.2; the sample size is not big enough to return statistically significant estimates for the independent variable. However, these problems could not be avoided, as panel data containing responses for health care coverage along with opinion on both income inequality and health care policies do not exist. The GSS is the best option available.

Another limitation of the regression model is the categorization of INCOME in the GSS. The highest income category for the GSS is "\$25,000 or over," containing 61.65% of the entire sample. However, reports on health care coverage reveal further variations among individuals over the income level of \$25,000. In 2012, the uninsured rate was 21.4% for people with family income ranging from \$25,000 to \$49,999, 15.0% for people with family income ranging from \$50,000 to \$74,999, and 7.9% for people with family income of \$75,000 or more (DeNavas-Walt, Proctor, & Smith, 2013). In the GSS, a large portion of the respondents with varying income levels and insurance

coverage rates are aggregated in the same income category, thus giving less accurate outcomes.

Implications

The debate on how taxpayers of redistributive policies respond to rising inequality extends to the discussion on governmental health care provision in the 21st century. The government cannot ignore public opinion when assessing and reforming the national health care system. Studies that analyze public opinion provide important guides for the government in its policy formation (Panayotova, 2001). The regression outcomes of my study therefore provide meaningful figures to understand how different socioeconomic groups react to health care policies in the face of rising inequality. Despite a restrictive sample, over-categorization, and inevitable limitations of quantitative studies, no other surveys offer more comprehensive data than the GSS. Thus, this study provides the best estimate of the public opinion on health care policies to date and sheds light on how income inequality works in the context of health care policy preferences of the American public.

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Audience is Everything: Rewriting Composition Classrooms to Incite Democratic Participation, Social Activism, and Public Discourse

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Abstract

It is often assumed that the college classroom signifies a “public” space and that the writing done therein is an inherent form of “activism” (Ervin, 1997). But this supposition is misplaced. The reality is that composition courses teach rhetorical skills in a sort of abstract vacuum where the writer is expected to compose for an academic audience alone—often an audience of one: the instructor. The notion, then, that writing for a composition course is a form of public activism is misleading because the classroom is, in fact, a restricted community in which writing is transmitted to a privileged audience instead of a public one. Because academic writing is taught and disseminated within realms that remain largely inaccessible to those outside of the institution, academia has created a semi-closed circuit that mobilizes writing and research but only in an orbital, exclusive fashion.

Such limitations of audience and purpose prompt three concerns for the college composition classroom: the disengagement of the composition student; the perpetuation of dominant, hidden ideologies; and the neglect of our democratic responsibility to foster discourse between author and society. Composition courses offer a unique opportunity to address these issues using public discourse. This essay will explore the problems of engagement, ideology, and discourse by surveying student opinions regarding composition classes and by positing that an opportunity for improved composition pedagogy exists in our ethical obligation to use the composition classroom to generate practiced, democratic advocates. In recognizing our social responsibility to the communities that sustain our institutions, instructors can repudiate the gravitation toward armchair politicking and instead incite real-world change alongside our students. And in teaching writing as and through communication, we may just salvage what remains of our students’ longings to write what matters.

Key Words: English composition, academic writing, audience, public discourse

Introduction

“Audience is everything.” This is the line that I fed my college-level English composition students in each and every course that I taught. Like the realtor’s age-old mantra on location, I emphasized the importance of audience until the very mention of it was met with eyeballs rolling in sockets and audible huffs and pffts. I am not the only one, though, to tout this or a similar phrase. As an undergraduate writing major, I too was indoctrinated early on as to the necessity of audience awareness. The professors that I “looked up to” and then went on to work alongside stressed the need for budding college writers to accommodate a specific readership.

In addition to faculty, this audience-is-everything tune is a recitation sung by masters in the field of composition pedagogy. What I refer to below as an “ideal” audience, Paul Silvia (2007) calls

an “inner audience,” claiming that “an image of who will read your paper . . . will help you with your writing decisions” (p. 80). Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford (1984) assert, “the writing process is not complete unless another person, someone other than the writer, reads the text also” (p. 169). Peter Elbow (1981) reminds readers to “pay lots of attention as you write to your audience and its needs” (p. 177). Although these are just three examples in a veritable galaxy of writers who write on writing, it is safe to assume that the lecture on audience import is rooted deeply in the discipline’s history.

It took me six years of teaching higher education writing courses to begin to wonder about and to question my concept of audience. One day, I asked a student struggling to find her authorial voice, “Who is your audience?”

“You,” she replied coolly.

“Right, but to whom are you really writing—who do you want to read this essay?”

Her reply: “Well, no one. Because I wouldn’t write an essay like this outside of class.”

While at first this student may appear to have been suffering either from extreme sarcasm or a lack of understanding, these words, however flippantly delivered, left an impression on me. As her comment sank in, I began to see the difficulty in our positions: I was indeed the audience, and no matter how much time I spent lecturing on an “ideal” audience, my students were not being encouraged to engage in the type of writing in which audience truly mattered. In asking students to imagine an ideal audience but to write for an actual audience of one (me), I was essentially disconnecting my students from the goal of writing as communication. My exercises in audience awareness were not only somewhat futile and perhaps disengaging to student writers but they were also allowing for the recurrence of many layers of hidden ideologies to pass by, unquestioned and unevaluated. In addition to disengagement and the perpetuation of ideological agendas, the instructor-as-audience problem indicates a third issue: public discourse. Containing student writing to the classroom leads students to “an impoverished sense of writing as communication because they have only written in a school setting to teachers” (Elbow, 1987:51). Writing, we must not forget, is communication, but this communal piece is lost on composition students who are expected to write for elite, in-house audiences that rarely extend to true public spheres.

In this paper, I argue that approaching the composition classroom from a perspective of social responsibility and public discourse sheds an essential light on the goals and outcomes of academic writing. This essay will explore the results of a survey of student opinions about composition courses both as they are and as they might be. In doing so, I hope to illustrate that dissatisfied, disengaged students can be reanimated if instructors address the problem of audience. By replacing the practice of the in-class writing devoid of a public audience with the opportunity to write for and to people, groups, or institutions in the public domain, we create the opportunity to address the issues of student engagement, ideological and hegemonic preservation, and social responsibility.

Literature Review

This review of the literature includes primary research in the form of empirical studies. However, I also draw upon secondary sources and analyses because I view interpretation and the translation of lived experiences as valid forms of knowing. To exclude these from my study or to devalue them does not support the qualitative researcher’s notion that “research is a process of trying to gain a better understanding of the complexities of human experience” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 21). To gain a more holistic understanding of our world, I strive to draw from different disciplines and rely on various types of resources to help me weave a more comprehensive tapestry of understanding.

Composition & Student Engagement

Student engagement has been a persistent topic for several decades (Astin, 1984). From effects on minorities (Ream & Rumberger, 2008) to attrition rates (Gilardi & Guglielmetti, 2011) to teaching effectiveness (Polikoff, 2015), discussions revolving around student engagement permeate academic institutions. Breaking down the aspects of student engagement typically results in a three-pronged model. For Trowler (2010), this includes emotional engagement, cognitive engagement, and what she terms “behavioral” engagement, which she defines as “behavioural norms, such as attendance and involvement, and . . . the absence of disruptive or negative behaviour” (p. 5). For Parsons et al. (2014), this three-dimensional model includes both emotional and cognitive engagement, as Trowler’s does, but these authors refer to the third aspect as “affective” engagement, which is “a sense of belonging in the classroom and an interest, curiosity, or enthusiasm around specific topics or tasks” (para. 5). While there are variances in naming the elements that constitute student engagement, essentially, researchers agree that for a student to be “engaged,” she must be interested, active, and challenged.

For the composition classroom in higher education, however, student engagement does not come easily. To begin, first- and second-year students who are required to take English composition courses enter these spaces with no lack of writing anxiety. The pressures of producing an immaculate end product (Bayat, 2014), the “fear of teacher’s negative comments,” “insufficient writing techniques” (Younas et al., 2014, para. 15), and a lack of the time needed for “process, revision, and collaboration” (Rose, 2011:46) all serve to heighten students’ anxieties and impede their writing endeavors. Next, students are disconnected from the work that they do in part because of the lack of an authentic audience. I use the term “authentic” audience to imply a reader who is invested in the text to an extent that supersedes the instructor’s investment, which can be reduced to the quantification of student writing to a numeric grade. An authentic audience is an “active, critical audience” and, more importantly, one that does not seek to employ the text as a mere measurement of a student’s aptitude for writing (Von Mucke, 2010:61). The missing public—or authentic—audience serves to create a rift between the student’s experiences within the classroom and the his/her life outside of it.

Composition & Ideology

The literature regarding composition and ideology revolves around these questions: what should or should not be taught in the college writing classroom and should particular ideologies be interwoven into such courses in order to “bring about political and social change” (Hairston, 1992:185). One camp insists that college composition should revolve around creating clear, concise, academic writers by teaching the writing process—Peter Elbow, Andrea Lunsford, Lisa Ede, Donald Murray, Maxine Hairston, and Linda Flower are just a few. Hairston (1992), for example, rails against a composition classroom focused on political agendas and ideological discussions. She regrets that “required writing courses” are increasingly used as “vehicles for social reform rather than as student-centered workshops designed to build students’ confidence and competence as writers” (p. 180). The opposing camp, which includes theorists such as James Berlin, Patricia Bizzell, Charles Paine, John Trimbur, and Linda Brodkey, among others, supports the notion that composition pedagogy cannot afford to ignore the need to connect “literacies with [the] responsibilities of a global citizenship” (Hawisher et al., 2009:55). This dispute indicates that those who teach composition cannot agree on even fundamental aspects of the discipline such as the purpose of teaching writing.

Moving away from this sort of dichotomous approach to composition pedagogy, I focus instead on the problematic nature of the instructor as sole audience, claiming that such a biased

audience for student writers serves to amplify a completely different set of ideological suppositions that come standard with the teaching of composition. Because composition can be taught in a way that “favor[s] one version of economic, social, and political arrangements over other versions,” the authoritative audience of one accentuates and promotes an unchallenged master narrative and with it whatever ideologies the particular instructor brings into the classroom (Berlin, 1988:477). In other words, a whole range of hidden ideologies is perpetuated by the instructor-audience despite the instructor’s stance on the appropriateness of teaching ideology in a composition classroom. These hidden ideologies, in turn, provide “students with a rather limited form of literacy” and obscure the complexities of the art of communicating through writing (Ward, 1994:4). Within the classroom, “ideological assumptions” are blindly presented “as mere ‘common sense,’ and . . . contribute to sustaining existing power relations” (Fairclough, 1989:77). These assumptions—which maintain the status quo—cannot be challenged or even recognized by novice writers when the one in power plays both the role of audience as well as instructor.

Composition, Democracy, & Public Discourse

For the sake of argument, I will define democracy as “a way of living in which we collectively deliberate over our shared problems” (Wood, 1998:180). Those who call for educational reform in the spirit of Wood’s (1998) idea of democracy are many. John Dewey, Michael Apple, James Sears, Roger Soder, John Goodlad, Carole Edelsky, and many more envision public education as the way by which to “make this a better world to live in” (Teitelbaum, 1998:40). In their minds, our challenge as educators is to set “new standards of excellence” that revolve around “human dignity, social and economic justice, spiritual enlightenment, and peace and sustainability” (Sears, 2004:5). Striving towards such ends, however, may in fact succeed in cultivating students who will not only be knowledgeable but also ready and willing democratic participants.

The composition classroom provides a unique avenue through which we might inspire this type of democratic and socially aware student. Writing, discourse, communication—these are “social activities” (Heller, 2003). To remove the social aspect of writing is detrimental to the process and the product, and yet, this is essentially what instructors do when we attempt to teach writing skills without an authentic audience. Writing should be a conversation with the public (Bruffee, 1983). And Dewey (1916) agrees. A forerunner in the movement to use education as the pursuit of democratic ideals, Dewey (1916) reminds us, “there is more than a verbal tie between the words common, community, and communication” (p. 4). With this formative work in mind, it seems likely that the teaching of composition currently undermines democratic ideals by neglecting the part of the equation that links composition to communication.

Methodology

My ultimate goal as a professor of composition is to find ways to answer this question: How can I better foster student engagement, confidence, and success? This research project was my starting point; it was a way for me to collect the student narratives necessary to address those three goals. I conducted qualitative research because it provides a way for students to tell their own stories in their own voices, offering a more complete picture of the student writing experience (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In order to address issues of experience, I approached this study using a social constructivist framework and the idea that meaning is constructed. The overall goal of this study was to discover my students’ “subjective meanings to their experiences,” and to do so, I relied “on the participants’ views of the situation” (Creswell, 2013:24-25).

Research Questions

The research questions that fuel this study are relatively uncomplicated. The purpose of this research is to determine students' general opinions about their previous and/or current college composition courses. Here is what I set out to learn:

1. How do students feel about college composition courses?
2. How do students define the purpose of a composition class?
 - a. And what do they say *should* be the purpose of a composition class?
3. What can composition instructors do to foster student engagement and success while simultaneously addressing the need to foster democratic participants?

Framework & Approach

Within the social constructivist worldview, I chose to employ a phenomenological approach that I then supplemented with a narrative approach. I used phenomenology as my main approach because, in the end, my goal was to understand how students feel about their experiences pertaining to composition courses. I gave my participants a chance to describe their experiences—or their “essence[s] of perception” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962:vii)—and from their descriptions, I have woven together their voices in order to work toward a “gradual development of knowing” (Hegel, 2009:21). In addition, I incorporated a narrative approach because this study deals with the unique stories of the participants, and I subscribe to the idea that “the narrative is the main mode of human knowledge . . . and the main mode of communication” (as cited in Czarniawska, 1998:3).

In light of my phenomenological and narrative approaches, participants were asked to write their replies to questions posed in an online survey. One reason for an online questionnaire was to provide students with a convenient and less-intrusive option of answering questions. But there are two other reasons I opted to do written instead of verbal interviews: the act of storytelling and the act of writing. Storytelling “can situate us as tellers of our own truths” (Benmayor, 2012:vii). In having participants consider these questions on their own time and compose smallish narratives of their experiences and opinions, I provided them with the occasion to reflect on and then compose their “lived realities” (Benmayor, 2012:viii). Flores Carmona and Luschen (2014) purport that storytelling is more than just a creative endeavor—it “is an important aspect of culturally relevant pedagogy and social justice education” (p. 2). With this text in mind, I elected to encourage participants to craft their own critical stories of their experiences in English composition courses.

After convenience to the student and the act of storytelling, my third reason for using a written survey was to empower my students to write. Writing is often mistaken as the mere act of documenting what is already in our minds. But the act of writing is more closely related to the creation of new ideas than the recording of existing ideas—it enables us to form connections that are yet undefined. Jim Suchan (2004) agrees and writes that the act of writing is “a process of discovery, knowledge creation, self-revelation, and . . . personal identity formation” (p. 311). I wanted to provide my participants with this same type of opportunity for self-analysis and idea generation—an opportunity to construct their identities and to make meaning.

Data Collection

This study was conducted at a Midwestern community college. I chose a community college due to the general mission statements of such institutions, which focus on student success, community engagement, and social responsibility over research. The vision statement of this particular college challenges “students to meet the needs of the community and the world.” Given this statement of purpose, I thought it would be appropriate to conduct my study at this community

college as my argument is based upon the need for a greater attempt on behalf of academia to engage in public dialogue with the surrounding community. The participants for the study were recruited from English Composition II courses. The rationale for surveying second-year students was that these students have more experience with college-level composition courses and therefore have more to say about them. All English Composition II instructors teaching during the Summer 2015 semester were emailed. They were informed of this study and encouraged to email their students and invite them to participate. Per NMSU's Institutional Review Board (12067-A) as well as a second IRB through the community college, students were emailed a cover letter explaining the study's parameters and providing the link that would take them to the survey. Fifteen students participated in the online survey.

Data Analysis

The data analysis aspect of qualitative research gives me cause for concern. Like St. Pierre and Jackson (2014), I am “concerned about analysis that treats words (e.g., participants’ words in interview transcripts) as brute data waiting to be coded” (p. 715). When “words are reduced to numbers,” what we are essentially doing is engaging in a “positivism that presumes that language can, indeed, be brute and value-free” (St. Pierre & Jackson, 2014:715-16). This push to quantify participants’ words and to transform experiences into coded data negates the very reason for collecting critical narratives.

As a qualitative researcher, as a scholar who most closely aligns with a social constructivist theory, and as a professor of composition, I struggle with the fact “that analysis in qualitative methodology continues to be mired in positivism” (St. Pierre & Jackson, 2014:717). Jackson and Mazzei (2012) take this problem of data and discuss it in terms of normativity or “sameness” (p. 4). By grouping and coding participant writing, what we as researchers are doing is compartmentalizing lived experiences into categories of normal versus abnormal, studying and validating that which is “normal,” according to our numbers, and discarding that which is different. In the spirit of queer theory, the act of quantifying and coding certainly does not allow researchers to “critically examine processes of normalization and reproductions of power relationships” (Shlasko, 2005:125). My worry is that in our continued attempts to defend the validity of qualitative research, we as qualitative researchers sacrifice not only the essences of the voices of those who write and speak to us but also the positions we claim within our particular theoretical frameworks.

Conflicts aside—if that is at all possible—I recognize the need to interpret qualitative research results. After all, research is meaningless without analysis and interpretation. Vygotsky’s (1978) theory of learning suggests that understandings are formed not individually or internally but through culture and context—socially constructed. Therefore, for this research study, I have taken the written results of my survey and attempted to generate a narrative that encompasses the voices of all of my participants, both those who conform and those who do not. I have also noted the silences in this narrative; I perceive the absence of words to be just as important as the words themselves. My endeavor to capture my participants’ experiences in a holistic fashion is my way of validating my participants’ critical narratives as well as remaining true to the spirit of qualitative research.

Results

The survey results indicate three main factors that affect students' perceptions of college English composition courses:

1. writing pretexts and previous feelings toward the discipline,
2. personal experiences with individual courses and instructors,
3. and perceptions of what liberal education means and the purpose of college composition courses.

Pretexts

All students come to the table with different pretexts regarding academic writing. Those participants in this study who did not harbor negative feelings towards writing indicated that they were "happy" taking composition courses. Most participants, however, were unable to state that they were happy taking composition courses simply because they did not consider themselves "big English fan[s] so it makes it really hard for [them] to like the class and give it [their] all." While students recognized that "as much as [they] did not want to take composition courses," they also understood that if they want to get a degree, they "just [have] to do it." A student's pretexts partly determines her current feelings.

In-Class Experiences

Pretexts are not the only aspect shaping students' feelings towards composition courses. Specific in-class experiences also affect their perceptions. The minority of students who reported being happy to take composition classes also reported having had positive in-class experiences. These students feel that teachers who present "amazing class ideas and an amazing course structure . . . can completely revolutionize the way English is taught." What this means is that teachers and curriculum that have the potential to positively influence how students perceive the discipline. Moreover, if students are willing to acknowledge and then adjust their pretexts, then they are able to change their perceptions from negative to positive. Here is one example from the survey: "After seeing what the course would exactly be like, I did not mind it what so ever . . . I liked the way it was set up. Overall my college composition classes [went] over very well."

These contented voices, however, are the minority. As mentioned, the majority of participants dislike having to take English composition, and part of the reason is due to ineffective teachers or disengaging classes. For example, participants revealed that many teachers fail to "make the class interesting to everyone" and seemed to design their curriculum solely for the benefit of the "writing talented." Certain pedagogical choices do not allow those students who may not be strong academic writers to gain an appreciation for the discipline. Participants also noted feeling resentful of composition courses when they could not place them in relation to their majors. Here is what one reported: "I didn't find this course hard, it was just difficult to be enthusiastic about it because it didn't pertain to my major as much as other classes." Essentially, the way a course is taught and the experiences students have in specific courses directly influence how students view the discipline as a whole.

Perceptions of Purpose

The most determining factor in regard to student perceptions of composition classes is the notion of purpose. Those who recounted being happy taking composition classes seemed to more

fully understand the definition of liberal education. Participants happy to take composition courses defined a liberal arts education in the following ways:

- “a broad education”
- one in which “the student is exposed to many subjects and gains a comprehensive education [sic], rather than a specific or tailored one”
- the “Freedom to learn what interests you”
- “a very well rounded education” in which “every student should have a strong knowledge in math, reading, science, english [sic], government, social studies, economics.”

Only one student who reported being dissatisfied with the composition experience chose to define liberal education. This individual described liberal education as “one that doesn’t hold much of a career path for many students.” The other students who reported being unhappy to take composition courses elected to skip this question. What this silence implies is that students who dislike taking composition courses are either unable or unwilling to define the meaning of a liberal arts education. It is likely that these students do not understand or do not subscribe to Dewey’s (1916) notion that education is a process of “self-renewal” (p. 9).

Unlike the silences in regard to defining a liberal arts education, when asked to define the purpose of the English composition course, participants unanimously replied. And this time, there is almost no distinction between those who claimed being happy and those who claimed being unhappy with composition courses. Only one student wrote a reply that showed his or her deep distaste for composition classes; this individual stated that the purpose of the composition course is “to take more money from [the] student.” Beyond that one response, however, the participants collectively agree on the purpose of taking composition courses. Even those who indicated their dissatisfaction (minus the one participant detailed above) answer this question in a way that shows that the majority of students understand the importance of written communication. The purpose of the college composition course, according to students, is this:

- “to have the knowledge to write in the professional world”
- “to explore our writing abilities and discover new ways to express ideas”
- “to improve/strengthen verbal and written communication skills”

Whether or not students claim to understand the goals of a liberal education, and whether or not they are happy taking English composition, all but one understand the need to improve written communication through coursework. In other words, students do indeed want to improve as writers, and they recognize that they will need this skill beyond the classroom.

Student Suggestions

The fact that nearly all participants understand the purpose of composition classes does not negate the fact that the majority of them are still unhappy with these courses. This distaste could be due, in part, to what they think composition courses should accomplish. When asked how they would change the teaching of English composition courses, students recommend two main changes: more autonomy and more writing practice in genres that extend beyond academic essay writing. In particular, students would like “more choices for composition/writing courses for specific majors. For example if you are focusing on business you should be allowed to choose a business writing/composition course. This course would not necessarily have research papers but more report styles that you see in the business world.” Likewise, students would appreciate courses that are “somewhat specialized. For example they could be on email writing, resume writing, and other things that may be more beneficial.” The participants indicated wanting assignments “ranging from very small writing assignments to one or two large ones, and everything in between. [They] would

also make sure the students encounter a diversity of writing techniques.” If “teachers let their students have more availability to choose which assignments that they would like to dive into more,” this particular student believes that student perceptions of composition classes would greatly improve. Participants, in short, recommend that instructors find ways to make the teaching of composition more relevant to their current and future needs.

Conclusion

We know that the majority of college composition students are not happy. While they understand the need to think critically and to be able to communicate successfully through writing, they fail to see how composition classes apply to their lives outside of the classroom. Composing essays to a professor does not, to their minds, equate to the writing they will be required to do beyond the institution. Quite frankly, I do not blame them. I would hesitate to suggest limiting the teaching of composition to business or technical writing because doing so might undermine the overall vision of a liberal arts education. However, I can certainly see the need to address what is taught in the composition classroom, how it is taught, and where it is taught in order to meet the changing demands of twenty-first century learners. After all, today’s students

“must learn abilities that will sustain them through multiple career changes, new roles in marriage and community life, and forbidding political crises in the environment, economy, and social justice. If compositionists and rhetoricians are to act upon the current research and theory in our own journals, writing programs can no longer be limited to introducing students to the rhetoric of academic fields and majors” (Parks & Goldblatt, 2000:586).

To engage today’s student, English composition instructors must find ways to make this skill relevant and applicable.

Recommendations

In regard to where composition takes place, I recommend supplementing the instructor-audience with an authentic, public audience. In essence, we should take writing out of the classroom. Heilker (1997) also focuses on the problem of where composition takes place: “writing teachers need to relocate the *where* of composition instruction outside the academic classroom because the classroom does not and cannot offer students real rhetorical situations in which to understand writing as social action [original emphasis]” (p. 71). Providing authentic rhetorical exercises will help students appreciate and engage the complex nature of writing as communication.

To address the “where” of composition, higher education instructors might look toward the principles of experiential and service learning theories. These theories have the potential to alleviate the three problems posted in this paper: student engagement, ideology, and social responsibility. In particular, I advocate Heilker’s (1997) “fifth form of service-learning in composition,” which connects student writers with people, organizations, and businesses in the community that have writing needs (p. 74). The appeal is that “these writing tasks do not simulate or replicate or ask students to hypothesize about *anything*”; instead, these assignments “enable students to work with a very specific ‘content’: the mission of the agency” with whom they would be working (Heilker, 1997:75). Addressing this overarching problem of audience can reinvigorate our students and their desires to write what is important. It can stem the ways in which instructors perpetuate their own hidden agendas and ideologies. It can fulfill our obligation to enter into and maintain public discourse with the communities that house our institutions. Let us show our students that “rigorous intellectual work is prized . . . because of its ability to make a difference in how we understand and act powerfully on the social world in which we live” (Apple & Beane, 2007:151). In dislodging the instructor-audience, we will no doubt create a space in which our students are able to reclaim

autonomy, purpose, and joy within the composition classroom as well as the ability and desire to take their writing beyond it.

A classroom is never simply a means of evaluating a student's learning or work. Education, if we can agree with John Dewey, is an avenue for developing democratic citizenship whereby social change becomes possible. To fulfill this end, the composition classroom, in particular, must strive to produce texts and writing that can be used for civil disobedience and public discourse. A student who is empowered to take her writing beyond the classroom and into the public arena becomes a powerful voice for equity and social change.

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Appendix: Survey

1. What is your academic standing?
 - I'm a first-year student
 - I'm a second-year student
 - I'm beyond my second year
 - I take random classes as I can
 - other
2. Have you attempted any college writing/composition courses before this one? Indicate yes or no and how many composition courses you've *attempted* (not just passed). (Include previous sections of this course if this is not the first time you're attempting it.) *Example: Yes, I've attempted 3 previous courses: EN 101 twice and EN 102 once before this current course.*
3. If you have attempted one or more composition courses or sections, were these required for your degree path? And were you happy to take them?
 - the courses were/are required, but I was NOT happy about having to take them
 - the courses were/are required, and I was HAPPY about having to take them
 - the courses were/are NOT required, and I was HAPPY to take them
 - I have not attempted any college composition courses before this one
4. What would you say is the point of taking college composition courses? In other words, why do you think the academic institution requires or offers them?
5. What do you think SHOULD be the point of taking college composition courses? In other words, how would you personally like to benefit from such courses?
6. Tell me how you would change the teaching of writing/composition if you could plan the curriculum. How would you teach or approach it and why?
7. What is your idea of the phrase "liberal education"?
8. Based on how you understand liberal education, do you think composition courses fit into or oppose the idea of liberal education? Why and in what ways?
9. How happy are you with your overall academic experience up to this point?
 - click on 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 thumbs up icons to indicate your happiness
10. Finally, is there anything else you would like to share about your experience with composition courses? Anything you can tell me about your feelings, ideas, perceptions, successes, or failings in this regard would be great!

Ontario (Canada) Education Provincial Policy: Aboriginal Student Learning

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Abstract

Educational policy related to publicly funded schools in Ontario, Canada, is intended among other things to address the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal student academic achievement. The Ontario Ministry of Education's (2007) *The Ontario First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework* draws attention to the nuances of Aboriginal knowledge, Aboriginal student epistemologies, and learning preferences. The Framework also identifies the importance for publicly funded provincial schools and school boards to recognize these distinctions in both their policies and practices in order to prepare Aboriginal students as 21st century learners. According to Ball (2009), public schools in Canada have not proven that they are capable of successfully addressing the learning needs and community realities of Aboriginal students and families, as evidenced by their inferior levels of achievement in comparison to their non-Aboriginal peers. Hence, this study investigated the experiences of Aboriginal students in 3 public elementary schools across northern Ontario in light of the mandate of the policy Framework. The core categories grounded in the voices of 16 participants from different regions across northern Ontario are described as 2 phases of student discernment. The initial phase includes students' discernment of the influence of the various relationships they share with peers and teachers. The second phase is described as students' discernment of their social location as Aboriginal peoples in public schools. The core categories describe the most significant factors that distinguish high- and low-functioning public schools and contribute to students' sense of engagement in their education.

Key Words: Aboriginal education, policy, relationships

Introduction

Educational policy related to publicly funded schools in Ontario, Canada, is intended among other things to address the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal student academic achievement (Ball, 2009; Canadian Council on Learning, 2009). The focus on Aboriginal student achievement is pressing given that the Aboriginal population in Canada is growing almost six times faster than the non-Aboriginal population, and that the Aboriginal child and adolescent population is in excess of 6% of the total population of this demographic (Miller, Laye-Gindhu, Bennett, Liu, & Gold, 2011). Some projections estimate that Aboriginal elementary school students will represent more than 25% of the entire population in certain provinces and territories across Canada (Young et al., 2010). Moreover, although 50% of the Aboriginal population in Canada resided in urban dwellings 10 years ago, more Aboriginal children are projected to attend Canadian urban-centered schools over the next decade (Richards, Vining, & Weimer, 2010).

The 2007 Ontario policy document, *The Ontario First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework* (the Framework) draws attention to the nuances of Aboriginal knowledge,

Aboriginal student epistemologies, and learning preferences. The Framework also identifies the importance for publicly funded provincial schools and school boards to recognize these distinctions in both their policies and practices in order to prepare Aboriginal students as 21st century learners. Given the projected increase of Aboriginal students in publicly funded schools, it makes sense that the Ontario educational policy Framework brings to light the uniqueness of Aboriginal student epistemologies, histories, and traditions and calls upon teachers, principals, and school board administrators to reflect these preferences accordingly. Battiste (2002), Cajete (2000), Hampton (1988), and others have identified Aboriginal knowledge as being distinct from more western-based understandings. Aboriginal knowledge, according to these scholars, represents an array of relationships that implicate profoundly upon language, place-based beliefs, and local culture. According to Ball (2009), public schools in Canada have not proven that they are capable of successfully addressing the learning needs and community realities of Aboriginal students and families, as evidenced by their inferior levels of achievement in comparison to their non-Aboriginal peers (see also Canadian Council on Learning, 2009).

Ball's (2009) statement in some respects provides the impetus for the central question that this study addresses; specifically, what distinguishes successful publicly funded urban northern Ontario elementary schools (with significant enrolments of Aboriginal students) in terms of their response to the mandate 8 years into the 2007 policy Framework's implementation and, in turn, their capability to equip Aboriginal students as 21st century learners? However, rather than focusing on the empirical evidence that typically includes student grades and test scores, this investigation concentrates upon the voices of the Aboriginal students themselves—in what Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, and Teddy (2009) term “the sense-making and knowledge-generating processes of the culture the system marginalizes” (p. 735).

Consequently, the paper will first provide an overview of the Ontario policy Framework. Second, the literature review will serve as the conceptual underpinnings of the key notions that inform the investigation, including concepts related to curriculum, pedagogy, teachers, and schooling. The methodology section of the paper provides the relevant details regarding the student participants and data analysis. The paper subsequently presents the findings of the study that consist of two core categories that emerged in response to the central question. The categories are grounded in the voices of the student participants and described as two phases of student discernment in view of their educational experiences in provincial northern Ontario schools. The initial phase includes students' discernment of the influence of the various relationships they share with peers and teachers. The second phase is described as students' discernment of their social location as Aboriginal peoples in public schools. The core categories describe the most significant factors that distinguish high- and low-functioning public schools and contribute to students' sense of engagement in their education.

Contextual Overview

The Ontario Ministry of Education (OME) policy Framework draws attention to the historic and socio-cultural realities of Aboriginal students that often have adverse effects on their achievement levels and educational experiences (Castellano, Davis, & Lahache, 2000). The Framework alludes to the achievement gap that positions Aboriginal students in lower standing than their non-Aboriginal peers, and self-declares the OME's commitment to provide top-notch education for all students across the province. The Framework is a strategic policy that calls upon teachers, principals, school board administrators, and local communities to improve Aboriginal students' experiences and achievement in public schools. The Framework represents

“A holistic and integrated approach to improving Aboriginal student outcomes. The overriding issues affecting Aboriginal student achievement are a lack of awareness among teachers of the particular learning styles of Aboriginal students, and a lack of understanding within schools and school boards of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit cultures, histories, and perspectives” (OME, 2007:6).

The Framework targets specific strategies for the various stakeholders involved in public education to more adequately respond to the unique learning and cultural needs of Aboriginal students through programs and services that complement a broader engagement of Aboriginal parental and community involvement in public schools. School and board administrators, according to the Framework, are commissioned to professionally develop teachers’ knowledge of Aboriginal students’ learning styles and advance teachers’ skills towards implementing more culturally respectful pedagogical practices that better position Aboriginal students to succeed in public school classrooms. In turn, teachers are required to implement practices that resonate with the socio-cultural and epistemic realities of Aboriginal students. The intent of the Framework is to raise educators’ awareness of the diverse needs of Aboriginal students, improve their academic achievement in order to close the aforementioned gap, and enhance the formal schooling experiences of Aboriginal learners.

The Framework is a central policy to this study since its principles served as the foundation for the semi-structured questions posed to the Aboriginal student participants. The questions focused upon the strategies outlined in the Framework and essentially informed the dialogue between participants during each of the research conversations.

Literature Review

Curriculum and Pedagogy

Postcolonial notions of Canadian public school curriculum and pedagogy have not favoured Aboriginal students and have not been reflective of their epistemological practices (Battiste, 2002; Cajete, 2008; Frideres & Gadacz, 2005). The more western-based provincial curriculums have generally not been aligned to Aboriginal knowledges, while classroom pedagogy has in many instances ignored Aboriginal students’ learning styles (Duggan, 2003; Piquemal, 2005).

There is also a wave of literature that underscores the need for educators at all levels of K to 12 schools to have better understandings of Aboriginal students’ epistemic needs (Aldous, Barnes, & Clark, 2008; Mellor & Corrigan, 2004). As Hampton (1993) explains, “Traditionally Indian forms of education can be characterized as oral histories, teaching stories, ceremonies, apprenticeships, learning games, formal instruction, tutoring, and tag-along teaching...all of the traditional Native methods took place within cultural settings that were characterized by subsistence economies, in-context learning, personal and kinship relationships between teachers and students” (as cited in Waller et al., 2002, p. 268). Mainstream teachers and learning practices that rely on memorization, the regurgitation of facts, individual competition among students, and test-driven assessments are not necessarily culturally appropriate practices for Aboriginal learners (Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005; Holmberg, 2010). The repercussions of such misaligned practices have resulted in negative public school experiences for Aboriginal students. Aboriginal epistemologies tend to reflect a holistic view of teaching and learning whereby the individual student benefits from a balanced education that nurtures intellectual, physical, social/emotional, and spiritual characteristics (Pearce, Crowe, Letendre, Letendre, & Baydala, 2005).

There remains, therefore, a glaring disconnect between Aboriginal students' epistemic realities and socio-cultural traditions and public school educational practices related to teaching and learning (Cherubini, Hodson, Manley-Casimir, & Muir, 2010). Multifaceted, unique, and complex Aboriginal worldviews have typically not been represented in Canadian provincial schools. Aikenhead and Michell (2011) have observed that Aboriginal children who learn best by demonstration, repetition, and practice, as well as those who prefer to assume active roles in their learning, do not benefit from the rote learning and standardized assessments that often drive pedagogy and evaluation in publicly funded provincial schools, such as those in Ontario. Aboriginal student epistemologies, including holistic models of educational practice that are centred on visual, oral, and group activities, have essentially not been a meaningful part of public school curriculum and teachers' pedagogy (Pearce et al., 2005) and in the process have ignored teaching and learning practices that contribute to the strong development of Aboriginal learners (Archibald, 2008). Strengthening Aboriginal learners in culturally appropriate and sensitive ways in public schools "is critical to the well-being of Aboriginal people" (Canadian Council on Learning, 2009, p. 5).

Educators

Public school teachers must be aware of Aboriginal students' epistemologies and learning preferences in order to meaningfully incorporate such traditions in their practice. Teachers, according to Aikenhead and Michell (2011), must have a genuine understanding of learner-centred instruction and be able to adopt their classroom practices to further Aboriginal student achievement in the same manner as non-Aboriginal learning. Such an understanding entails that quality educators are willing to interrogate their own personal biases and assumptions about Aboriginal students, communities, and traditions. Quality educators also possess effective communication skills that allow them to dialogue with Aboriginal students, parents, and members of the community in a meaningful way. The ability to be a contributing member of a team includes participating in networks across Aboriginal communities.

In the Canadian context, the western-based curriculum and standardized practices that measure student achievement are generally implemented by mainstream teachers who often have not been adequately trained to develop the aforementioned key characteristics of quality educators (Cherubini, 2010; 2012). Although it is important to resist generalizations, mainstream teachers in Canadian and Ontario public schools are often products of and formally educated in a specific paradigm of teaching and learning that involves teachers positioned at the front of the classroom of students as they deliver a specific lesson focused on a topic of one particular subject (Cole & Cole, 2001; Stigler & Hiebert, 1999). Aboriginal student epistemologies, their unique socio-cultural traditions, and the focus on community relations are typically not part of an educator's repertoire in publicly funded Canadian and Ontario schools and classrooms. This has been detrimental for Aboriginal students' learning and engagement in public education and has resulted in higher dropout rates, more student absenteeism, and lower enrolments in post-secondary education programs.

Additionally, the alarmingly high number of Aboriginal students who fail and become disengaged from formal schooling in northwestern Ontario has been described as deplorable for more than 40 years (see Latus & Bauman, 1980). Although some educators may understand the holistic and spiritual nature of Aboriginal worldviews and their effect on Aboriginal student learning (see Jegede & Aikenhead, 1999; Sutherland & Dennick, 2002), the international literature on the characteristics of quality educators makes the significant distinction that such understandings need to be juxtaposed with educators' own reflections of their socio-political positions as teachers and learners before they

can meaningfully act upon their knowledge. Without an understanding of Aboriginal epistemologies and of one's position as a mainstream educator, teachers and administrators in public schools cannot begin to decolonize the western-based practices that have historically marginalized Aboriginal students and communities (Howitt & Stevens, 2005; Shaw, Herman, & Dobbs, 2006).

Methodology

This research was located in three public elementary schools in northern Ontario that were identified as having a proportionately high enrolment of Aboriginal students. The schools did not all belong to the same school board. English is the language of instruction in each school. Prior to the study a senior administrator from each of the respective school boards was asked to identify K to 8 schools that were considered to be high and low functioning in terms of the culturally relevant activities and programs offered to Aboriginal students, and staff and student resources pertaining to Aboriginal languages, customs, and histories. Two high-functioning and one low-functioning schools were selected as research sites. Information sessions were hosted at each site in advance of the interviews. All Aboriginal students in each of the schools were invited to participate.

Student Participants

Sixteen students (eight female, eight male) of various Aboriginal ancestry participated in the research conversations. The students resided in different communities across a vast geographical area in northern Ontario that included Missanabie Cree, Michipicoten, Ojibway, and Anishnabai groups. The students were in grade 7 (approximately 12 and 13 years of age). The three publicly funded schools represented different school boards that spanned over 15,000 square kilometres, included 15 Aboriginal groups, educated over 20,000 students, and employed nearly 1,700 teachers. More than 3,200 students across these school boards self-identified as Aboriginal, representing 16% of the total student demographic. Permission to participate in the study was granted by the students' parents/guardians. The student-participants who were enrolled in the same school did not necessarily have the same homeroom teachers, although since they were on a rotary schedule each of the students shared the same teachers for certain subjects.

Research Conversations

Information sessions were presented at various Aboriginal community gatherings in order to inform the respective parents and community Elders. The research conversations with students were conducted in June near the conclusion of the school year (see Kanu, 2011). The interviews were semi-structured in design and included questions that were based largely on the principles and strategies of the Framework. Students were encouraged to elaborate on their responses and speak to their experiences as senior-level elementary school students. Each research conversation was audio recorded, transcribed, and returned to each student for member check. The research conversations were between 90 and 120 minutes in duration. Key excerpts from the students are included in the paper. Students are identified by pseudonyms.

Data Analysis

A grounded theory approach was best suited for this study. This qualitative design is grounded in the words of the participants (Kennedy & Lingard, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and includes the coding of basic units of analysis as a result of a line-by-line examination of transcripts (Charmaz, 2006). Coding is grouped into concepts to create initial themes and eventually core

categories; hence, the findings are grounded in the voices of the participants and not influenced by the researcher's dispositions (Cherubini, 2007). The analysis and findings were triangulated by two Elders who were not involved in the research conversations and did not reside in the jurisdiction of any of the schools. It is important to offset the data analysis with the authentic insights and cultural awareness of Elders (see Fasoli & James, 2007).

Findings

Grounded in the voices of participants are two core categories described as distinct phases of Aboriginal student discernment. The categories represent the most significant factors that distinguish high- and low-functioning schools. The first category includes Aboriginal student discernment of the influence of the various relationships they share with their teachers. The second category is distinguished by student perceptions of the extracurricular activities associated to public schooling whereby they clearly discern their social location as Aboriginal students in the broader public school culture. Further, and particularly significant, the analysis concludes that it is precisely the combination of these two factors that contribute most to students' sense of engagement in their education.

Discerning Relationships

During the research conversations the student participants from the higher- and lower-functioning schools consistently discerned the manner in which they related with their teachers and, in some cases, amongst themselves. In one of the higher-functioning schools Brad distinguished the significance of teachers who discussed Aboriginal values and traditions to complement and extend the mainstream curriculum. Brad identified with a specific teacher who was willing to "talk about" traditional knowledge like the seven grandfather teachings during the school day and appreciated opportunities to "do a lot of research about the Aboriginals [to] find out that when the white people came they took the land and they kicked [the First Nations Peoples] out." Student participants appreciated teachers who incorporated Aboriginal history as a meaningful and accurate component of the Canadian history curriculum. Students discussed how in these instances they felt represented in Canadian history.

Students from the higher- and lower-functioning schools noted that teachers who tailored curriculum and pedagogy to include culturally relevant material made an obvious contribution towards building stronger relationships with students. Fred, typical of the other students in his research conversation circle, praised teachers who are "just not teaching" and instead invest the time and energy in "getting to know you better." Fred explains that students cherish relationships in which teachers "get to know you and what you struggle with in your school work." Students appreciate teachers who are willing to better understand their individual nuances as learners and, very importantly to the findings of this study, discern those teachers who understand students' individual learning styles and personal interests and account for this in their actual practice. Even at this relatively young age (approximately 12 to 13 years old) the students discern those educators who are committed to Aboriginal student welfare and want to build relationships with them to foster Aboriginal student learning.

Student discernment of the relationships between them and their teachers in the lower-functioning school was equally profound albeit less promising. Emma, on behalf of the other students in the research conversation circle, observed that her teacher "never picks [her] to answer the question so [she is] just sitting there, kind'a not even listening." Victoria, who was sitting in the same

circle, stated that her teacher “made [her] cry before”; Matt, her classmate, added that one teacher made him cry “three times already.” These and other examples speak to students’ sense of isolation in public school classrooms where they discern that the teacher has no confidence in their aptitude and intentionally ignores their willingness to actively participate in their learning. Jack suggested that the teachers notice and relate better to students “who do their work” and as a result “kind of avoid” the Aboriginal students. There is no sense of engagement on the part of these students with either their teachers or with the provincial curriculum. Such a lack of engagement seems to take a toll on students’ insecurity. Feeling neglected amongst her peers during lessons, Victoria admitted that “some people think that I am dumb,” while Emma added that “Sometimes I just don’t even want to talk because I don’t like my teacher...he is rude.” Students in these instances choose to disengage from the learning environment.

Students’ response to this lack of relationship with their teachers and peers is essentially a complete withdrawal from the dynamics of their classrooms as they choose to stay silent rather than to converse on any level with their teachers and in some cases with their non-Aboriginal classmates. Emma and Jack commented upon teachers’ treatment of the Aboriginal students who struggle with completing their assignments. Emma stated, “[The teacher] says it [in reference to the Aboriginal student’s name] straight out to the other kids in the class. ...He actually treats [student identified by name] like he is retarded.” Jack added that the same student to whom Emma refers is treated “like garbage.” Students discern how the teacher’s tactic of public humiliation makes them feel more vulnerable, disengaged, and isolated in school. These children feel, as Emma declared, “not wanted as a student” since they do not perceive themselves as having a meaningful presence in the classroom due in large part to the absence of genuine relationships between them, their teachers, and for some, their non-Aboriginal classmates as well.

The students in the higher-functioning schools appreciate those teachers who relate to their epistemic preferences. Brad, as one example, struggles with reading and prefers oral language and activity-based learning are favoured. For him, and others like him, he favours activities that allow him to best demonstrate his learning. He readily voiced his pleasure in describing these opportunities: “Last week we built [structures] to hold up textbooks.” But even in reference to classroom activities in which he and others like him struggle, Brad noted how his teachers “always help me” because “they understand I have a hard time.” Students discern positive relationships with teachers who understand their learning styles and offer non-judgmental support. Scott, sitting in the same research conversation circle with Brad, commented on teachers who “help us right away” and are willing to assist students work through their difficulties without shouting, humiliating, or “yelling lots.” Even in the higher-functioning schools, however, students distinguish that there are teachers who are “ready to yell” when they “close the door.” Students perceive that these teachers are inclined to express their anger behind closed doors and feel that their temperament is volatile and unsteady. It is evident that for student-participants across all the research sites it is difficult to establish genuine relationships with teachers who demonstrate unpredictable behaviour.

In the other higher-functioning school, Grace and Fred expressed their appreciation of teachers who share their personal experiences during class so that students can, as Fred describes, “Get to know them.” To some extent students are comforted by teachers who share their experiences and stories. In this manner, students like Grace described “feeling comfortable” in the classroom since they can better identify with their teachers who open a space for students to share their stories and in the process foster nurturing relationships. Students discern conducive and respectful environments in

which they have relationships with their teachers and do not have to worry about being embarrassed if they offer an incorrect response.

Notably, Emma, Matt, Jack, and Julia (who all participated in the research conversations in the lower-functioning school) distinguished teachers in their school who also shared personal experiences and stories but, in these instances, the sharing often merely reinforced how little in common the non-Aboriginal teachers had with the Aboriginal students. Emma observed, “[Teacher is named] always goes on about how good his [own] kids are and how he compares us to them. He’s always talking about how well off he is...and keeps on going. I don’t care.” Learning in a context of sharing, respectful, and accountable classroom contexts in which students, as Alice shared, can “really get to know” their teachers is critical for these students. Teachers who are perceived as nurturing and helpful stand most in contrast to the ones who make students like Alice and Billy “not want to work” and feel “uncomfortable” in their classrooms and schools. Scott, and many of the other students, know that they “got to earn [teachers’] trust first” if they want to establish mutually respectful relationships with teachers, and just as significantly, discern the importance of wanting to have positive relationships with their teachers in the first place.

The authentic care for Aboriginal learners demonstrated by some teachers in the higher-functioning schools is not always the same in the lower-functioning one. According to Jack, some teachers “favour the people who do their work or are smart.” These Aboriginal students feel further isolated when the high-achieving non-Aboriginal students are regularly celebrated in classroom and school-wide events. Students discern that their relationship with the teachers is based and measured by the teacher’s perception of students’ intelligence. The non-Aboriginal and high-achieving students receive, in the eyes of the Aboriginal student participants, preferential treatment and are invited into those spaces where relationships can be nurtured with the teacher. Conversely, Emma felt “stupid...as if I am not smart enough.” Again, the toll on students’ esteem is drastic as the Aboriginal students internalize behaviour and thinking that is the result of an unhealthy classroom environment characteristic of unsustainable relationships. For Jack, Emma, Victoria, Julia, Tanner, and the others around the research conversation circle, some teachers are considered “everyone’s enemy” since they have established reputations in the school for isolating, “picking on,” and “swearing at kids.” Students readily distinguish such teachers’ lack of professionalism and care. They describe these teachers as “intimidating” because of their aggressive and forceful behaviour.

These students, as well as all the others in the respective research conversation circles, have an understanding of their learning preferences but resign themselves to failure in the absence of teacher assistance and motivation. The learning environments seem to enable this sense of resignation in students. Matt’s description of his interest in history and the teacher’s pedagogy is particularly telling: ‘History actually teaches me more about my rez and where my family comes from. But the way [teacher is named] teaches, it feels like a 5,000-hour story.’ Jack added, “[same teacher is named] does not make anything interesting. He just says, ‘Well, so and so discovered Newfoundland.’” The students are not represented in the teacher’s delivery of Canadian history since he does not account for the students’ intrinsic interest in their own Native history. Emma’s blunt conclusion is especially telling: “We are only learning about the Europeans,” and Matt added that “We have only done two pages of work on First Nations.” The teaching and learning of Aboriginal history is relegated to the margins. It silences the Aboriginal children even further and in their eyes undermines their historical identity. Most significantly, these practices are negatively internalized by the Aboriginal students and contribute to stifled and troubled relationships with their teachers.

Discerning Extracurriculars

The second phase of student discernment is highly related to the first. Emerging from the voices of students in both the higher- and lower-functioning schools was their perception of the culturally relevant extracurricular activities associated to their respective schools whereby they discern their social location as Aboriginal peoples. There were numerous references among the students attending the higher-functioning schools to pow wows hosted at the school and to opportunities for Aboriginal students, as Brad described, to participate in “drumming all the time.” Drumming, smudging, and dancing were referred to as being instrumental activities that not only showcased students’ cultural uniqueness but provided a means for Aboriginal students to meet on a social level within the public school environment. Drumming, for Aboriginal students like Brad, is self-described as being “good for me.” Students perceive the positive influence of extracurricular cultural interventions and identify how the presence of the drum fulfills a self-described void in their lives. Scott, like Brad, observed that the extracurricular activities allow for “a bunch of people getting along” since these Aboriginal students describe taking comfort in common cultural activities that lend themselves to what the students perceive as social harmony in the school. Although students described the lack of a regular presence of Elders in the school, their presence is noticed during the school pow wow when, according to Scott, the Elders and other community role models “kind of teach us what to do.” Students feel honored to learn through the example of such cultural role models within the public school environment and describe a reaffirming sense of identity as Aboriginal peoples.

The same feelings of belonging to the school community are shared by Alice, Grace, Billy, and the other students in the other higher-functioning school. Many of these students take pride in “sing[ing] and danc[ing]” and Billy described that the school regularly recognizes Aboriginal cultural traditions. Whether students sing or dance Fancy Shawl, Tradition, or Grass, they discern that all cultural activities have a place within the public school. The students who attend the school that keeps a Grandfather Drum perceive the centrality of the drum to their sense of identity and to their unique traditions. Of equal importance are the Elders and role models who themselves have a presence in the school. Students identify with them as traditional knowledge-keepers and authority figures. Grace believed that “when you see people from where you live doing great things you can relate to them.” For Fred, the outcome is to “get inspired.” Aboriginal students see themselves reflected in positive endeavours that they associate to both their local and school communities.

The students from the lower-functioning school also discussed the extracurricular activities offered at the school; however, these events had a dubious discernment on their location as Aboriginal peoples. Jack and Matt referred to dancers at one assembly “that came to our school [but the students] forgot” why the dancers were even present. The students recollected feeling “pretty cool” during the singing and dancing performance, and Emma described the event as being “different” to the mainstream practices. Jack enjoys the pow wows at the school but regretted that they occur only “every once in a while.” The extracurricular events, according to the student participants, are scheduled sporadically and seem to be offered as isolated activities. The students discern a genuine distinction between mainstream and Aboriginal socio-cultural representations in their classrooms and schools. The lack of Aboriginal representation, according to the students, embeds them in a location of difference and affirms the socio-cultural divide between traditions. For these students, having school-wide participation in a pow wow is an opportunity for their

mainstream peers to experience Aboriginal traditions. As Jack stated, when the entire school population “experiences the history and some of the dances” it informs their current realities through historical tradition. Students are intrigued by their values and worldviews as Aboriginal peoples but discern how these interests are stifled in public school practices, curriculum, and teachers’ pedagogy. Students lament the fact that there were no special events to honor their traditions over the course of an entire school year. They perceive the teachers as not wanting to be bothered to recognize their cultural uniqueness.

The lack of representation of their uniqueness as Aboriginal peoples is compounded by the fact that none of the students could remember a time when there was an Elder or Chief in the school. Conversely, several of them shared examples of students “saying something in Ojibway” and being told by their teachers to stop “being silly [and] be quiet.” Grounded in the students’ voices are perceptions of extracurricular activities that discern their social locations as Aboriginal peoples to the proverbial margins of their public school.

Discussion

The core categories that emerged from the voices of the participants point to two profound phases of Aboriginal student discernment. Grounded in the first category were student perceptions of the nature of the relationships they had with their teachers; the second category consisted of their perceptions regarding the extracurricular activities at their schools that contributed towards the discernment of their social location as Aboriginal peoples.

Students spoke candidly about how teachers’ pedagogical underpinnings influenced their relationships with Aboriginal students. The non-Aboriginal teachers who demonstrated a willingness to learn about Aboriginal students’ proficiencies, interests, and learning preferences were perceived as being dedicated to students’ welfare. This is in line with the OME (2007) policy Framework that brings to light the significance of teachers demonstrating an awareness about Aboriginal learning styles, cultures, and perspectives. The Framework identifies the need for teachers to deliver programs that best facilitate Aboriginal student learning. These teachers, according to the student-participants, not only accepted the epistemic differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students but also invited their unique socio-cultural worldviews into the public school classroom and hallways. The school, and especially the classroom, became spaces that teachers were willing to mobilize in order to support the dormant and often marginalized narratives of Aboriginal students.

In terms of Aboriginal peoples’ educational traditions, such a nurturing context complements the same personal relationships between teachers and students that Hampton (1988) and others suggest is integral to student engagement. Students appreciated teachers who delivered mainstream curriculum that at certain times drew upon culturally relevant facts to highlight the local histories of Aboriginal peoples. Here too it seems that the teachers’ response to the OME (2007) Framework is quite favourable. The provincial policy calls upon teachers to be sensitive to a curriculum that facilitates student learning while implementing pedagogical practices that increase Aboriginal student participation. In light of the Framework, some teachers are implementing meaningful Aboriginal cultural perspectives and activities into their pedagogical practice. By virtue of teachers’ actions, as well as their efforts to share their own life experiences, the Aboriginal students discerned more fluid and personal relationships with teachers. As Bishop et al. (2009) suggest, learning contexts that are characteristic of shared power and non-dominating relationships contribute to Aboriginal student engagement. Students distinguished those teachers who adopted different ways to engage them in

dialogue, knowledge-acquisition, and social constructions where they had a space to share their stories.

The student participants in the lower-functioning school perceived a much different understanding of relationship with their schooling and teachers. The standardized provincial curriculum, for these students, represented the Eurocentric Canadian narrative. In these contexts students perceived their teachers as unwilling to examine the limitations of such historical accounts and to embed Aboriginal cultural perspectives in the curriculum. Similarly, teachers' pedagogy was often perceived by students as rigid. The Aboriginal students perceived that their teachers were not tolerant of their differences, were often unsympathetic to their realities, and did not have the same high expectations related to achievement that they overtly demonstrated for some non-Aboriginal students.

One of the strategies of the OME (2007) Framework is for educators to adopt a holistic and integrated approach to bettering Aboriginal student success in public schools. According to the students in the lower-functioning schools, their teachers and schools did not hold them accountable to the same measures of achievement as their non-Aboriginal peers. Moreover, the teachers did not implement best practices to assist Aboriginal students, as the Framework recommends. Since the student-participants could not reconcile the tension they perceived in curriculum and pedagogy, they discerned troubled relationships that they had with some of their teachers. Their feelings of isolation and alienation as marginalized students were not consoled by enduring relationships with teachers; rather, they perceived that their difference was both very consequential and detrimental to their teachers.

In numerous testimonies Aboriginal students shared how they experienced an impoverished sense of self-esteem in the absence of nurturing relationships with their teachers. This seems to be a far cry from the principles and strategies of the Framework that includes "nurturing academic environments," "a sense of belonging to both Aboriginal and wider communities," and "the implementation of education programs and services designed to meet the specific needs of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students" (OME, 2007, p. 8). In various instances the teachers and schools seem relatively unresponsive to the OME's goals for improving Aboriginal students' outcomes and experiences in public schools. By discerning contentious relationships with their teachers and its effect on their sense of self-worth, the perceptions of these Aboriginal students are characteristic of resistance, struggle, and disengagement from formal education as opposed to the perceptions of those students in the higher-functioning schools whose discernment of their relationships with teachers embodied stories of agency, negotiation, and academic success.

Also grounded in the Aboriginal students' voices were perceptions about the extracurricular activities that contributed to their discernment of their social location in the public schools. Students in the higher functioning schools spoke readily about the culturally relevant activities offered as extensions of school programming that provided varied opportunities for them to honor and celebrate their traditions and worldviews. These opportunities provided a means for Aboriginal students to define their unique identities across the broader school community. These initiatives seem to be in line with the goals of the OME's (2007) Framework that call upon school boards to develop and include programs and services that support and reflect Aboriginal cultures and worldviews. Students discussed opportunities where they could shape their engagement in formal education in ways that transcend standardized provincial curriculum and western-based pedagogies. The students discussed how these opportunities contributed to their re-imagining of identity as Aboriginal peoples and

students in the physical spaces of school that did not require them to sacrifice their traditional values in order to gain such recognition.

Identity development is a key concept in the OME Framework. According to the provincial policy, the OME (2007) is committed to supporting board and school programming that “promotes the development of a positive personal and cultural identity (p. 8). By doing so, the provincial policy suggests that Aboriginal students can reach a high level of achievement. Students discerned a degree of compatibility between publicly funded provincial school values and their own epistemologies and traditions. The cultural events were symbolic of opportunities that, according to the Aboriginal student participants, bridged these two spheres that historically have existed in a state of tension to the detriment of Aboriginal student learning and achievement. These observations are reminiscent of Lomawaima and McCarty’s (2006) work that suggests that more than respect for cultural diversity is necessary in order to effectively incorporate complex understandings of difference across particular cultures (see also Ngai & Koehn, 2010).

In the case of the students attending the lower-functioning school, the sporadically scheduled culturally relevant events seemed to be at odds with the other practices of the provincial public schools. For these students, such events were far and few between. Their participation in the cultural celebrations evidently was not memorable, as students had difficulty remembering the details. In this way, the Aboriginal students discerned a fundamentally different social location than their peers attending the higher-functioning schools. Students discerned how the distinction of their socio-cultural traditions as Aboriginal peoples and learners has not taken hold on classroom and school practices. Despite the OME’s call to heighten the capacity of school boards to collaborate with Aboriginal communities to integrate the Framework into school board planning, and despite the mandate on educators to create school-community projects and initiatives that include culturally appropriate components, such interventions are not readily apparent to these students.

Students also discern that matters of identity and difference do not coexist with the values and priorities of their public schools and hence the few cultural events hosted at the school do more, according to the students, to embed a cultural divide that serves to further decentre Aboriginal students from their mainstream peers. Since the culturally relevant events are perceived as isolated occurrences, the Aboriginal students discern them as strengthening the socio-political boundaries that reflect a colonial hierarchy of priorities across the school culture. These perceptions are detrimental to Aboriginal students’ sense of engagement and ignore the fact that schools are environments that have an essential role in student development (Miller et al., 2011).

Such observations are troubling because they evoke implications of practices in residential schools whereby education was the instrument that repressed and aimed to annihilate Aboriginal students’ epistemologies and worldviews (Stewart-Harawira, 2005). The school and staff generally did not intend to create positive learning environments for Aboriginal students to facilitate their identity development either inside or outside the classroom. Rather, students perceived that their school culture was reluctant to recognize Aboriginal worldviews and to meaningfully include multiple perspectives in the socio-political culture of public education. For these students, therefore, neither they nor their communities have been supported through extracurricular activities offered at the school. For them, the opportunities to celebrate their traditions in an inclusive manner with the broader mainstream school community were not readily available or apparent. While the Aboriginal students at times distinguished a vibrant school culture, they were open and frank in identifying that their worldviews as Aboriginal peoples and learners were typically not embedded in the social fabric of the school. The students, in these unrecognized social and epistemic spaces, did not feel successful

or valued in their school. Hence, they attested to feeling disengaged from formal education—a historical trend that has been dangerously predictive across the province, country, and elsewhere.

Conclusion

The two phases of Aboriginal student discernment grounded in the voices of participants contribute a significant response to the guiding question regarding the distinctions between high- and low-functioning elementary schools in northern Ontario in terms of their response to the principles and objectives of the OME (2007) policy Framework. Clearly, Aboriginal students discern that their educational experiences, relationships with teachers, and engagement in culturally relevant events are enhanced by school cultures that embrace their epistemic traditions and worldviews. These students are undoubtedly influenced by teachers who advocate for Aboriginal student interest and have high expectations for them. Schools that directly engage in policy implementation are distinguished by their attempt to build a cohesiveness between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. Teachers at these schools are marked by their willingness to function in a relational context with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students and align components of their pedagogy to Aboriginal students' preferences. The school cultures, in turn, reflect a clear path to the alignment of these efforts by adopting good practices as described by the policy Framework.

Conversely, teacher behaviours more characteristic of the lower-functioning school seemed to simply reinforce existing social, epistemic, and political stratification across the school cultures. According to the Aboriginal students, these teachers were not responsive to their learning and social needs. Students attested not only to uncomfortable learning environments but also to relationships with teachers that were detrimental to their self-esteem. Relative to the goals of the OME (2007) Framework, these schools did not provide cultures that honored Aboriginal student worldviews, nor did they collaborate with Aboriginal parents and communities in terms of culturally relevant programs. The result of a lack of policy response, thus, is the creation of an underclass of lower achieving and disengaged students—precisely the realities that the OME Framework intended to change.

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Teaching Wireless Communication Basics: Inductive Methods with Their Assessment and Evaluation

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Abstract

Learning wireless communication fundamentals by engineering students is often faced with the difficulty of relating theory to real-world practice. In this paper, we address the use of inductive teaching methods in wireless communication education for undergrad students in UAE University.

We offer a design of a series of collaborative laboratory and fieldwork tasks that can be integrated with the typical material of a course about wireless communication fundamentals. In addition, the paper outlines some low-cost and ultra-portable wireless communication devices that can be used in performing these tasks. The proposed design of the field and lab tasks follows a discovery-based learning approach that allows the students to discover wireless channel effects on transmitted signals before the relevant theory is presented to them in regular lectures. Moreover, the analytical modelling of wireless signal path loss, which is a core topic in a typical wireless communication course curriculum, is introduced to the students following a problem-based learning approach. Based on the outcome of the proposed tasks, the students will be asked to express mathematically the amount of power lost by a wireless signal in its path to a receiver by using their background in statistics. The paper also introduces some course learning outcomes that are aligned with the proposed laboratory and field tasks. The assessment and evaluation methods of these learning outcomes are outlined.

Different from the abstract concepts introduced in textbooks, the proposed inductive teaching methods help the students to touch and feel the nature of wireless channels. Furthermore, they aim at strengthening the student ability to form a mathematical model, which is a very important research tool in the wireless communication field.

Key Words: Inductive teaching, wireless communication, engineering, education.

Introduction

Wireless communication has become one of the most used technologies in the twenty-first century. However, there are difficulties of teaching wireless communication fundamentals to undergraduate students because they often have problems understanding the theoretical abstract concepts. A typical syllabus of an introductory course in wireless communication includes some concepts about wireless signal propagation and empirical modelling of received signal level. These concepts are usually introduced in an abstract way in most of the textbooks. Moreover, empirical (analytical) modelling of practical measurements is not easy to understand without performing real experiments.

In this paper, we address the use of inductive teaching methods in wireless communication education for the undergrad students of the Communication Engineering program in UAE University. Our approach is student-centred. It is hinged on a combination of discovery-based and problem-based learning methods. Usually the effects of the different impairments of a

wireless communication channel on signal reception are often hard to imagine or to comprehend by undergrad students. Research shows that inductive teaching methods lead to a deeper student learning experience with longer retention of information than other methods (Prince & Felder, 2006).

The contributions of this paper are four-fold. First, we offer a series of collaborative laboratory and field tasks that can be seamlessly integrated into the design of a typical course about wireless communication fundamentals. The proposed design of the field and lab tasks follows a discovery-based learning approach that allows the students to discover wireless channel effects on transmitted signals before the theory is presented to them in regular lectures. Second, the analytical modelling of a wireless signal path loss is introduced to the students in a problem-based learning approach. Third, the paper presents some low-cost wireless communication devices that can be used in order to accomplish these tasks for classes with moderate or even large number of students. Fourth, the paper provides some course learning outcomes that cover the proposed lab/field tasks. The assessment and evaluation methods for the student performance of each one of these learning outcomes are also discussed.

The rest of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 introduces a background about inductive teaching technique. It particularly highlights discovery-based and problem-based learning approaches. Section 3 provides the proposed modifications to the design of an introductory course about wireless communication fundamentals. The benefits of the proposed approach are discussed in Section 4. Section 5 introduces example course learning outcomes, for the proposed field/lab tasks, with their assessment and evaluation methods. Finally, Section 6 concludes the paper.

Inductive Teaching

Prince and Felder in (Prince & Felder, 2007) and (Prince & Felder, 2006) defined inductive teaching as a teaching technique or a strategy that urges students to know on their own what is the required theory, skills and experience in order to learn a certain subject. In inductive teaching, students are given the chance to teach themselves, exert effort to discover problems, and the information they need without instructor intervention. Teachers, who use inductive teaching method, only direct students to the way they should follow in order to discover information and solution to problems (Prince & Felder, 2007) and (Prince & Felder, 2006).

Indeed, it has been found that students may become motivated when they realize that the information they learned is helpful in practice and beneficial to them in their future careers. The authors Prince & Felder, (2006; 2007) indicated that several forms are available for inductive teaching as in the following.

Inquiry-based learning: This is a generic form of inductive teaching. Basically, all other inductive teaching strategies are variants of inquiry-based learning that differ mainly in how much the instructor is engaged with the students.

Discovery-based learning: In this type of inductive teaching, students are given an exercise to be solved. However, students are required to find out how to solve the exercise themselves as no guidance or intervention from the instructor is allowed. According to Prince and Felder (2006), there is a better version of discovery learning called “guided discovery”, where course instructors may give some directions to students.

Problem-based learning: Students are requested to solve a relatively large, but practical problem in groups. They should solve the it themselves by going through all the required phases such as problem formulation, exploring solution techniques, and identifying solution limitations. They

should also figure out the background knowledge required to solve the problem themselves. Instructors can explain in lectures the required background information if it is expected to take too much time for students to gain it themselves. Alternatively, instructors can give students some hints and directions on where they can find the required information (Prince & Felder, 2007) and (Smith, Sheppard, Johnson, & Johnson, 2005).

Project-based learning: This kind of inductive teaching has mixed features of both inquiry-based learning and problem-based learning. Students are asked to work on a design project, which is an application to parts of the course material they have already studied. Students try to apply their practical and theoretical knowledge in order to come up with a reasonable solution to the project problem. It involves some instructor guidance since students will have already studied the necessary background information during the course lectures (Prince & Felder, 2007) (Prince & Felder, 2006).

Just-in-time teaching: This implies challenging students with a pre-lecture question that may be emailed to them. Students then send their answers to the course instructor prior to the lecture. After that, the course instructor collects students' answers, tries to identify any lack of background or the pieces of lecture material that may cause confusion to students, and then prepare for the lecture based on students' response (Prince & Felder, 2007) (Prince & Felder, 2006).

Proposed Modifications to Course Design

This section addresses the proposed modifications to the design of a typical introductory course about wireless communications. The modifications include the introduction of guided discovery-based learning as an inductive teaching tool represented by a series of collaborative lab/field tasks. Moreover, we exploit another inductive teaching tool (problem-based learning) for introducing the Path Loss Modelling topic, which is usually offered by textbooks in an abstract manner. The section also provides some hardware equipment that can be purchased with an affordable budget to fit a class with a reasonable number of students.

Collaborative Lab/Field Tasks

The proposed tasks require collaborative effort from the students in the class. The students should be divided into groups with a maximum of 3 students in each group. Each task (experiment) should start with preparing a given setup.

Each group of students will be given a router, a WiFi adapter, a measuring tape, and a Linux Ubuntu (Ubuntu, 2015) installed as a Live CD option. A smartphone with a global positioning system (GPS) should be available with at least one student in each group. The router is considered to be the sender. The WiFi adapter is the receiver that measures the received power, i.e., the received signal strength indicator (RSSI) value. Each group of students should use their own laptop.

Students should be informed about the indoor and outdoor areas where the measurements are to be taken. There are some common steps of the setup that should be followed and documented before the measurements can be taken as in the sequel. First, students should measure the received power at least 10 times for some distance between the sender and the receiver. The students should also be instructed to take the measurements at different locations inside a room (or outdoors) in order to take shadowing effects into account. Second, the power should be measured over a distance range of 1 to 10 meters with a step of 1 m for indoor measurements. For the outdoor measurements, the distance range should be chosen differently in order to reach greater distances.

Lab tasks should be done to cover both line-of-sight LOS and non-LOS cases. LOS means there is a virtual straight line connecting the sender and the receiver without any obstacles intersecting it. On the other hand, non-LOS implies that the line passes through one or more obstacles such as computers, monitors, tables, and chairs in an indoor environment. One of the lab tasks is dedicated to address mobility effects on power measurements. The LOS field tasks, Non-LOS field tasks, outdoor field tasks, and mobility tasks are listed in the following experiments. The steps for each task are grouped into three main phases, namely, Setup, Measurements, and Observations.

Task 1: LOS Scenario Investigation

The main objective of this task is to measure the received signal power at different locations of the transmitters and receivers and different transmitter-receiver distances in an LOS setting. The experiment also aims at getting the students acquainted with the setup and the measurement procedure. In addition, they are expected to observe the effect of shadowing on the RSSI values for different locations. Students should provide their results in a table documenting the outcome of each time the experiment is performed, which includes the power received at each transmitter-receiver distance (from 1 to 10 meters).

Setup:

- Run Ubuntu Linux as a Live CD on your laptop.
- Connect the WiFi adapter to the pre-configured access point name broadcasted by the router

Measurements:

- Select two locations for the receiver and the transmitter. Make sure there are no obstacles in between.
- By using the measuring tape, determine the distance separating the router and the laptop then record it in a table.
- Measure and record the received power after staying stationary for few seconds to avoid fast fading effects.
- Repeat the measurements 10 times with the same separation distance but in different locations and record the results each time.

Observations:

After finishing the experiment, observe the variation in the RSSI values at one distance and explain what could be the reason behind it.

Task 2: Non-LOS Scenario Investigation

The same setup steps in Task 1 should be followed. The main differences lie mainly in the Measurements and Observations phases as indicated below. The objective of this task is to let students observe the effect of shadowing in non-LOS communication.

Measurements:

- Use the measuring tape and/or the Pythagorean theorem to measure/calculate the distance between a router and a laptop then record the measured distance.
- Make sure that there are some obstacles in between the router and the laptop. The variation of obstacles results in more accurate path loss measurements.
- Measure and record the received power after staying stationary for a few seconds to avoid the fast fading effects.
- Repeat the measurements 10 times, with the same router-laptop separation distance, but in different locations, and record the results.

Observations:

- Observe the variation in the RSSI values at one distance and try to explain the reason behind it.
- Observe the difference between the LOS and the non-LOS RSSI values and try to explain the reason behind it.

Task 3: Outdoor Scenario Examination

The same setup steps, which are mentioned in Task 1 and 2, should be followed.

Measurements:

- Use GPS coordinates obtained from a GPS-enabled smart phones to measure/calculate the distance between a router and a laptop then record the measured distance.
- First make sure there is an LOS between the transmitter and the receiver. Do the measurements the same way as in Task 1.
- Repeat the measurements with some obstacles in between the router and the laptop as in Task 2. The type of obstacles should cover both metal and non-metal objects.
- Measure and record the received power the same way as in Task 2.

Observations:

- Observe the variation in the RSSI values and the difference between the LOS and the non-LOS RSSI values. Explain the reason for this difference.

Task 4: Mobility Scenario Exploration

The objective of this experiment is to let the students experience the effect of mobility on received signal power. This setup requires one extra piece of equipment (robot) to hold one of the transceivers and move it around the area where the task is performed. A configured moderate speed robot should be available to each group of students.

Setup:

- Make sure that the robot is programmed to move correctly over a predetermined path. The path should make the distance between the laptop and the robot fixed.
- Run Ubuntu Linux as a Live CD on the laptop.
- Fix the wireless router over the robot firmly.
- Connect the laptop to the access point broadcasted by the router.

Measurements:

- Make sure the robots do not stay in the same place while measuring the power.
- Make sure there are no obstacles between the wireless router and the laptop for LOS measurements.
- Leave the robots running long enough to take about 10 RSSI measurements.
- Change the distance between the router and the laptop, record the new distance in a table until the whole range of distances is covered.

Observations:

- Observe the variation in the RSSI values at one distance and try to explain the reason behind it.
- Observe the difference between the results of Task 1 and Task 4 results then write down your observations.

Problem-based Teaching Method for Path Loss Modelling

After finishing all the lab/field tasks, the students are expected to find the solution of a given problem. The problem asks the students to express mathematically the amount of power that a wireless signal loses in its path to a receiver (path loss) based on their lab/field measurements and by using their background in statistics.

Consequently, the students should be introduced to the theoretical background that is required to solve the problem. The theoretical background includes the following path loss equation (Rappaport, 2002)

$$PL(d)(dB) = \overline{PL}(d_0) + 10 * n * \log\left(\frac{d}{d_0}\right) + X_\sigma$$

The terms of the above equations are commonly described in most of the textbooks as in the following. The path loss exponent n describes how quickly the path loss increases, d_0 is the close-in reference distance, d is the separation between transceivers, X_σ is the standard deviation for a zero mean Gaussian random variable with a standard deviation of σ , and $PL(d)$ is the path loss at distance d in decibels (Rappaport, 2002).

In a regular deductive teaching approach, the majority of the students are usually not able to follow why the above equation is represented with the variables n and X_σ , which is different from the fairly simple free space equation. In our proposed teaching approach, students have to compare the path loss measurements they have done in Section 3.1 with the above equation. It should be emphasized that the calculated $PL(d)$ at distance d does not always equal the measured one. Based on the collected measurements, students should be able to discover for themselves the reason behind having a random component in the above equation. The solution to the problem requires finding the variables n and the standard deviation σ . The students should use the background that they acquired from previous statistics courses to be able to estimate the values of the two variables, and hence estimate analytically the path loss model. After that, the students should compare their findings for n and σ with the corresponding values in their textbooks and other sources from the literature. They should also comment on any discrepancy that may be found.

As a supplementary assignment, the students will be asked to investigate the current techniques that are used in the literature to mitigate wireless channel impairments. They should also mention some practical examples for commercial products that use these techniques.

Low-Cost Hardware for Lab/Field Tasks



Figure 1: A spectrum analyzer and a vector generator

Many transceivers can be used in our proposed lab/field tasks. Some of these transceivers provide a high degree of accuracy, whereas others are more affordable in terms of their cost. For instance, a vector signal generator and a portable spectrum analyser as depicted in Figure 1, can be used to perform all the proposed lab/field tasks. They provide highly accurate results. However, the configuration of a setup that includes this equipment is not straightforward. Moreover, it is very expensive to purchase more than one unit of each one of them. For

educational purposes, high accuracy may not be required since the results, which are obtained with moderate accuracy, are sufficient to correctly represent the concepts under consideration.



Figure 2: A WiFi adapter and a wireless router

Given the relatively large number of students who usually register in wireless communication courses, we propose using a wireless router and a WiFi (IEEE802.11, 2012) adapter for educational purposes due to their availability, easy setup, and configuration.



Figure 3: A Zigbee gateway and a TelosB mote.

In fact, ZigBee (IEEE802.15.4, 2003) transceivers and gateways, as shown in Figure 3, can also be used. They measure the RSSI directly and easily. They are normally inexpensive with a price range that is between 25 and 50 US Dollars per unit. Figure 3 also shows a TelsoB mote (TelosB, 2015). TelosB motes represent a viable option as they are able to measure RSSI values directly, however, they are a bit more expensive. Their price range is from 100 to 150 US Dollars each.

Benefits of the Proposed Inductive Methods

One of the main objectives of the introduction of the proposed inductive teaching approach is to help the students to touch and feel the nature of wireless communication channels and the impairments they may have. Field experiments often surprise the students with some results that need unintuitive explanation. Moreover, the students can be exposed to the physics of wireless signal propagation and the effect of different types of obstacles on the received signal level in a practical way. In addition, it helps students to understand typical empirical channel models that are usually introduced as an abstract theoretical part in most of wireless communication textbooks.

Furthermore, the proposed inductive teaching approach allows the students to practically exercise the concepts they learn in statistics courses. This leads to strengthening their ability to form a mathematical model describing some random phenomena, which is a very important research tool in the wireless communication field. Thus, the proposed approach provides a smooth transition between the stage of acquiring the basic knowledge, during the undergraduate education, to the next stage of seeking deeper knowledge through scientific research.

In addition to the technical learning benefits, the proposed teaching approach has also some non-technical positive impacts. First, it helps to develop the teamwork spirit among the students since they have to conduct the lab/field tasks together in groups and also to collaborate in order to solve the path loss modelling problem. Second, it promotes information sharing, in addition to knowledge and findings exchange among students. Third, it helps to enhance time management

skills of the students as they are required to take a sufficient number of measurements within the allotted time of each lab/field task.

Assessment and Evaluation of Learning Outcomes

This section addresses how student performance can be assessed and evaluated for the inductive teaching tools outlined in Section 3.

The student performance assessment needs clearly defined student learning outcomes. Therefore, the original course learning outcomes (CLOs) should be amended by the outcomes described in the sequel in order to reflect the additional student knowledge gain.

For the lab/field tasks, the following learning outcomes apply by the end of the course:

- CLO1: The students should be able to identify different propagation phenomena of wireless signals.
- CLO2: The students should be able to recognize the practical effect of mobility on wireless signal transmission.

For path loss modeling, the learning outcomes, by the end of the course, are as follows:

- CLO3: The students should be able to model the wireless path loss based on lab/field measurements.
- CLO4: The students should be able to design a wireless link taking into account the path loss model for this link.

The assessment tools that can be used to evaluate the student performance for these course outcomes are mainly the observation reports of field/lab tasks and the path loss modeling report. It is recommended that the observation reports are designed to reflect the outcomes mentioned above so they can be easily evaluated.

For instance, the observation report of Task 2 may contain the following questions:

- Q1. Find the mean RSSI values measured over different transmitter-receiver distances.
- Q2. Draw a graph showing the variation of the mean RSSI values versus transmitter-receiver distance. Comment on the trend of the curve.
- Q3. Find the mean, maximum, and the minimum value of the RSSI you measured at the same transmitter-receiver distance.
- Q4. Relate the variation of the RSSI to the obstacle material (i.e., concrete wall, metal...etc.).
- Q5. Compare the mean, maximum, and minimum RSSI values obtained over some transmitter-receiver distance in a non-LOS setting with their counterparts in an LOS setup.
- Q6. Explain the difference between LOS and non-LOS propagation characteristics.

Questions 2, 4, and 6 above shall contribute to the observation report grade with higher mark weights than the other questions. The grades of the observation reports of Task 1, Task 2, and Task 3 shall be used to evaluate the student performance of CLO1. In the literature, there are different approaches to measure the student performance of the course outcomes mentioned above (Lang & Gurocak, 2008) (Hill & Meyer, 2007). In our approach (Lang & Gurocak, 2008), each percentage of the total grade is given a performance level. For example, grades above 80% is given level 1, which implies meeting the course outcome with outstanding performance. Level 2 is assigned to grades above 70% but below 80%, which indicates exceeding the expectation of meeting the outcome. Level 3 implies a satisfactory meeting of the learning expectations of the course outcome. Level 3 is assigned the grades above 65% but below 70%. Level 4 implies a minimal meeting of the learning expectations. Level 4 is assigned to the grades above 60% but below 65%, whereas Level 5 is assigned to the grades below 60%. The students who get grades less than 60% (Level 5) are not meeting the learning expectations. The quantitative average

performance level for each CLO shall be calculated. The course instructor is encouraged to set a target performance level that reflects his self-perception about student performance for each CLO. The instructor also shall conduct a survey among students that aims at measuring their self-perception about what they learned from the lab/field tasks and the path loss modeling problem.

Finally, a comparison should be conducted between quantitative average, faculty self-perception, and student self-perception results. If the student self-perception results are higher than the quantitative average, this may imply that the students overestimate their level of achievement. On the other hand, if the quantitative average is below the instructor target, actions for improvement the implementation of the inductive methods should be carried out.

Conclusion

In this paper, we introduce an inductive approach to teaching wireless communication fundamentals to undergraduate students. We exploit inductive teaching methods in order to transfer the usually hard-to-comprehend abstract wireless communication concepts into an exciting practical experience. We offer a series of lab/field tasks that can be easily integrated into the design of a basic course about wireless communication fundamentals. The design of the lab/field tasks follows a discovery-based learning approach that encourages the students to discover by themselves the phenomena accompanying wireless signal propagation. Moreover, we propose using a problem-based learning approach to introduce one of the core topics in wireless communication courses, namely, path loss modelling. The proposed problem-based learning aims at strengthening the mathematical modeling skill for the undergraduate students, which is an essential skill for scientific research in the wireless communication field and electrical engineering in general. Furthermore, we present some inexpensive lab equipment that can be used in the proposed lab/field tasks for classes with moderate or even large number of students. The paper also introduces some course learning outcomes that are aligned with the proposed inductive teaching methods. In addition, the assessment and evaluation of these course outcomes are presented.

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The Role of a Gender-Based History-Writing of Education in the Preparation for Social and Civic Competence

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Abstract

Out of the eight key competences that have been accepted by the European Union in 2006 one is social and civic competence, which is an individuals' ability to participate actively in the formation of society and to organize the macro- and micro-society in their immediate surroundings. A significant aspect of civics is history, and within that, the results of the history of education, which show and stress the individual's active social involvement based on the accomplishments of the past. But one should not forget those social groups, which – for various reasons – have been left out of the history-writing of education, such as women, Roma people, and individuals living with disabilities. A history writing of education based on gender takes these marginalized groups into consideration on the one hand, while on the other, it also problematizes the process by which exclusion happens.

In my paper – primarily relying on the English sources of a gender-based history-writing of education – with the aid of content analysis, I explore the ways in which gender appears in Hungarian history-writing of education, how the various authors discuss the histories of different social groups and the kind of “alternative” histories that are created.

A gender-based, history-writing of education can contribute to raising people's awareness to the fact, that gender roles are socially constructed, that one's rigid and fixed expectations towards gender roles narrow their prospects (and not only in education), and define their lives. An equitable education would mean that everyone, regardless of their social definiteness, has access to resources without limitations, and everyone can actively participate in the life of society; and in order to do so, they would receive sufficient and appropriate examples during their time spent in educational institutions.

Key words: Gender, history, social competence, education

Background

Nowadays practically every EU level policy acknowledges the importance of supporting active democratic citizenship (Eurydice, 2012). One of the aims of the European Council in Lisbon in 2000 was to create a European framework system, which could define for every individual the new basic skills based on lifelong learning in a knowledge-based society. The Lisbon Strategy emphasized the importance of key competences owned by the individual in establishing social cohesion, economic development, competitiveness and welfare. (Hoskins et al., 2008., Halász-Michel, 2011) It is also due to the Lisbon Strategy that the concept of active citizenship entered the vocabulary of EU documents and policies. Within the frame of the Strategy active citizenship meant that the individual is prepared to make their voice heard in the community, and that they

are able to interpret the relationship between the individual and the community, understand the different cultures and opinions and accept equality and democracy as values. Later, the original definition was followed by a number of different interpretations coming from various points of view, in which rights and responsibilities were primarily emphasized, which was later supplemented with the concept of participatory democracy. (Hoskins et al., 2008)

The Education and Training 2010 strategic frame program, which was accepted as part of the Lisbon Strategy, proposed three aims: improving the quality and efficiency of educational and training systems, provide accessibility to every individual, and make education accessible in the whole world. The requirement that accessibility should be provided includes active civil existence, supporting equal opportunities and social cohesion, in which the individual learns how to participate actively and responsibly in the society that surrounds him or her, and how to support minority groups in practicing their rights and making their points of view visible. The frame program – not only in this area – thinks of education and training as a strategic field. In this interpretation, education and training can be understood as a tool in the hands of society, by which society can be formed, so for example, the individual can learn that discrimination based on any identity component (skin colour, gender etc.) is not an acceptable social practice.

The Education and Training 2020 strategic framework reinforces in its aims the importance of the so-called cross-curriculum competences: lifelong learning and mobility, social cohesion and active citizenship, creativity, innovation and supporting enterprises. (Halász-Michel, 2011) One of its aims is “promoting fairness, social cohesion and active civic involvement”, in which the role of education and training is to enable every citizen to “acquire, update and develop skills and competences required for employability, and it should also facilitate further learning, active civil involvement and creating a dialogue between cultures.”¹

Thinking about competences necessary for a knowledge-based society had already started in the 1990s in the activities of international organizations dealing with education. The OECD emphasized on many forums and in studies that redefining the content of education is necessary in order to allow every citizen to learn the basics required for prosperity in a 21st century society. These were mostly proposed in the form of new knowledge, competences and values. The need rightfully emerged for proposing general skills, whose basic knowledge can help the individual participate effectively and successfully in a knowledge-based society, and so help society itself run successfully. In the 2000s, OECD started the PISA tests in which they measured in 15-year-olds how well they acquired the competences necessary for their later lives, successful employment and active citizenship. During the tests they measured both those skills learned within and those learned outside the school system in real-life situations (Halász-Michel, 2011) and sought answers to the question of what kind of qualities and knowledge does a young person need nowadays in order to operate effectively in society. In other words, education and learning must prepare young people to enable them to motivate and manage their own learning throughout their lives. (Kerr, 2008)

¹ Council Conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020) [Official Journal C 119 of 28.5.2009].

Strategic Objectives:

1. making lifelong learning and mobility a reality
2. improving the quality and efficiency of education and training
3. promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship
4. enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training

The 2006 recommendation of the European Parliament and the European Council on the common European reference framework for the key competences² – based on the context of the time – proposed eight key competences which ensure that the individual is capable of adapting to continuous changes, and which everyone needs for self-realization, development, active citizenship, social inclusion and employment. That is, the key competences might be the means to prosper in a knowledge-based society, and their acquisition – according to the recommendation – is primarily connected to formal education. One of the eight key competences is social and civic competence, from which social competence is the one that really focuses on the issues in my present study. According to the document: „Social competence refers to personal, interpersonal and intercultural competence and all forms of behaviour that equip individuals to participate in an effective and constructive way in social and working life. It is connected to personal and social well-being. An understanding of codes of conduct and customs in the different environments in which individuals operate is essential. Civic competence, and particularly knowledge of social and political concepts and structures (democracy, justice, equality, citizenship and civil rights), equips individuals to engage in democratic participation actively in the society. This includes for example that the individual thinks about equality between the genders in a responsible manner, knows about the relationship between individuals and society, knows about and understands the multicultural and social-economic dimensions of European societies. It also includes the individual's ability to communicate effectively in different environments. Furthermore, they are tolerant, they accept and understand the various points of view, they are empathetic and sympathetic. All of the above can only be realized if the individual respects diversity, respects others, and is prepared to fight prejudice. Civic competence includes the individual's effective cooperation with others and their solidarity regarding the problems of the community that surrounds them. This would be inconceivable without the individual's acceptance of equity as a value and without their respect for different social groups. Active participation means that the individual supports social diversity, cohesion and sustainable development, and respects the private life and values of others.

It is clear that since the 2000s, education and training has been more and more conceived as a strategic field in the documents of the Union and OECD, in the recommendations and in the policies. This means a kind of education and training which satisfies the current needs of the individual and the society; one which is fair, which means that it provides access to everyone, and offers extra support to those social groups, who, due to some disadvantages, would otherwise be excluded from it. Education is positively connected with the construction and maintenance of active citizenship competences and that higher education has the greatest effect. (Hoskins et al., 2008) As the previously mentioned EU documents propose, the literature also stresses that education is a strategic tool and area in a democratic society and in creating social cohesion, and as part of it, in training young people to become active citizens. The most efficient form of learning about participating as active citizens is the so called situational learning/learning embedded in a situation/understanding connected to a situation/situated learning, in which we create a learning environment that is most appropriate for the context (for example volunteerism). (Hoskins et al., 2012a)

One of the elements of creating knowledge which is the basis of critical active citizenship is realizing the components that exclusion from society is based on, and how exclusion happens. This is possible if students come into contact with stories about minority groups from the point of view of the minority groups themselves during formal education. The most recent research of Korostelina (2013) investigates the role history-writing has on identity formation, how it can help

² For the conceptual definition of competences and key competences see: Halász-Michel, 2011.

mitigate conflicts and – with the constant revision of the curriculum – how it can create the culture of peace.

Learning history and getting to know the histories of different social groups is a tool that can change the dynamics of identity-based conflicts, it can reduce negative perception, and facilitate an understanding between different or even opposing groups. When teaching history, there is a possibility to question stereotypes and prejudices with the aid of different stories, as well as to come up with alternative interpretations and to represent multi-perspective points of view. This means that learning history plays a key role in forming social identity. Teaching history supports social cohesion on the one hand, with the curriculum, which can help us understand which social groups were excluded from the current group identity and the reason behind it, and on the other hand, it can contribute to the reformation of identities. History books which connect contemporary events, policies and decisions with events of the past operate as similar tools, and with the aid of this technique they can problematize concepts such as equality, or human rights. For this very reason, history teaching – based on examples – instead of stressing differences and opposition is capable of presenting diversity as a value, which relies on tolerance, solidarity and collective welfare and prosperity. The discussed examples and historical narratives support critical thinking, reflexion on identity, power and dominant positions as well as the core principles of mutuality and cooperation. (Korostelina, 2013)

In order to make the histories of different minorities and social groups that have been left out of mainstream history-narratives accessible in formal education the primary necessity is to know the histories of these groups and the fact that historiography should talk about these narratives. One of the subareas of a history writing which integrates gender is the history-writing of education, in which researchers primarily seek answers to the questions of how the histories of women can be made visible for the history-writing of education, how they became the shapers of their own educational opportunities, and why or how they were subjected to multiple disadvantages in education even during the 20th century. In these histories women are not understood as a homogeneous category but, in addition to the gender aspect, they are understood along the lines of other identity components such as social background, ethnicity etc. The questions posed in my study are to which extent these criteria, questions and problem areas are present in the history-writing of education in contemporary Hungary. Who writes these histories and of whom are these histories written? Based on my initial suggestions, even though there are women in the history-writing of education, these researches rather “add” women’s histories to already existing ones.

One of the most frequent questions regarding the analysis of gender is how much difference can there be between gender history and women’s history. An excellent researcher of the history of education and cultural history, Ruth Watts (2005), when analyzing the 1976-2004 issues of *History of Education*³, a well-established scientific journal, pointed out that the categories of “gender” and “gender studies” are used in a considerably lax manner and often as a synonym for “women”.⁴ One of the primary reasons for this is that the border between the two is so faded that they are hard to distinguish. (Watts, 2005) Research of the last two hundred years clearly stresses the significance of gender as an analysis category. The real question is whether the increasing visibility of the gender issue contributed to changing gender-interpretations and whether it had

³ See the list of studies in: Watts, 2005b.

⁴ Goodman and Martin also analyse the articles of the *History of Education* between 1972 and 2004 with special regard to debates, topics and methodologies. They ask how much historians were capable of surpassing established academic borders. Goodman – Martin, 2004.

an effect on the whole area of knowledge.⁵ It is primarily characteristic of English-speaking areas that in addition to the effect of feminist and gender history we can clearly establish the effect of postcolonial theories on the history-writing of education, culture and andragogy. (Goodman – Martin, 2005)⁶ The effects of these theories can be observed in the continuously renewable methodology and in the choice of topics as well. Stressing interdisciplinarity, it problematizes the visibility of women, the relationship between gender and power, the connection between work and gender, the social constructedness of sexuality, the dichotomy of the public and private spheres, and the study of family, social background, and different social networks. (Watts, 2005)

Gendered Papers on History of Education in Hungarian Pedagogical Journals

In my research I analyse the four decisive Hungarian journals of the field of education, concentrating on the time period after 2004. One can rightfully ask what changes were made in the Hungarian history-writing of education in the decade since Hungary joined the European Union and what problem areas became foregrounded. My main enquiry is whether women appear at all, if they are visible as active agents, as narrators or shapers of stories. Are there histories about women? Upon further consideration of the issue, it is worth considering how much we can discuss women as a homogeneous group and how much other identity components define how we talk about women. As quantifying the published material is not sufficient; it is also necessary to investigate whether the possibly quantifiably larger visibility necessarily means the appearance of gender-based interpretations in the field, and whether it means gender consciousness. In other words, does the greater number impact the field itself? (Watts, 2005)

The attention of Hungarian history-writing of education, culture and andragogy has turned more specifically and more strongly towards gender as an analysis category in the past few years. We can consider it a positive change that there are more and more studies and conferences where we hear about research where the point of view of gender analysis was also ‘used’. However, it is also clear that there are still specific conferences organized around the topic of gender and journals still dedicate special issues to the topic. It is a much rarer phenomenon that the analysis point of view of gender is an integrated part of conferences and journals of the history-writing of andragogy, education and culture. This, on the one hand, means that gender is included in the discourse of Hungarian history-writing of education, culture and andragogy, but on the other hand, one might ask in what form is it included. The question is, when gender is considered, do researchers reflect on the theoretical framework and methodology behind it or are these writings strictly about women?

To gain a deeper understanding of the issue I indicated the exact percentage of works published in journals dedicated to education which deal with the history-writing of education, and how many of those focus specifically on women or the two genders.⁷ I followed the methodology and steps of Watts (2005), the president of the History of Education Society at the time, who analysed from a gender point of view the articles published in the History of Education journal between 1976 and 2004. Her main question was how many articles were written in this period about the history of genders, about women, and whether the larger quantity of published articles meant a change or broadening of the field of history-writing of education. Watts found 87

⁵In her analysis Watts highlights the fact that it is not important whether in a quantified manner there were more articles published in the History of Education about women or by women, because this would only be a simplified quantitative indicator. She specifically calls attention to the fact that there are articles which are about women but do not discuss gender issues. Watts, 2005.

⁶ On the connection between the theories and feminist view points, primarily based on the approach of Margaret MacLure see: Goodman, 2003.

⁷ The title or the text itself should include the word „women”.

studies published in the 28 year interval that were about the education of women and/or used a gender-based analysis.⁸ Apart from quantifying, Watts did a qualitative content analysis as well. She pointed out that there was not only a change in the content in this period, but that the diversification of the research focus also brought theoretical and methodological reflections as well. Based on this, one can conclude that if one wants to research the histories of social groups that have been excluded from the mainstream history-writing of education, one needs to change their methodology as well. Due to the historical legacy of colonization, the post-colonial approach is markedly present in the History of Education journal along with post-structuralism. She specified minorities, geographical links and masculinity researches as areas of shortage (Watts, 2005).

As a necessity, I understood women as a homogeneous category in this research, but it is important to note that the concept of intersectionality points out the very fact that the various identity components (gender, social class, ethnicity etc.) cannot be understood alone, because they are in constant interaction with each other, creating different inequalities. (Vincze, 2012., Sebestyén, 2014)

JOURNAL	Educational Sciences	History of education	About women
Magyar Pedagógia	155	26	3
Iskolakultúra	1151	186	11
Új Pedagógiai Szemle	982	83	2
Educatio	462	48	6
TOTAL	2750	344	22

Hungarian Educational journals 2004-2013

From between 2004 and 2013, 2750 works were examined in the research, out of which 344, that is, 12% dealt with the history of education or had a history-writing of education focus. It can be concluded that the works on the history of education have a Hungarian focus and that we can rarely find works that analyse a period or issue of a broadly understood Europe; not to mention territories outside of Europe. This phenomenon might be due to the fact that the analysed journals are in Hungarian and are optimized to the Hungarian readership.⁹ Regarding the international promotion of the Hungarian results Benő Csapó emphasizes: “From the point of view of the tasks of Magyar Pedagógia, the most important question that continuously needs to be reconsidered and reinterpreted is the connection between the internationality of science and the Hungarian publications. (...) Being a member of the European Union and the creation of a European research space makes the international integration of the Hungarian history of education research inevitable.” (Csapó, 2005. 6.) Due to the particular situation of pedagogy the author explains that – even though there is a growing need for publication in foreign languages – the use of the national language is understandable since the research results are read not only by researchers but by teachers in training and occasionally by parents as well.

Based on the research, it can be concluded that gender does not appear in the history-writing of education: the works only occasionally reflect on the hierarchies and inequalities that arise from the interaction of the various identity components. This might be due to the fact that the English-speaking feminist/gender-based tradition of history-writing of education did not

⁸ This is due to the fact that Watts (2005) examined a journal that specifically deals with the history of education.

⁹ Occasionally there are works in Magyar Pedagógia (Hungarian Pedagogy) which are written in a foreign language.

become established in Hungary.¹⁰ That is, the works are not about women, their points of view, fights, nor are their notions represented. During the analysis I do not consider the general history of education articles apart from quantifying them, but primarily concentrate on those that focus on the history of women's education. However – due to the interpretative nature of qualitative content analysis – I address topics that require special attention in accordance with the categories of the research even though they do not specifically focus on gender (such as territories outside of Europe, the histories of Roma people and teaching the holocaust).

Magyar Pedagógia (Hungarian Pedagogy) is the scholarly journal of the Pedagogical Committee of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. In the examined interval, 17%, that is, 26 studies were categorized as having a (broadly understood) theme of the history of education. I found three works that, even though they do not specifically deal with the education of women, consider the different opportunities and roles of the two genders. The journal entitled *Iskolakultúra* (School-culture) was created after the change of regime in Hungary, with the primary aim of disseminating professional and scholarly knowledge¹¹. The proportion of work with an education historical theme is 16%; out of which 11 focus specifically on women, or present – and possibly centralize – the points of view of women in the analysis. It is also due to the orientation of *Iskolakultúra* that there is a relatively high number of works discussing territories outside of Europe, the history of childhood or works focusing on the theoretical and practical issues of history-writing. *Iskolakultúra* – due to its strong interdisciplinary nature – publishes a higher number of studies and articles on the history of literature, philosophy and even natural sciences. The 11 discussed works make up 6% of the studies that have a history of education focus, but gender does not appear in them. There are 47 articles regarding the history of education in *Educatio*, another interdisciplinary journal, of which there are 6 in which issues are discussed based on gender-differentiation, or discuss specifically women's issues. Out of the 83 studies that appeared in *Új Pedagógiai Szemle* (New Pedagogical Review) which discuss the history of education or history-writing, only 2 focus on the history of women's education.

Conclusion

One can justifiably ask how it is possible to prepare people for social and civic competences when there are hardly any scholarly works on the history of women's education in history-writing. The importance here is that although women make up one of the largest minority groups in the history of education, there is little knowledge of their roles and voices – not only in the Hungary but also in the international arena. This lack of knowledge has changed as a result of the growing number of research on the history of women's education, which can be closely connected to the increasing number of research on the history of women in general.

As Joan Wallach Scott (1986) pointed out in her ground-breaking study on historiography: when analysing gender, one needs a theoretical framework, otherwise the great number of good quality historical work are in vain. Even though more and more research is based on the results of gender studies, or rather, there are more that integrate the analysis category of gender, one can rarely find work either regarding the definition of gender or – based on international literature – work that sketch the related theoretical and methodological frame in the Hungarian literature. And in works on the Hungarian history of women's education these cannot be found at all.

¹⁰ Katalin Kéri pointed this out to us at the National Pedagogy Conference in 2011. Unravelling the reasons for this would require more inquiries, which go beyond the limits of this study.

¹¹ Géczi says the following: „between the scholarly and disseminating journals, it takes on the task of maintaining the communication between educators and highly qualified pedagogical professionals” (Géczi, 2005. 24.)

Obviously, there is no direct connection between new developments in a field of science and the integration of these developments into its school curriculum. Yet we still think that if the focus of scholarly works ignore minority groups, for example talks of education and training in a general way, the defining parts of the history of society will remain invisible. Based on my analysis I conclude that the history of women's education is still on the periphery in the Hungarian history-writing of education and they rather add stories to the mainstream histories of education instead of integrating and building on gender theories and methodologies.

Social and civic competence presupposes that the individual can think responsibly about the inequalities between the genders, about the relationship between the individual and society and knows and understands the multicultural and social-economic dimensions of European societies, understands and accepts the various points of view. It is the task of history-writers of education and members of the academy to – supposing that they themselves are sensitive to social issues – make the histories of marginal groups visible and continuously question the problem areas and boundaries of mainstream history-writing of education.

One might ask what social effects do those histories of women's education might have that, even though they are about women, they do not discuss repressive gender structures and do not critically interpret the dynamics of inclusion-exclusion which are realized in the field of education and training. Without a critical interpretation the very thing that could contribute to sensitizing and could strengthen the key competences of those who participate in lifelong/lifewide learning will remain invisible: questioning dominant ideologies and standing up to injustice against themselves and other social groups.

The research of Korostelina (2013) shows that learning history and getting to know different histories are especially important in learning social and civic competences. Getting to know the histories of different social groups is a tool which can help decrease social conflicts and prejudices, can effectively support mutual understanding and promote the creation of coexisting multi-perspective interpretations. It is necessary for this that we not only present histories but – for example in the case of the history of women's education – build on the basic (in this case gender) theoretical and methodological frames.

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Introducing Creative Dramatics in Tertiary ESL Education

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Abstract

The value of creative dramatics in ESL education is widely acknowledged. However, many students are unfamiliar, or uncomfortable, with the creative process. This paper proposes a curriculum design aimed at developing skills in creating narrative structures and drama. It is the thesis of this paper that, when given a strong grasp of basic narrative elements and how these elements can be applied to create narratives and dramas, students are able to pursue task-oriented creative dramatic learning projects with greater independence, efficacy, and enthusiasm.

The focus of instruction is to approach the topics of narrative and drama structurally. First, basic elements and structures are defined, followed by the identification of examples of these elements and structures as they operate within popular narratives such as fairy tales or contemporary films. Once students have a working grasp of these elements and structures, they are led through a series of exercises in applying their understanding.

Key Words: ESL; drama; tertiary; education

Introduction

The value of drama-based activities in the classroom is widely acknowledged (Maley, 1982: Way 1-9). One of the main benefits, according to most literature on the subject, is that drama activities generate a creative learning environment (Heathcote, 1984). In tertiary ESL education, drama is incorporated into curriculum in manners that vary widely from drama exercises and games in conversation classes to the ubiquitous graduation dramas that many university English programs perform each year. However, despite such a wide range of application, there is very little material available to ESL instructors on how to introduce what a drama actually is. Particularly, there is a lack of material aimed at giving instructors tools to help them guide students in the creation of original drama projects.

A common technique in ESL classes that use creative dramatic techniques is to give students a conflict or problem, and then ask them to solve the ensuing communication breakdown through dialogue: in essence, to enact a short play. The shortcoming in this sort of exercise is the lack of a clear structure to create dialogue that might give students more confidence to fully explore the dramatic situation, and thus employ a richer variety of language opportunities.

Many tertiary-level ESL programs utilize long-form dramatic projects, such as students developing an original drama for a school celebration or competition, or rehearsing and presenting a pre-written script as a graduation project. But, without an adequate understanding of dramatic structure and elements, students do not have a clear understanding of what a drama actually is, or the tools to work confidently and efficiently in creating one.

One of the goals of creative learning techniques in general, and drama in particular, is to engender a low-anxiety learning atmosphere (Pirto, 2004). In such an atmosphere, students feel more confident, participate more fully, and retain more from their lessons. Research has shown that the use of clear structures and paradigms are an important aspect of reducing anxiety and engendering a creative learning environment. This is because they set very clear guidelines for student participation (Starbuck 2006).

The goal of this paper is to outline the basic elements and narrative structure of drama in order to present educators with tools to develop a creative dramatic curriculum that can be easily taught and implemented in the tertiary ESL classroom. It is hoped that this structural approach to the teaching of creative dramatics will give students the tools necessary to empower them in the creation of original dramatic narratives for language practice and improvement. Additionally, the topics covered in this paper may also be useful for instructors leading students in situations where pre-written scripts are used in classroom settings – especially in the analysis and preparation of these scripts for performance.

This paper will present material for curriculum design through an analysis of the three main elements of a dramatic narrative (*character*, *plot*, and *setting*), and a brief outline of traditional narrative structure. It is the premise of this author, that if these concepts are clearly communicated to students, they will be able, with guidance, to prepare and present original dramatic narratives that will be beneficial for their English language improvement.

Introducing Character

The most basic element of all drama is character. Until this element is clearly defined, there can be no story. But character is much more than a name or an identity. It is the foundational generative force that drives the narrative.

When asking students to contribute ideas for characters in the creation of a drama, the responses will often be occupations (doctor, police officer, teacher), types (old woman, little boy, handsome man), or stereotypes (gangster, movie star, tycoon). These are all good starting points for the creation of character, but simply creating a list of titles or types does not really address the requirements for a drama. For, although there are certain assumed traits that we associate with various character types, titles, and occupations, what do we really know about the movie star, the police officer, or the little boy that makes them distinct and interesting as a character? Nothing really. All we know by a title or type is what might be referred to as a character's role.

The true definition of character is found in need. All characters are defined by their needs. These needs, in turn, drive characters to actions. The results or consequences of these actions generate the emotional dynamics of the drama.

Need

In order for a character to function in a drama, it must have a strong sense of purpose – a need. In fact, need is what actually determines character, and gives the notion of character its utility

in drama. For example, what actually sets the role of a police officer apart from the role of an old woman, or a tycoon, are his or her needs. In order to test this notion, simply think about a single need and apply it to all three roles. Love, for instance. It is easy to see that the need for love to be reciprocated will define the police officer, the old lady, and the tycoon more than their roles. Their distinctions are vastly diminished when the same need is applied to all three, and it is easy to imagine all three characters behaving in very similar fashion in order to achieve their need for love. Change the need to a desire for fame, and again, they are all redefined. You can continue with other needs such as power or money and find the same results. This is not to say that roles (titles, occupations, stereotypes, etc) don't have a use in determining how a character will develop – but without a clear need, they will most often remain flat and two-dimensional.

Needs can be discussed and classified in many ways. Perhaps the most well known method is Maslow's (1943) hierarchical pyramid:

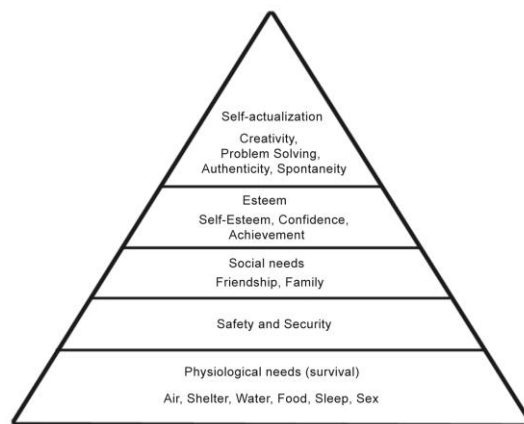


Figure 1: Maslow's Pyramid

Maslow's pyramid is a useful tool in discussing needs conceptually, however its terminology may be too abstract to be of practical use in ESL instruction, and an in-depth analysis of Maslow's theories will almost certainly hinder student engagement in a second-language classroom. Furthermore, when needs are discussed in a classroom setting, the discussions often include, or gravitate towards, material items (money, food, a new car, an ipod, etc), but Maslow's pyramid does not provide a clear context for locating material items in his hierarchy. Thus I would suggest that Maslow's pyramid, although useful, is not ideal for an initial classroom discussion of need.

I would propose that a more useful categorization of needs for the classroom would be tangible or intangible (in an ESL setting, I would suggest using the terms 'things you can touch,' and 'things you can't touch'). In this manner, all imaginable needs are covered, yet there is a simple distinction between those, which can be obtained in a physical manner and those which cannot. This categorization also gives the language learner clear distinctions wherein to locate vocabulary (physical vs. conceptual terms).

- Tangible Needs:** physical items that can be gifted, obtained, earned, purchased, won, or lost.
(e.g. money, prizes, food, property, etc)
- Intangible Needs:** emotional or rational concepts that can be felt or perceived.
(e.g. survival, safety, justice, trust, love, power, respect, etc)

The tangible/intangible categorization is a useful tool for introducing the concept of need and how it affects the development of character. For instance, in a particular exercise, the instructor could direct students to come up with only intangible needs (freedom, relaxation, respect, etc), and then pursue those needs in the development of a short improvised drama. Then, with the same groupings, the instructor could direct students to improvise another drama pursuing only tangible needs (e.g., money, food, clothing, etc). As students advance they might also play with pairing needs from both categories to develop more complex characters and scenarios.

It has been my experience (as mentioned above) that classroom discussions about need generally gravitate rather heavily towards tangible needs. It is usually only after introducing the concept of intangible need that students start to actually consider this category. However, once it is identified, it often becomes a very active part of the discussion, as well as an often-utilized category of need in classroom projects. Thus another benefit of the tangible/intangible categorization is that it seems to draw more attention to the concept of intangible needs – which might otherwise be overlooked or under-explored.

Often, a classroom drama project seems to revolve only around the need (or needs) of the central protagonist. However, it is important to communicate to students that every character has at least one need, however simple it may be, and that they must pursue it in order for their character, and the drama as a whole, to become fully developed. Even a bit character, one that enters just to tell another character a piece of information, has the need ‘to communicate’. For an example, we can take the story of Little Red Riding Hood. It is important for the drama that, just like Little Red, the other characters all have their own needs as well. The wolf must eat to survive. And perhaps his nature as a predator gives him a physical, or instinctual, need to kill. More advanced types of needs for the wolf might be a need for respect as a fearsome animal, or a need for power that he fulfills by killing. Perhaps, comically, the wolf may be lonely and seek friendship with Little Red, but this need for friendship is overcome by his hunger need. Additionally, the grandmother has several needs - even if we don't see her before she is devoured. Once she is freed from the wolf's belly she may have a need for revenge, or a need for comfort. The hunter too has needs (to save Little Red and Grandma, to display his prowess, to be a hero). The degree to which each character expresses and pursues his or her needs will help to define his or her character, and the quality of the overall drama. Once this concept is clearly understood by students, they can more actively engage in their roles as they develop the drama.

As a note on need, it should also be mentioned that a narrator is a form of character, and thus must have at least one need. The most common need for a narrator is the need to communicate to the audience. However, more complex narrators may have other needs as well (e.g. respect, power, love, money, food). It is often interesting when a narrator has complex needs that influence the manner in which he or she tells the story - perhaps even drawing the narrator into conflict with the characters in the story.

Action

Need leads to action. When you want something, you naturally take steps to obtain it. If a character is thirsty, they reach for a glass of water. If a character is in love they might approach their love interest with some form of conversation or gift. On the other hand, fear (and the need to be free from fear) might cause them to act bashfully, or run and hide from their love interest. If a character needs money they may engage in work or a task that will pay them for their labor. Or, perhaps they might steal the money. In this regard, all action in a drama can be seen as the result of pursuing a need.

Often students will say that they 'don't know what to do next' when creating a drama. Reminding them to think about their needs can help them to discover their next action. The process of action in a drama is progressive. Each action leads to a reaction, which in turn leads to another reaction, and so on until an ending is achieved. The end of dramatic action can be either the achievement of need by one or more characters (resolution, transformation), or the revelation of the inability to achieve any needs (stasis). Generally, since learning environments favor a task completion paradigm, it may be beneficial to instruct students to pursue endings that resolve as many of the needs of the characters as possible. Obviously, it will not always make sense for every character's needs to be met – but, at minimum, a situation where the main protagonist or antagonist succeeds will give students a sense of completion.

Emotion

Emotion is directly related to need, because a character experiences emotions relative to their needs being achieved or denied. A character in need of love is elated when that love is reciprocated, lost and heartbroken when not. A character in need of money is happy and relieved when it is available, desperate and anxious when it is not. This direct relationship between need and emotion can be very helpful in training students to create their own dramas. For instance, when students are unsure how to express themselves, they can simply ask themselves to what degree are their needs being met and determine an emotional response to try out.

A useful technique in classroom drama exercises is to encourage students to express themselves with what might be termed 'heightened' or exaggerated emotions. This can serve to counteract the natural human tendency to mute emotional expression in social or public circumstances. This may be because heightened emotional response is, due to its exaggerated quality, clearly not a 'real' emotional response. This in turn alleviates some of the natural anxiety around self-presentation that is inherent in dramatic situations. Students are more aware of pretending when they exaggerate, and thus, paradoxically, it is easier to engage a shy student when they are given the opportunity to overact. Once several students take the initiative to heighten their emotional responses to needs being met or thwarted, the result is rather infectious, and many students who were reluctant to participate on an emotional level engage more wholly in the activities.

A final note on Character

The notion of character should not be limited to human form. As has been demonstrated above, a character is defined not so much as by what it is, but by what it needs. Thus any animal, object, or element of nature can be expressed as a character. For instance, a cloud may need the

wind – and these two elements can be expressed as characters with dialogue and movement. A pencil could need an eraser, and thus set off on a journey whereupon it meets a ruler, a coin, and any other assortment of typical desk drawer items. Animals also make for great characters, especially since many animal traits are expressed with common verbal expressions already built into English vernacular; curiosity killed the cat, a dog is man's best friend, proud as a lion, sly as a fox, sneaky like a snake, hungry as a bear, etc. Animals, objects, and natural elements also have the beneficial quality of being so absolutely 'non human' that the risk of revealing one's actual self is less, and thus students generally feel less self-conscious when portraying these roles.

Introducing Plot

Plot is often referred to as the narrative of the drama. This is true, but not all narratives are dramatic. For a narrative to become dramatic there needs to be tension. This tension is arrived at through many avenues: disagreement, competition, envy, greed, malice, desire, curiosity, etc. At its most basic level, tension is the result of a need not being achieved, or in the process of being achieved. Thus, plot is really a term for the chronicle of the difficulties (or problems) encountered in the pursuit of need. Without difficulties, there would be no drama. For instance, if Cinderella's stepmother were a kind and fair woman, there would be no story – at least not one that would be of much interest. Thus at the heart of any truly dramatic narrative are the obstacles to needs. These problems, or difficulties, are often given the general term 'conflict'. A very popular way of categorizing conflict according to this general definition is:

Man	vs.	Man
Man	vs.	Nature
Man	vs.	Himself

This categorization is useful, but may be too general. Additionally, it seems to imply that all conflicts share the same basic nature, and differ only by the parties involved. I would suggest that a more useful way of understanding the obstacles, or problems, a character encounters in pursuit of need would be to categorize them into two basic types: *conflict*, and *complication*.

Conflict

Conflict, according to this categorization, has two major types. First, is the involvement of two or more characters in the pursuit of a single need (e.g. two men love the same woman, a group of contestants compete for a prize, two armies in combat, a political election). The second type of conflict is the involvement of two or more characters in pursuit of different, or conflicting, needs (e.g. a couple want to go to the movies – she wants to see a romance, he wants to see an action film, political parties competing in an election, etc). These conflicts can arise between any combination of individuals or groups:

Individual vs. Individual
Individual vs. Group
Group vs. Group

Complication

The second type of narrative obstacle, according to this new categorization, is complication. Complication arises when the pursuit of need (by a single character, or a group) is thwarted or

delayed by factors, either internal or external to the character(s), which do not involve the needs of any other character(s). To put it simply, a complication is a problem without a sentient adversary. Some examples of complications would be: fear, lack of physical strength, natural disasters, a timetable, etc. Complications can generally be categorized as follows:

Individual vs. Self
Individual /Group vs. Nature
Individual / Group vs. Circumstance

Understanding the distinction between conflicts and complications can lead to more focused types of group activities. For instance, in a particular class session, students could be instructed to develop short dramas involving only complications. The nature of addressing complications is such that people tend to work together to solve the problem. In this manner, the task work of each group will have a strong sense of unified purpose to overcoming the obstacle. This is a good tool for developing harmonious group dynamics. Conversely, another class session could be devoted to exploring only conflict type dramas. Here the task emphasis could be placed on resolving the conflicts. It is important to note that conflicts, by their nature, tend to develop into more argumentative situations than complications. When introducing conflicts into class work, it may be wise to give a good introduction on their volatile nature at the onset so that students are not too surprised by the types of interactions that may develop. On the other hand, it is sometimes the volatility of conflicts, and the opportunity to explore them in a safe setting, that stimulates student interaction.

Aristotle (1967), in his *Poetics*, states that complex plots make for better plays. Although not all of Aristotle's dramatic ideas have held their ground in the modern age, the notion of a complex plot being more interesting and enjoyable is still practically a truism. Perhaps the most efficient way to develop a plot's complexity is by the addition of conflict and complication. The more problems a character (or characters) encounter, the more interesting and enjoyable the drama becomes. With beginning students, it may be enough to have them deal with single conflicts or complications (or a few combined). However, as students become more advanced, they should start to play with multiple combinations of conflict and complication. In doing so, they will start to discover more elaborate and interesting plots.

As an example, we can look to the familiar story of Cinderella. Here, in what is often one of the earliest stories told to children, we find a rather complex plot. Let's first look at the characters of Cinderella and the Prince:

Cinderella's problems:

Her mother has died

Her father has married a horrible woman who treats her as a slave.

Her father seems unable / unwilling to help her.

Her step-sisters torture her.

She has no friends.

She works hard to go to the ball, but is denied.

Her dress, shoes, carriage, and coachmen will all disappear at midnight.

Her stepmother tries to hide her from the prince.
She is afraid the prince will not love her when he sees her dressed poorly.

Prince's problems

He is under pressure to pick a bride.
The woman he likes runs away.
He cannot find the woman whose foot fits the shoe.
He is fooled twice by the stepmother.

We could continue with all the other main characters: Cinderella's father's despair at losing his first wife, and his subsequent isolation from reality; the Stepmother's thwarted attempts to pass off her two daughters to the prince; the desires of the step sisters to be beautiful, popular, and rich. All of these character needs are problematic and create opportunities for complex mixtures of conflict and complication to be enacted.

Once students become aware of the benefits of increasing the complexity complications, the problem of the 'blank canvass' typically evaporates. Furthermore, the stimulation of the narrative as a result of increased complexity adds not only interest to the story, but also more individual opportunities for students to participate in the drama. Indeed, the more complex the plot becomes, the more each character has to do in order to resolve the drama. Once this attitude is adopted, the process of creating a narrative truly becomes a task-based activity.

Introducing Setting

Setting is an often overlooked or under-appreciated element in the structure of a drama. Where a drama happens is as important as what happens. Consider, for instance, the popular movie Titanic. At its most basic, it is a love story with multiple conflicts and complications. But would it be as interesting a story if the characters had simply met passing on the street? Could they have even met in that manner? In this instance, setting is crucial to the plot, and even adds an over-arching level of complication to the narrative. The setting itself is a complication. Perhaps the two most common mis-steps when creating a drama are to:

- A) Make no active decision whatsoever about the setting, and thus have no clear concept of the world in which the action takes place.
- B) Assume that the action takes place in a setting that fits too neatly to the characters, and thus results in a clichéd, or unstimulating environment.

Either of these mis-steps at the onset of creating a drama can result in many missed opportunities for dramatic enhancement.

If in the first instance (A, above) no active decision regarding setting is made, the resulting indeterminacy creates a flat and indistinct world. The opportunity for setting to play an active part in the drama is lost. This is often the case in basic drama activities when students are instructed to adopt two characters and pursue a dialogue. They have no idea where they are, and thus lose the opportunity for setting to enhance their situation. Take, for example, a student-generated dialogue between a boss and an employee. If the students make no clear choice for setting, then the drama will by default seem to happen in an indistinct 'office' or 'work' location. But if the students ask themselves particularly what sort of business is involved (e.g. shoe store, restaurant, bank, amusement park, etc), then they will have a much clearer sense of how to set their needs and pursue them. For

example, the needs of bank teller, a waitress, and a Ferris wheel operator are all quite specifically different.

In the second situation (B, above), even if students do make an active choice, they often rely on typical settings in relation to their characters. The aforementioned boss and employee are set in a shoe store, office, or restaurant (typical locations for this relationship). But if students take a further step in their understanding of setting, then whole new opportunities for dramatic development arise. Again, take the boss and the employee – but this time their setting is in a jail cell, or in a hot air balloon (perhaps one that is losing its air). These non-traditional settings give the drama specific, yet highly enhanced opportunities for development.

Non-traditional settings can also make an old story new. One need only look at the relationship of *West Side Story* to *Romeo and Juliet* to find a clear example. Here the major setting change is temporal, from pre-Renaissance Verona to modern mid-town Manhattan. The characters do not change drastically, but the opportunities for conflict and complication are opened to new possibilities. Issues such as ethnicity and class are brought to the fore.

Furthermore, setting can have an effect on more than just the theme of a drama. Once again consider *Little Red Riding Hood*. But now, instead of the familiar setting of a journey from the village into the forest (a place of danger and mystery), relocate it to a modern inner city, where the forest becomes the subway system (a place of danger and vulnerability in many cities). Now the setting enables the familiar story to be enhanced by the incorporation of new characters and problems. Even more, it encourages the transformation of characters into new forms. Perhaps the wolf is no longer an animal, but rather a menacing gangster. The hunter could be a detective on his trail. It is the same story outline, but now with new character types and many opportunities for students to discover character and plot. All this is the result of one clear choice in setting.

The power of setting to create dramatic opportunities is perhaps the most under-utilized aspect of creative dramatic exercises. If students do not make clear choices in the setting of their dramas, they will most often fall back on vague or uninteresting settings, which will cut them off from vast opportunities for character and plot development. If, on the other hand, students learn to explore alternate and non-traditional settings, there is no limit to the creative potential that they may unleash.

Introducing Narrative Structure

When viewed as a whole, the work of organizing the various needs and actions of characters into a complex narrative that builds dramatic tension seems to be a rather daunting task. But, if the work of creating a narrative is broken down into its constituent stages, it becomes much more manageable. This is the key notion to communicate to students at the onset of a creative dramatic project.

The traditional narrative structure of drama is rather simple and easy to communicate to students. This is because they encounter it on a regular basis. For, although most modern students do not attend the theatre or read plays, this structure is evident in most modern movies and television dramas. However, despite their familiarity with traditional dramatic structure, many students are unclear on how to identify and analyze the various stages in a dramatic narrative. Fortunately, once given a clear structural outline, and provided with simple terminology for these stages, most students are able to easily understand and discuss these stages.

In the late part of the 19th century, German novelist and playwright Gustav Freytag outlined five stages of dramatic progression that have become the basis for much of our modern understanding and analysis of dramatic structure (Freytag, 1900). Freytag termed these stages *Exposition*, *Rising Action*, *Crisis*, *Falling Action*, and *Dénouement*. These stages can be briefly defined as follows:

Exposition – the introduction of the characters and setting of the scene.

Rising Action – the introduction of the conflicts or complications.

Crisis – the point of no return, the moment of choice.

Falling Action – the final or major confrontation.

Dénouement – the resolution of the action of the drama.

This five-stage structural delineation is very applicable to classic and early modern theatre styles, and has a strong relationship to many modern dramas, but the terminology and the fine distinctions between the stages could be alienating in an ESL classroom setting. For the purpose of clearly communicating the key elemental stages, I would suggest using a simplified four-stage structure incorporating the terms *Introduction*, *Action*, *Crisis*, and *Resolution*. Below, I will outline each of these stages in a manner that may be useful in an ESL classroom setting.

Introduction

The introduction is the opening stage of the drama. It is here that setting is established and we meet the central character(s) and learn their needs. In this stage, we may also learn something of the problems (conflicts, complications) that face the central character(s). The introduction is usually a very brief stage, comprising only a scene or two at most.

Action

This stage can be summed up in the phrase ‘something happens.’ In this stage we will be introduced to the larger problems (conflicts, complications) that the characters will encounter. It is here that the character(s) may experience a change in their condition, or embark on a journey. It is also here that the main themes of the drama are developed. New characters may also appear in this stage as well. The action stage can consist of many scenes in many locations, all building the tensions between the various characters in the drama. The action stage is the longest stage of the dramatic structure, usually comprising at least half of the content of the story, and often much more.

Crisis

The crisis stage is the point in the drama where the central character(s) must express and/or work out the major problem(s) (conflicts or complications) of the narrative. It is the point of no return, and very often results in one or more character experiencing a change of condition or nature, sometimes very extreme. As in previous stages, new characters may appear in the crisis stage. This stage is most often brief, consisting of one to a few scenes of high intensity or energy.

Resolution

The resolution is the expression of the result of the crisis, and an indication of what the future may hold. It is most often a brief stage consisting of a scene or two at most. It is possible, but not common, for new characters to appear in the resolution stage. In general, there are two types of

resolutions: *dénouement* and *catastrophe*. *Dénouement*, French for ‘untying the knot,’ is most often associated with comedies, and is the stage in the drama where foibles and misconceptions come to light. The end of a comedy is generally expressed as a return to normalcy. The second type of resolution, *catastrophe*, is the ancient Greek term for ‘overturn,’ and is most often associated with tragedies, or serious dramas. In a catastrophic resolution, the world, or at least a character, has experienced a change of great magnitude. They will never be the same again.

These two forms of resolution, *dénouement* and *catastrophe*, are often referred to in common vernacular as ‘happy’ and ‘sad’ endings, but this simple binary does not allow for the many subtle variations, which can occur in these two forms of resolution. For example, at the end of a tragedy or serious drama, a character that has experienced an intense change of condition might be happy for the newfound insight they have gained. Or, conversely, at the end of a comedy, a character may be embarrassed or angry about the jokes played on him or her during the action of the play. For the purpose elucidating these two types of resolution in terminology appropriate to an ESL classroom setting, I would propose describing these two forms of resolution as ‘*a return to normal*’ (*dénouement*), and ‘*things have changed*’ (*catastrophe*).

Conclusion

It is the hope of this author that a clear understanding of the basic elements of drama (*character*, *plot*, and *setting*), and the traditional structure of narrative (*introduction*, *action*, *crisis*, *resolution*), will enable instructors to develop curriculum for the incorporation of creative drama projects that will engage and challenge their students. It is further hoped that a greater understanding and facility with these elements will empower students to take bold steps into the rich territory afforded by dramatic activity, where they can confidently approach the work of creating original dramas.

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Geography Education in the Google Age: A Case Study Concerning the Nsukka Local Government in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study employed a critical approach to the examination of the challenges geography educators and students face in keeping up with the present Google age, in a bid to recommend approaches for the advancement of geography teaching and learning in Nigeria. In an era where geography is being perceived as a difficult school subject and there is drastic reduction in the numbers of geography teachers and students, it is important to continuously explore how the relevance of geography education can be restored. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with 10 randomly selected geography teachers and students in Nsukka educational zone in South-east Nigeria. The findings revealed that the teachers and students desire Internet facilities and appreciate its usefulness in overcoming the challenges of teaching and learning geography. Moreover, geography education will be more effective if Google is incorporated into classroom learning as it saves on classroom time and can make up for the impracticability of experiential learning for most Nigerians. These findings have implications for policy makers, curriculum planners and geography teachers; there is urgent need to educate geography teachers on the use of Google to confront the challenges of geography education.

Keywords: Geography education, teaching and learning, case study, Google, Nigeria

Introduction

“The study of geography is about more than just memorising places on a map. It’s about understanding the complexity of our world, appreciating the diversity of cultures that exists across continents. And in the end, it’s about using all that knowledge to help bridge divides and bring people together.” – President Obama (2012).

The above quote by the American president shows that the study of geography is very crucial to the unity and development of people all around the world. Many other scholars support this view and empirical studies have shown that this discipline can foster national and international unity (see Gregory, 2000; Okpala, 1990; and Fan, Monday & Tandu, 2014), as well as enhance social, economical and environmentally sustainable development. This is possible because geography is about understanding conditions in other places and our connections with those places. Students (present

and future citizens of the world) should learn about the land, climate, economy, politics and culture of their environment as well as of other places. As Gersmehl (2014) opined, this knowledge will help them deal with an increasingly interconnected and often highly competitive world.

However, despite these benefits of geography, its study is on a decline, especially in Nigeria where 'professional' disciplines like medicine, engineering and law are prioritized to the detriment of other fields. Geography is not present in Nigeria's primary school and junior secondary curricula and optional in the last three years of secondary school, where only a few students choose it (usually because they need to have a minimum of nine subjects for the final certificate examination). These may be responsible for the scarcity of geography teachers and the declining popularity of the subject among young people in the country. Overall, this has resulted in a populace with low geographical awareness of local and foreign people and events. As a geography teacher in Nigeria, this situation, which permits mediocrity, is important to me and it is hoped that this study will contribute to an improved geography education in the country, especially with respect to the use of Google to increase its popularity.

Purpose of this study

This study is very significant in many ways. First, there is need to explore ways of sustaining interests in geography education, especially in Nigeria where the subject is dying off, and Google can contribute if effectively employed. In addition, there is a dearth of studies focused on the application of the Internet and/or Google to educational activities in Nigeria, as Shittu et al (2013) noted, and only one of them is focused on geography (but in the western region of the country). Furthermore, the few studies available are on universities and there is none on secondary schools. In Nigeria, Geography's fate is dependent on its success at the secondary school level (since this is where students are first introduced to it). Reduction in the number of people studying it at that level implies reduction in the numbers opting for it at higher levels and this has serious implications for the future of the discipline and its important role in the society. Thus, this study is expected to fill the highlighted gaps, especially since there is no study on the application of Google to geography education. This study goes further by taking the views of geography teachers and students of secondary schools in the study area because both groups are important participants in geography education. Furthermore, as opined by Kubiak, Mrazkova & Janko (2012), understanding students' views is important for supporting their achievements and interests towards a particular discipline and research suggests that students are motivated to learn if the educational content is interesting, connected with everyday life and useful for their future development.

Literature review

In order to properly assess geography education in the Google age in Nigeria, it is pertinent to evaluate the literature on geography teaching and learning in Nigeria, Google and Nigerian education and Google as a dangerous tool, as examined in the ensuing sections.

Geography teaching and learning in Nigeria

The teaching and learning of geography in Nigeria started in the second half of the 19th century which was a primary school subject. When secondary and university education started in 1859 and 1948 respectively, geography was included in the subjects of study. According to Okpala

(1990), geography teaching in Nigerian schools was dominated by British influence, both in personnel and philosophy. The textbooks were the same as those used in British schools and regional geography was the main focus. However, in the wake of national independence, there was a steady growth of geography in Nigeria as indigenous geographers such as Mabogunje (1970) began criticizing the fundamental objectives, content and methods of school geography, which they found inadequate for the needs of Nigerian children. The geographic studies of North America, the British Isles and South East Asia were removed and there was an emphasis of study on the home region, with most of the teachers being Nigerians. As the country struggled towards relevant education and vocational independence, new education policies were formulated. Geography became a senior secondary subject, with a little of it infused in social studies being taught in the junior secondary schools. It was also an elective to be chosen in place of history or literature in English. This relegation of geography was perhaps the beginning of its difficulties in Nigeria.

Furthermore, Nigerian geographers such as Ofomata (1971) and Ologe (1984) agreed that geography, unlike professional disciplines as engineering, medicine and law did not directly lead to a profession even though it made valuable contributions to individual and national development. The unprofessional status of geography results in its relegation in Nigeria, with the emphasis on professional training in the country. In addition, several other factors have been attributed to its unpopularity among Nigerian students; Okpala (1988) identifies them as the wide scope of the subject, poor results in school certificate geography examinations, geography being unrelated to their future career and poor teaching.

As a geography teacher in Nigeria, it is easy to understand these problems. The geography curriculum, for example, is saddled with far too many current and environmental issues, in addition to obsolete content and many other items, which need to be removed for better focus and effectiveness. This, coupled with poor teaching and the lack of passion students bring to class because it is not related to their future 'professional' careers, eventually results in poor results in the school certificate examination. Poor geography teaching has been attributed to lack of appropriate teaching qualifications (Alaba, 1988) and lack of teaching materials (Okpala, 1990).

Based on a study conducted in 15 secondary schools in Northern Nigeria, Mohammed (2014) has recommended the need to make geography more interesting since she found that lack of interest was a major problem affecting the teaching and learning of geography in the schools she surveyed. Providing the necessary teaching facilities and qualified teachers can improve geography's appeal.

Geography seems to be the most difficult subject to teach in Nigerian secondary schools. Adejuyigbe and Majasan (1970) opined that the study of geography from its inception was through verbal description of geographic features, which made the study very abstract and quite uninteresting. The teaching of geography in Nigeria has also been focused on the theoretical aspect, to the detriment of scientific and experimental approaches. These discourage open questions, inquiry and active participation of students and makes geography classes difficult and boring (Sofowora & Egbedokun, 2010). Okoruntifa (1970) also showed that students were just made to learn geography concepts in the abstract form and were subjected to too much imagination of geographic features instead of learning through practical observations and this is still the situation today. Smiths (1997) emphasized the importance of relevant instructional materials and the need to diversify the strategy for teaching geography. Google can serve a very useful purpose here if employed appropriately and its prospects are discussed in the ensuing section.

Google and Nigerian education

Many teachers are still apprehensive about using new technologies for instruction in Nigeria. The use of Google especially needs to be promoted in the country because of the vast amount of information that can be found through it, which can bring fun to geography classes. But teachers have been found to be apprehensive about improving and modifying instruction by incorporating new technologies (Sofowora & Egbedokun, 2010). Lack of appropriate skills has also been proffered as a reason for the low utilization of ICT among Nigerian geography teachers. In a survey of technological application in teaching geography in Nigerian secondary schools, Sofowora & Egbedokun (2010) found that even though 55% of geography teachers in a western state of Nigeria had access to computers, majority of them do not have the prerequisite ICT knowledge and skills needed. The Internet was not included in the ICT facilities surveyed and it is widely known that, with the exception of a few private schools, Nigerian secondary schools do not have Internet facilities. Therefore, the use of Google and other Internet facilities would be at the teachers' or students' personal costs, and most likely in their homes.

Modern day students are Internet savvy: most of their activities involve using the Internet. Yet, this phenomenon is not universal because majority of secondary school students from the third world nations especially, cannot operate computers, much less use the Internet (Nganji, Kwemain & Taku, 2010). Many higher institutions in Nigeria are creating Internet-friendly environments for students' learning but this does not seem to be happening in secondary schools. Many secondary school students, especially those in urban areas, have smart phones and are connected to the Internet but mostly for social networking (Shittu, Gambari & Sule, 2013) and there has not been sufficient research on whether they use the Internet to supplement their education as Shittu et al (2013) noted. This is one of the enquiries of this study: do geography teachers and students who have access to the Internet and Google employ these for educational purposes?

Shittu et al 2013 conducted a study to test the technology acceptance model (TAM) by exploring students' attitude and behavioural intention on adoption of Internet for learning among students in a Nigerian university. TAM states that user acceptance of any technology is a function of perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness and user's attitude towards the technology itself (Davis, 1989). The researchers included "facilitating condition" as a fourth factor in the model because this is perhaps the most important in the Nigerian context. Acceptance is dependent on availability, even though availability does not guarantee usage. Even though they found facilitating condition to be statistically insignificant in influencing students' attitude to adopt the Internet for learning, I argue here that this is a fundamental factor and this qualitative study will explore that. Perceived ease of use and usefulness were found to be statistically significant however.

The benefits of the Internet and Google as teaching and learning tools have been widely documented but to realise these benefits, teachers and students must use these tools. Aboderin, Fadare & Kumuyi (2012) investigated the use of the Internet and computer among secondary school teachers and students in SouthWest Nigeria (Ondo state). They found access rates to the Internet and computer by both teachers and students to be around average, even though teachers reported use of school cyber café while students reported use of mobile phones. The study also reported that the use of Internet and computer had contributed to personal cognitive interests rather than enhancing the teaching and learning activities in the secondary schools studied. This serves as a distraction and will be explored further in the subsequent section.

Google as a dangerous tool

Despite the merits of Google, it is important to highlight the dangers Internet search tools like Google pose to education. According to Stafford (1999), academic research involves three steps: finding relevant information, assessing the quality of that information and using appropriate information either to try to conclude, uncover or argue about something. The Internet is very useful for the first step, a little useful for the second and not useful at all for the third. Yet, it is common to find it being used for all three steps, especially in Nigeria. Thus, it is important to emphasize to Google users (especially students) that the Internet contains a variety of information that ranges from scientific facts to personal opinions. Therefore, after the first step of information retrieval, the source must be scrutinised and further searches carried out to confirm the authenticity of the information being revealed. This is especially important if it is not an academic source. The third step requires critical thinking and judgement, independent of Google and the Internet, but this step seems to be diminishing in Nigeria's education system especially.

The popularity of Google is encouraging laziness, poor scholarship and compliant thinking, as Brabazon (2007) reported. She went on to state that poor quality online materials are used as an avoidance strategy to dismiss important scholarly work that can be found on library shelves. Libraries are a good reference for information because the materials there are usually from authentic sources and authors and the quality has been checked. Scholarly thinking is also encouraged with the use of libraries, where the scholar searches out information from an array of options and has to put them all together bit by bit. But this process appears to be too tedious for the Google-age scholars and clicking is replacing thinking. This assertion is supported by Loertscher (2003) who wrote that search engines such as Google are so easy and immediate that many young people faced with a research assignment just Google their way through the Internet rather than struggle through the hoops of a more traditional library environment. Furthermore, a 2001 study by Lenhart, Madden & Rainie (2006) revealed that 71% of American students relied mostly on the Internet for major assignments at school, 24% on library and only 4% on both Internet and library. The situation is worse in Nigeria, with more dependence on the Internet, due to poorly equipped libraries and limited access to them. However, as Brabazon (2007) recommends, students need to actually move between the digital and analogue: the un-refereed web and scholarly databases in libraries.

Furthermore, Benson & Wright (1999) reported that over 20 per cent of their students found that access to computers and the Internet actually hindered the completion of assignments. These teachers were therefore concerned with the ethical implications of digitisation. Thus, Olojo, Adewumi & Ajisola (2012) have advised that incorporating Google as an educational tool requires inculcation of certain skills like critical thinking, research and evaluation due to the increasing volumes of information from different sources that have to be sorted through. It will be interesting to know the prevalent ways Nigerian geography teachers and students seek information, as well as the reasons for their choices. This study is also interested in revealing how much they know about the kinds of information available via Google; are they aware of the inherent dangers?

Research questions

1. Is there a significant gap in interests and access to Google between geography teachers and students in Nigeria?

2. How is the rapidly expanding knowledge base on Google affecting geography teaching and learning in Nigeria?
3. What are Nigerian geography teachers and students views on the current geography curriculum with respect to the Google age?

Method

The participants of the study comprised 5 geography teachers and 5 geography students in Nsukka Educational Zone of South Eastern Nigeria. A summary of their demography is shown in Tables 1 and 2 below.

Participants

Teacher	Gender	Age	Qualification	Experience
John	M	Above 50	B.Ed. Geography	Above 20 years
Mark	M	30-40	BSc Geology	Less than 5 years
Queen	F	30-40	BSc Geography	Less than 5 years
Christy	F	30-40	MSc Geography	5-10 years
Ben	M	41-50	MSc Soil Science	11-20 years

Table 1: Profile of the teachers

Student	Gender	Class
1	F	SSS2
2	M	SSS3
3	F	SSS2
4	F	SSS1
5	M	SSS2

Table 2: Profile of the students (SSS* = Senior Secondary School and indicates their level)

The study area and schools were chosen because there is no study of this nature in the area (South eastern Nigeria). Geography is not taught in primary and junior secondary schools, only senior secondary schools; thus, the student sample is from the senior secondary classes. Convenience sampling was used to select the schools but the teachers and students were randomly selected and those who gave their consent to participate in the study were interviewed. A pilot study was carried out in a school within the zone that was not included in the main study, to test the appropriateness of the research instrument – the interview schedule. This helped in the refining of the questions to make them less ambiguous and more focused on the study's purpose. The schedule was found to have face validity.

Research ethics were observed throughout the conduct of the study. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study and only those who consented were interviewed. They were also informed that they could withdraw at any time and assurance was given that all information is confidential. This is the reason for the use of pseudonyms throughout the study's report.

Findings

The findings of this study have been organised according to 4 themes, based on the outcome of the thematic coding of the interview transcripts. The teachers' views are presented first, before the students.

Teachers

Interests and Access

All the teachers reported being interested in the Internet and Google. Christy said she uses them everyday on her mobile phone and personal computer for research and social media. Ben, Mark and Queen reported less usage due to problems of access, as well as John who agreed that the Internet is informative but not available to him (he owns neither a computer nor a smartphone). However, Queen added: *"my school's library is well equipped with both old and modern geography textbooks and materials so I do not have much need for the Internet, except to get additional instructional materials like diagrams and pictures."*

Problems of access appear to be the major hindrance to the use of Google and the Internet in Nigeria secondary schools. Those who cannot afford to provide it for themselves have no means of applying Google to their teaching.

Challenges

Christy and John mentioned a lack of instructional materials as their major challenge as geography teachers. Christy: *"The unavailability of teaching aids and materials like slides and pictures makes it difficult to teach some topics."* Mark and Queen had similar responses:

Mark: *"some things we talk about, we have not even seen them and can barely imagine them. So how do we teach these things? We just assume that the students can imagine it."*

Queen: *"certain areas you'll be teaching but because they've not seen it, it is hard to imagine or understand. They (the students) always request for field trips but this is difficult to organize. The time and resources are not available."*

Mark also reported that the geography curriculum is not well arranged. *"for example, map reading is placed in SS 1 whereas they shouldn't learn that yet because they do not know the basic aspects of geography."*

Ben's challenges include lack of funding and teacher involvement: *"There are topics that are practical oriented, but schools don't sponsor excursions. For example, mountains, rocks, caves... students are supposed to go see. But they (schools) are not ready to provide materials and sponsor trips. It is difficult for students to identify without seeing it. No support from ministry of education and school heads. I improvised the globe we have here using bamboo, so that they can picture some things like lines of longitude and latitude. They introduced climate change, GIS, remote sensing but no materials to teach. Curriculum planners lump these in the curriculum without involvement of teachers who can tell them the problems on ground. They don't bother whether it's achievable or not."*

Importance of Google

All the teachers agreed that Google is very important because it contains so much information that can be easily retrieved. Except for John who is not conversant with the Internet, they all spoke extensively about how Google aids research and is a good source of teaching materials. For example, Mark said: *"The map of Nigeria of the 1980s is not the same as today's. The Internet helps you get updated"* and Queen reported that: *"you can get pictures of mountains and volcanoes, for example, from the Internet and use them to teach."*

They all reported that their students ask them questions beyond the scope of the lesson and they encourage this because it helps develop knowledge. However, John said *"they (the students) are too young for the Internet. But a few clever ones use it to know whether the teacher is right."* John also acknowledges that the students ask questions he is unable to answer *"for example, they told me about a new planet they heard about and wanted to know more. But I told them I do not know about it but they can go and research on the Internet."*

Christy made a similar comment about a question on GIS she could not answer: *"these concepts are new in the curriculum and were not there in our time as students so we can only learn about them through the Internet."* She also opined: *"It is very important for teachers to have the Internet. For example, many teachers do not teach glaciers and volcanoes because they have not seen slides or pictures or documentaries on it and find it difficult to picture it in the mind and teach."*

Queen recommends that: *"teachers should be trained to use the Internet and Google and these should be provided in schools. Google can generate maps with longitude and latitude, for example. So you may not get the map of an area in a textbook but you can generate it via Google."*

Mark: *"Google needs to be embedded in teaching and learning because of changing knowledge."*

Ben: *"Google is very important because geography is a practical subject. When you are talking about mosaic disease, for example, Google can show how this disease affects the leaves of cassava."*

Despite the unanimous endorsement of Google, Christy says *"Google is good but it makes people lazy. It sharpens and encourages but makes us believe we don't have to think."* Ben's response revealed more harmful consequences: *"...they (students) are not ready to spend on education. Instead of going to Internet for educational purposes, they go there for porn and other useless things."*

Geography curriculum and Google

Google or the Internet is not featured in the secondary school geography curriculum and the teachers do not seem pleased with it. Their dissatisfactions were expressed in various ways. Christy said: *"Africa was removed from the new curriculum. It would affect this generation because they would not know outside Nigeria. It is good they brought in GIS and remote sensing and a little of climate change but removing the study of our continent is not satisfactory. Geography should be a study of the world; it is bad enough we do not study other continents but removing ours is unacceptable, so I still teach it."*

John: *"the national curriculum is not up to date, that is why we use a different one in my school. It is not standard and so everyone in different schools is doing different things and teachers do not participate in making the curriculum so we are not carried along."*

Mark believes that: *“map reading should start from mid SS 2 not at the beginning of SS 1 when students have not understood the basics of geography.”* Queen is of the opinion that the curriculum is too vast. *“It is impossible to handle the specified topics in the little time given.”*

They all believe teachers should improvise if need be, like reinstating important aspects of the curriculum that were removed and leaving off more difficult topics until the basics have been taught. John: *“the quality of a good teacher is bringing in innovation.”* However, Queen warns: *“WAEC (Senior School Certificate Exam) is based on the curriculum so if you don’t follow it, it will affect the students.”*

They all seemed open to the incorporation of Google and the Internet to the teaching and learning of geography but access remains a major problem. Though, Christy thinks it may not be effective for the students because *“what they know is social media, give them any assignment to do on the Internet and they say it’s hard.”*

Students

Interests and access

Three of the students do not use the Internet because they do not have access to it. Of these 3, 1 is not interested in the Internet because her parents forbade her from using it *“because of corruption”*. She was referring to the pornographic content on the Internet. The other 2 have been hearing of it and know it contains plenty of information that can be useful, but do not know what it looks like.

Two students reported the use of the Internet with their phones, though not often due to the high cost of subscription. One of them reported that she uses Google to get information for assignments while the other uses it for only social media.

All five students acknowledged that they know that not all the information on the Internet is true, even though they do not know how to discern true information from false.

Challenges

All the students reported the bulky notes they are given as their major challenge of studying geography. 1 reported, *“It is a difficult subject with big grammar that is not easy to understand.”* And this response echoes the opinions of 2 others who also felt that the subject is difficult. Only 1 acknowledged that despite the bulky notes the subject is simple and interesting.

Importance

They all believe that Google can be useful in the learning of geography because it is very informative. A student reported: *“it would be good to have Internet for geography to make the work easy. Any problem you find difficult, just go to Google.”* Though one student said *“I wish to have Google but not now. I feel it would distract me.”*

Geography teacher

In spite of the researcher’s assurance that all information given would be confidential and anonymous, it was difficult to get the students to talk about their teachers, perhaps out of fear or respect. The only input was an expressed satisfaction with their teachers. However, 1 said: *“geography needs to be more practical because it is the study of the environment. It would be more interesting if teachers can take us out to see these things we are learning about.”* Another student

reported: *“our teacher gives too much notes and we do not understand most of what we are writing”* and wishes the teacher will give less notes and explain more.

Discussion

Based on the reports from the teachers and students, it appears that they are all interested in Google and the Internet but have varied levels of access. Except for one teacher who has regular access to the Internet, others wish it could be more available to them. In Nigeria, it is expensive for the average citizen to afford to pay for Internet. The teachers have more access generally, but there is no significant gap in the interests and access to Google between the geography teachers and students interviewed. Despite how much the Internet and Google have evolved around the world, they are not being fully utilized in Nigeria, mainly due to the problem of access. The challenges of geography education in Nigeria are numerous but can probably be solved to a great extent if Google and the Internet are publicised, made available and incorporated in the teaching and learning of geography.

The knowledge base on Google is expanding rapidly but this hardly has any influence on the teaching and learning of geography in Nigeria. The major reason is the problem of access as discussed above. However, the teachers and some students are aware of the vast information available on the Internet via Google and how these can improve geography education. The geography teachers have similar challenges and these revolve around lack of instructional materials and unsatisfactory geography curriculum. These were also found to be major problems of implementing the geography curriculum in the Nsukka area by Ajaps, Ibezim & Udoye (2010).

The importance of Google for geography teaching and learning in Nigeria cannot be over-emphasized because the nature of the curriculum as well as the teachers available require very accessible knowledge bases to augment curriculum delivery by teachers who are either not properly trained to teach geography or do not have the necessary instructional materials. The expanding knowledge base on Google can provide richer contents and better teaching strategies for the teachers to make geography classes more interesting. Also, since the students' major challenges revolve around excess notes and theories, Google can help make geographical topics more practical with pictures and videos. Both teachers and students are open to the inclusion of Google to geography teaching and learning and it is important to harness the positive contributions Google can bring to geography classes.

The results of this study have also shown that the teachers and students are dissatisfied with the current geography curriculum and have ideas on how to improve it. For example, reordering contents so that simpler concepts are understood before more complex concepts and bringing in innovations in the delivery of the curriculum. They believe that the curriculum needs to go hand in hand with the Internet in this present age for updated knowledge and effective delivery of educational content.

However, despite the importance of Google for geography education, the dangers need to be acknowledged, as examined earlier in the literature review section. A student inferred this by stating that her parents forbade her from using the Internet because of the corruption it contains and how distracting it can be. One of the teachers also highlighted the tendency of young students to spend their time on irrelevant things, including pornography, when they have access to the Internet. So, parents and teachers are sceptical about exposing secondary school students to the Internet.

For geography education to be made more interesting and relevant in the twenty-first century, Google and the Internet have big roles to play. It is important therefore for young people to

be orientated on the importance and use of the Internet for academic purposes. Almost every good thing is susceptible to abuse, but this does not mean that it should be thrown out of the window. Proper orientation and guidance can play a big role in guiding people to use the Internet productively.

Conclusion

This study has shown that the deteriorating state of geography education can be salvaged with the use of Google and other Internet facilities to make geography classes more interesting and satisfying. It is probable that these results can be generalized to other regions of Nigeria but until such studies are conducted, this study's results are restricted to the study area (Nsukka Local Government Area of South Eastern Nigeria). Low sample size may affect the study's generalizability even within the study area but 10 teachers and students were decided on because it is a case study and the major intent is to get extensive explanations from the participants. Future studies need to incorporate larger samples, as well as other regions of the country. However, from the results obtained from this study, which shows that access, and not interest, is the major challenge of incorporating Google in geography teaching and learning, the following recommendations are made:

Recommendations

1. In view of the huge academic resources available on the Internet via search engines like Google, and their usefulness to learning, teaching and research, it would be necessary for secondary schools in Nigeria to provide guaranteed access to the Internet. Inadequate Internet connectivity is a major challenge and the government needs to step up to this by providing Internet facilities in secondary schools.
2. Google should be featured in Nigeria's geography curriculum. This would make governments and other stakeholders more committed to the provision of Internet facilities in schools. Also, it is envisaged that teachers and students who already have access to it will be guided or motivated to seek guidance on how to use it productively and have a more encouraging environment to use Google for academic purposes.
3. Most people do not know about Google and how to use it. Awareness and training on the use of Information and Communication Technology is necessary, especially in semi-urban schools like the ones employed in this study.
4. Geography teachers need to update their knowledge about modern approaches to teaching. This could be done through workshops, conferences and seminars. Teachers should be encouraged to apply modern technologies to re-conceptualize the curriculum and make schooling and learning more interesting. However, for this to be successful, better facilities like steady supply of electricity must be ensured. The present erratic power supply being experienced in the country is not good for technological advancement.
5. Governments and other agencies responsible for curriculum development and reforms should always involve teachers and students at every step, because they are also major stakeholders and are better positioned to give feedbacks on the practicability and effectiveness of the curriculum's content and process.

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After Communicative Language Teaching: Adaptive Approaches in ELT in the Arabian Gulf and Beyond

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Abstract

Many EFL/ESL teachers begin their training on a CELTA course or equivalent, with an emphasis on the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach. For most of my peers here in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), this is also how they started their careers before going on to teach in a variety of countries. But have they maintained this approach, continuing in the path of their learned communicative methodology, or have they adopted alternative classroom approaches? This paper seeks to answer this question.

The aim of this study was, therefore, to confirm that CLT was the initial methodology teachers were trained in, and to ascertain whether or not they had changed their approach since, and, if so, how, why, and when? The exploratory nature of the study was such that it lent itself to an interpretative research design, adopting an exploratory, phenomenological approach using qualitative methods, whereby a small sample of teachers at tertiary institutions in the UAE were interviewed. The study found that the research sample had all been schooled in CLT and that all had indeed deviated from that approach in a variety of different teaching situations.

Before this study, any changes in approach that might have emerged had been attributed to reasons of cultural accommodation or institutional factors such as a prescribed methodology or rigid curriculum. In fact, these reasons did not hold, and teachers diverged from CLT methodology largely due to practical, experiential reasons (though cultural and institutional factors were also cited). Furthermore, although all participants had adopted alternative approaches, CLT had not been entirely discarded—the participants retained it as a resource when it proved suitable for a particular teaching situation, becoming part of the eclectic approach that this highly-experienced cohort of teachers had at their disposal.

Key-words: ELT, EFL, ESL, Arabian Gulf, methodology, teaching approach

Introduction

It could be argued that to be a successful international EFL teacher, cultural adaptation and tolerance for diversity mark the profession as unique. Coupled with the often lowly pay teachers receive, it is quite remarkable that so many continue in their chosen career for decades or even the rest of their working lives. The Arabian Gulf, as one of the highest paying regions in the world for EFL teachers, is where many end up in the latter part of their careers after an often fascinating cultural journey around the world. Over the course of their journeys, did teachers change their approach after their initial training, and if so, was this change due to cultural reasons, institutional reasons, or experiential factors? These are the research questions and focus for this paper. Before embarking on the research, cultural and institutional factors were initially thought the most likely causes of any such pedagogical change. However, practical experience acquired since the young,

fresh-faced TESOL-certified teacher could be an influence too, and did in fact emerge in this study as the major factor.

The UAE Context and Its ESL Teachers

ESL teachers in UAE Universities/FE Colleges typically have a relevant Master's degree, which is the minimum requirement at the three main public universities: Zayed University (ZU), the United Arab Emirates University (UAEU), and the Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT). Many also have the RSA CELTA or RSA DELTA while some also hold doctorates. The teachers are generally highly experienced with a minimum of five years teaching at the tertiary level, and most have decades of experience. Many teachers have published papers in peer-reviewed journals and co-written textbooks. The UAE attracts such highly skilled ESL teachers because it is perceived as an attractive, well-remunerated place to work and, as a consequence, the UAE can largely pick and choose its faculty at the better institutions. Though it does not command the highest salaries in the Gulf, its relatively comfortable, Western-friendly atmosphere (it is a tourist destination with bars, cinemas, high-end hotels/restaurants/shopping, and desert and marine activities/sports) makes it far more appealing to many Western and non-Western teachers than neighboring countries such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar, which generally attract teachers with more limited teaching credentials and experience.

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Communicative language teaching (CLT) has arguably been the most influential and important methodology in ESL/EFL for several decades since its inception in the 1970s (Richards, 2006:1). Definitions of CLT have varied over the 30-plus years of its existence as well-known writers in the field such as Widdowson (1978), Breen & Candlin (1980), Savignon (1983), Richards & Rogers (2001), and Nunan (2003) have defined it in different ways; nevertheless, there are a number of core components that Brandl (2008), usefully summarized: that language is viewed as communication; that communication should be meaningful via exchanges of information through activities and tasks; that emphases on texts and communication are realistic; and finally that the teaching should be learner centered (p. 5-7).

CLT's long predominance in EFL/ESL is evident in its continued use as the taught methodology of choice in ESL/EFL entry-level teacher-training courses such as the CELTA, with its "communicative focus in materials, tasks and activities . . . [and] language" (CELTA Syllabus, University of Cambridge, 2010:15). The similar Trinity College ESOL Certificate also emphasizes its adherence to CLT methodology in its syllabus as it focuses on "how to teach linguistic form . . . function and meaning . . . in a communicative context" (CERT TESOL Syllabus, Trinity College, 2013:11).

All teachers interviewed in this study reported that their initial teacher training was in CLT methodology, the majority via a CELTA or Trinity College Certificate with one teacher (previously a secondary school teacher) reporting that his first EFL qualification was a Master's degree, although, again, CLT was the training methodology employed.

The research question sought to determine whether or not these teachers continued with the CLT methodology throughout their careers or if they adopted alternative classroom approaches. And if they changed their approach, how and why did they do so? The initial assumption of this research paper was that any changes teachers reported would be laid at the door of cultural

accommodation. In other words, teachers were assumed to have changed their methodology because when they approached certain cultural arenas, their teacher training-received “wisdom” would not “work,” and alternatives needed to be identified. Certainly, what several academics have termed the BANA (British, Australasian, and North American) model and its associated methodology of CLT have come under wide criticism in the field of critical linguistics not only for being an unsuitable methodology for some cultures but also as a latter day form of colonialism. Academics in the field, such as Holliday (1994) and Phillipson (1992), have been particularly critical; the latter more recently defined CLT as “communicative imperialism” (2009:61). Indeed, critical applied linguistics has long seen the EFL/ESL teacher as “a coloniser,” imposing Western “standards” on the non-English speaking world (Pennycook, 1994, 2006; Phillipson, 1992, 2009; Skuttnab-Kangas, 2009; & Canagarajah, 1999). In addition to cultural factors, institutional factors such as preferred methodologies and demands of the curriculum could also be factors explaining why teachers might diverge from their original methodology. Practical experience in the field could be another. Each of these factors will be examined later in the paper.

Culture

Culture is difficult to define, but for the purpose of this paper, I utilize Holliday’s (1999) definition of “large culture,” whereby “large” signifies “ethnic, national, or international cultural difference” (p. 237). It is perhaps common sense among more experienced and travelled EFL/ESL teachers that cultural differences may affect methodology and approaches around the world, and, indeed, as Atkinson (1999) remarks, “except for language, learning, and teaching, there is perhaps no more important concept in the field of TESOL than culture” (p. 625). Teachers who disregard notions of cultural difference between their own learned methodology in teacher training and the preferred approach of their students in different parts of the world, especially non-BANA settings, may find themselves in an uncomfortable classroom atmosphere. Bonham, Cifuentes, and Murphy (1995) noted that “a teacher who wishes to have a useful, comfortable climate for interaction and learning will do well to remember that all culture is created by group negotiation and not by authority’s fiat” (p. 5).

However, the question of whether and to what extent the indigenous culture affects the foreign ESL teacher is an area less explored, either in terms of methodology or cultural accommodation. Some, such as Palfreyman and McBride (2007), have suggested that teaching approaches transported across cultures can be problematic, and that teachers may need to change in these ways: use “intercultural awareness, use comparative perspectives in presenting material, reconsider ‘universals’ in university learning and teaching, acknowledge and use local knowledges and locally appropriate methodologies” (p. 1). Even in following such recommendations though, which may appear to be benevolent attempts to engage students and meet them in terms of a learning style that is more culturally appropriate, potential problems exist. This “benevolent” accommodation could alternatively be viewed as the teacher categorizing students in certain countries as lacking in academic skills or knowledge, as some have suggested (Holliday & Aboshiba, 2009). It could even be argued to be a somewhat cynical strategy for more experienced teachers who slide into an “easy” routine where few demands are made pedagogically on either teacher or student, but all are “happy” with this arrangement (as participant P in the research later comments). Consciously or unconsciously, the teacher is affected by the culture in which he/she teaches,

resulting in “changes in personal identity. Teachers . . . adopt new attitudes and patterns of behavior as part of the process of adapting to the cultures they live and work in” (Neilsen, 2009:8).

Thus, there are two aspects of culture that can affect teachers’ methodologies: the teacher changing from his/her BANA-learned, CLT methodology to adopt a style of teaching more attuned and appropriate to the local culture and, secondly, the teacher him/herself changing and adopting “new behavior” (as Neilsen pointed out above), aligning their outlook with the cultural setting in which they find themselves. There may well be some overlap between these two factors, but, in summary, cultural accommodation of either or both types mentioned above was thought to be the most likely reason for teachers to diverge from their CLT training before the research commenced. As this study shows, however, it becomes clear that other factors are at least equally important, namely institutional and experiential factors, which will now be examined.

Institutional Factors – Curriculum and Methodology Curriculum

In terms of institutional constraints on pedagogy, one of the most commonly heard complaints amongst ESL/EFL teachers in the UAE is that of management-imposed, top-down curricula, which are difficult for the teacher to cover in the time allotted let alone feel confident that the students have achieved a mastery of all its components. As Markee (1997) argued, this demoralizes faculty “because it turns teachers into passive recipients of change agents” by forcing them to change their methodological approaches often simply in order to cover the curriculum (p. 64). Indeed, one participant (teacher J) reported exactly this in the study, reporting having to abandon more communicative activities in order to “cram in” the target language. As Nation and Allister (2010) remarked, time constraints in a curriculum are extremely important and can result in making teachers “try to cover most of the language items and skills but at a rather superficial level” (p. 19-20). In terms of CLT, its core tenets of meaning-based activities and tasks and learner-centredness are likely to be sacrificed if time is short irrespective of a teacher’s desire to adhere to CLT principles.

Methodology

Some institutions impose a methodology on their teachers that can make it extremely difficult for teachers to follow their preferred approach. In the study, two participants who had worked in military training colleges in the Arabian Gulf indicated a change in approach due to methodological constraints with strict controls on classroom delivery in addition to a fixed curriculum. These colleges followed a US-devised military language program similar to the Berlitz method, which participants reported were extremely prescriptive. It could be argued that the constraints were curriculum-defined rather than methodological in nature and that the division here is artificial. However, the ethos behind the program was certainly not allowing teachers much—or indeed any—flexibility in delivery of the curricula, so a separate categorization of methodology is argued to be justified.

A skills-based modular approach imposed on teachers by one institution was also considered to be a methodological factor, limiting faculty to teaching one skill, which the involved participant considered an old-fashioned and limiting constraint in terms of pedagogical approach (participant D).

Experience and Practical Knowledge

The concept of knowledge as just technical knowledge, a simple retention of facts, has been shown to be lacking in recent decades by a number of academics including Schön (1983, 1987), Eraut (1994), and Clark (1986) who argued that practical knowledge gained in the field is of great importance. As Schön (1983) posited, models of professionalism which rely only on “technical rationality” without taking account of practical knowledge are, in any model of professionalism, deficient:

If the model of Technical Rationality is incomplete in that it fails to account for practical competence in ‘divergent’ situations, so much the worse for the model. Let us search, instead, for an epistemology of practice implicit in the artistic, intuitive process which some practitioners do bring to situations of uncertainty, instability, uniqueness, and value conflict. (p. 49)

The true professional, argued Schön, works on tacit knowledge-in-action, a skilled behavior learned through experience. He states, “The knowing-in-action is tacit, spontaneously delivered without conscious deliberation; and it works, yielding intended outcomes” (Schön, 1987:28).

Eraut (1994:42) also referred to “tacit knowledge” in that we know it but perhaps cannot “tell” it, and reported that “teachers’ implicit theories tend to be eclectic aggregations of cause-effect propositions from many sources, rules of thumb, generalizations drawn from personal experience, beliefs, values, biases, and prejudices” (as cited in Clark, 1986:5). This tacit knowledge is of particular importance to teachers, argued Eraut (1994), because unlike other professionals such as lawyers and doctors who have time to reflect, in a classroom setting, “the teacher has no time at all to reflect: choices made during the preparation of teaching may be decision-governed, but those made during teaching are largely intuitive. The pressure for action is immediate, and to hesitate is to lose. People have to develop habits and routines to cope” (p. 53). Many participants in the study did mention or imply tacit knowledge and such coping strategies in the study; indeed, it was the most frequently given reason for diverging from CLT orthodoxy.

Methodology Of The Study

The aim of this study was to verify that CLT was the initial methodology in which teachers in the study were schooled and to see if they had continued with their learned methodology or had changed their approach since. If they had changed, was this due to cultural, institutional, or experiential factors? The exploratory nature of the study was such that it lent itself to an interpretative research design, adopting an exploratory, phenomenological approach using qualitative methods. My initial task was to see the research question “through the eyes of participants” (Robson, 2002:25). I then sought to place this study within my own theoretical framework before attempting to analyze “the participants’ perspectives with the goal of trying to define, unravel, reveal or explain the world” (Arsenault & Anderson, 1998:25).

Ontology and Epistemology

The ontology and research approach of this study is that of the interpretivist paradigm, which subscribes to the idea that the world does not exist independently of us but is, rather, socially

constructed (Grix, 2004). “Objective” analysis or research is, therefore, not possible, and the research becomes a sum of the participants’ and the researchers’ perspectives and interpretations of the world in which truth and meaning “com[e] into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities in the world” (Crotty, 1998:8). Research is, as the name of the paradigm suggests, an interpretation, whereby the researcher slowly builds a bottom-up picture of the themes in the data via inductive analysis.

The research methods most closely associated with interpretivism are qualitative. Interviews, such as the ones conducted in this study, are a typical data-gathering tool as they tend to yield deeper data than other tools such as surveys because the interviewer is able to probe, question, and check the interviewees’ responses. Interviews can be structured or semi-structured; in this study, semi-structured interviews were chosen to allow for deeper probing and to allow the interviewer freedom to pursue items of interest (Richards, 2003:51-62).

Ethical Issues In Data Collection

For qualitative research of a high standard, a number of guidelines need to be observed. As Cresswell (2009:177-201) observed, one of the most fundamental of these is the researcher identifying his or her personal background and possible biases. It is through the lens of the researcher that the reader is privy to the data and analysis; therefore, an indication of the researcher’s worldview becomes essential. The setting and the relationship between the researcher and participants and any power relationships (e.g. teacher-student) should also be clarified. The researcher bias and the researcher-participant relationship are further addressed in the next section.

Another important element of data collection ethics is to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants in the study (Heath & Luff, 1995:308; Newell, 1995:110). Such guarantees were given when consent forms were completed. Not only were participants’ identities kept confidential, but the identities of the institutions where they worked were also omitted from this research. These assurances of confidentiality were reiterated before the interviews themselves in line with best practice principles as outlined by Seidman (2013). All participants’ names in this research paper have therefore been changed, and no references have been made to participants’ current employers.

The Participants In The Study

The teachers at tertiary institutions here in the UAE are typically highly qualified with extensive experience, and the teachers interviewed in this study are no exception. The 6 teachers have over 100 years experience among them and have taught in over 20 countries in locations as diverse as China, Japan, Malaysia, Indonesia, Laos, Spain, Greece, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Mexico, the UK, the US, Ireland, Australia, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, among others. All have Master’s degrees in EFL, and all but one hold TEFL certificates from the University of Cambridge/Trinity College; two hold the RSA DELTA, and all either have or are studying for doctorates in EFL/ESL. All participants reported their initial training was in CLT methodology in the late 80s and 90s, typically in CELTA-type courses. Only one of the participants had not done a CELTA but had instead obtained a Master’s in EFL; this participant reported that the methodology on the course was again CLT.

Though not from my own institution, the teachers selected for the study were well known to me. My knowledge of the participants come from over 10 years of interaction in the field in the

UAE; from research, from professional institutions such as TESOL Arabia; from the Ed D. course in which I am participating; and, in several cases, from personal friendships. The rationale behind such a sample was the fact that my personal connections with the participants facilitated a strong position to conduct research of a personal nature due to the pre-established atmosphere of trust and confidentiality (Cresswell, 2009), which I hoped would produce candid responses from the participants (Silverman, 2001). In addition, I looked to my academic peers in order to minimize any issues of a participant-researcher power imbalance, as mentioned in the preceding section.

Interview Design

The semi-structured interview asked the following core questions, which were pursued as and where appropriate:

- What was the methodology you were teacher trained in?
- Did you apply this approach in your first teaching assignment?
- What were your subsequent teaching posts?
- Did your teaching approach change in any of these posts?
- If yes, what reasons could you give for this?
- How would you describe your approach now?
- What reasons do you have for adopting this approach?

The questions were chosen to fit the research question by identifying the initial methodology in which the teachers were trained and then exploring the issue of whether they had diverged from this approach. In cases of divergence from the initial methodology, subsequent questions were asked in order to tease out reasons. To avoid asking leading questions, the participant was asked to tell, and then the researcher would seek to analyze and categorize the data, post-interview.

Procedure

I had planned to interview a sample of between 5 and 10 University/FE College ESL teachers in the UAE who were teacher-trained in communicative methodology. The research proposal was documented and sent to Exeter for approval where confidentiality assurances were given and ethics forms were completed. Once approval was granted, interviewees were informed of the nature of the research and given documents outlining its purpose and methodology, including the fact that the feedback sessions would be recorded but the data would be used anonymously. They were then asked to sign a consent form after being fully briefed and asked if they had any questions about the research. In the end, largely due to time constraints, only 6 teachers were interviewed. Though some may consider this a small number and perhaps prejudicial to the findings, enough commonality was found in the subjects' responses for the findings to be significant. Pratt (2009) posited that "unlike quantitative findings, qualitative findings lack an agreed-upon 'significance level.' There is no 'magic number' of interviews or observations that should be conducted in a qualitative research project. What is 'enough' depends on what question a researcher seeks to answer" (p. 856).

Standard procedures and protocols of interviews were followed, informal warm-up questions to "relax" the subject before the core questions were asked, and associated probing questions were posed followed by a concluding statement (Cresswell, 2009:182). Interviews were recorded and transcribed, and themes were teased out according to guidelines proposed by

Cresswell (2009) and Cohen *et al* (2007). Cresswell (2009) suggested a general model for interview data analysis whereby transcripts are first organized for analysis, then codified. The analysis is then described, and themes are drawn out of the coded data. Such an approach was adopted in this research project: themes were identified, their interrelationships investigated, and then the findings were interpreted.

In terms of reliability of the data, Gibbs recommended several procedures for reliability such as checking transcripts for mistakes and being wary of “drift” in the assigning of codes and definitions; again, these measures were taken in this study (as cited in Cresswell, 2009:190). Validity was strengthened via member checking (i.e. taking the analysis of the data back to participants and seeing if they concurred with the findings via follow up interviews). This was done with several of the interviewees as a means of verifying the validity of their responses.

Limitations of the study

Though the possibility of bias exists in my reporting of the data, I endeavored to minimize it and present the data and my interpretations of it as objectively as possible. Mentioning researcher bias helps create an honest discourse with the reader and can help with validity. Likewise, extended periods in the field spent building up experience and knowledge can further enhance the validity of research. Both of these factors are featured in this study; I have built long and trusted confidence with the interviewees, and I have extensive experience in the UAE tertiary education system. This is a small-scale study with a limited number of participants and does not attempt to extrapolate its findings to a larger sample than the participants themselves, which would invite external validity threats.

Findings

A number of ways to group responses by theme were expected, and my initial ideas on how to code and classify the data into why teachers had adopted a different approach to CLT were these:

1. Classroom management
2. Motivation
3. Learner autonomy
4. Learning
5. Professionalism
6. Institutional expectations

There was overlap in some categories, particularly between experiential and institutional reasons, which one interviewee (teacher D) even remarked upon. Therefore, after analyzing the data, my original list was streamlined to three categories, which more succinctly coincided with my research question. The three categories to emerge were as follows:

1. Cultural
2. Experiential
3. Institutional

Overview of responses

The three categories for classification of the data were further divided into themes, which for reasons of clarity are best represented in a table (see Table 1 below). Each time a participant referred to a change in teaching approach, it was categorized and sorted into a theme; these were

tallied, listed, and then ascribed to the relevant participant in the third column below. What were categorized as “cultural reasons” could be the culture of the students’ larger cultural context. A typical example is teacher P’s indication that his Chinese students rejected his CLT approach, expressing a clear preference for “worksheets and textbook and intensive reading lessons,” which is examined in more detail later in the paper.

Institutional factors such as materials, class size, and curriculum were exemplified by teachers such as teacher A, who remarked his CLT just would not work due to the “huge classes of up to 60 students without any resources, without even a proper blackboard.” A rigid methodology and curriculum was another factor, which teacher P recalls led to classes that were “so dry, very prescribed . . . very tedious, very formulaic.”

Experiential factors causing a shift in approach were many, but the following example from teacher P illustrates examples of this well: “As soon as I started teaching properly overseas, I created a hybrid of my own which worked for me, and it used the value that I saw in the way *I had been taught* languages in school, and the way I had been taught *to teach* languages [original emphasis].”

Category	Themes	Number from sample	Total
Cultural reasons	1. Culture of the student/wider L1 culture	3 (P), 1(J), 2 (D), 3 (N), 1 (R)	11
Institutional reasons	1. Curriculum/syllabus/ materials	1 (P), 2(A), 2(J), 2(D), 1(N), 1 (R)	9
	2. Methodology/approach	3 (D), 1 (R)	4
Experiential reasons	1. Newly qualified teachers	3 (N)	3
	2. Practical (experiential) knowledge	4(P), 2(A), 2(J), 3(D), 1(N) 2 (R)	14
Grand Total			41

Table 1: Categories and Themes of Responses

What follows is a breakdown of the most significant reasons why teachers deviated from the CLT methodology in which they had been trained. Though some of the quotes are lengthy, I feel it is important to document the raw data to avoid the danger of what Golden-Biddle and Locke (2007) referred to as too much “telling” about data and not enough showing, whereby researchers concentrate on voicing their interpretations of the data rather than providing the raw data that led them to their conclusions (p. 52-60). Too much “telling” can be particularly problematic in qualitative research as it is already subject to interpretation from the researcher for data analysis.

Cultural Reasons

Many Western teachers would be thought to have a BANA cultural norm of teaching, and the participants in this study were no exception—all were schooled in CLT methodology. As some noted below, students not accustomed to this cultural approach to teaching might find it puzzling or reject it outright. Teacher P described a situation in which his Chinese students’ preferred learning style was at odds with his contemporary EFL teaching style:

We went to China for 4 years. That was our first time to be in a higher education situation. The focus there switched a lot more to academic reading and

writing for the Chinese students. And at that point, a lot of the TEFL techniques were not really relevant then. Students were very diligent, very hardworking. They didn't want to play language games. They didn't want to mess around with . . . realia! [laughs]. They wanted worksheets and textbooks and intensive reading lessons . . . it was very different from Japan.

Later in his career, at a tertiary education institution in the UAE, teacher P noticed a very different but nevertheless significant cultural effect: the presence of a minority culture in his all-Emirati classes (unlike other public tertiary universities, at this particular institution there are small numbers of non-Gulf Arabs in some classes). This, he surmised, had an effect on the other students in the class, but he also revealed that it had caused him to adopt a more academic focus in his pedagogical approach. He then avoided some of the “lighter” CLT activities that he used in his other classes. Here are his words:

They should be similar, but one of the classes—and I think this is significant—one of the classes has . . . 3 people who are not from the UAE. They are very good, very mature, I think they are the sons of lecturers at the university, and their influence on the rest of the class is quite a big thing, that class is much more serious . . . the level of English they have is better. The other classes are 100% Emiratis . . . they love games and stuff, but their focus is much weaker.

Cultural reasons were also singled out for differences in class management issues by some interviewees. Teacher D noted contrasted the different types of student in the Gulf and Europe:

Managing a class of Emirati women is not a difficult thing in terms of managing them to be focused on you when you want them to focus on you, and focused on the task when you want them to focus on the task, because by their nature, through their upbringing, they're used to listening to an authority figure. He contrasts these Emirati students with European students, whom he claims are far more demanding and difficult to manage:

Managing a class of . . . either mixed students in an institution in the UK or Spanish students . . . or Greek students or whatever . . . is that management of them was all about how interested they were in what they were doing and whether they thought they were learning. Because . . . their stake in what was happening was much greater. I can walk into a classroom here [the UAE], and I could have written the lesson plan in the corridor on the walk between my desk and the classroom, and the students will be receptive . . . not questioning the value of what you are doing with them. Whereas I would be more prepared in a class even of Spanish teenagers . . . and certainly of Greek businessmen . . . because at the end of the lesson, or even in the middle of the lesson, somebody may legitimately say 'What's the value of this?' Or 'How is this related to what we did last week?' So, in terms of managing, it is very different here.

Teacher R moved to Kuwait and very quickly changed his approach, moving from a CLT approach to what he described as a “dynamic form of lecturing ... very teacher-lead but I also focused on individual students as much as possible.” He found this approach necessary in order to

manage the class and maintain order. His early attempts at student-centered learning had failed largely, as he saw it, due to students not taking activities seriously which did not involve the teacher “leading.” Teacher R recounts his experience teaching in Kuwait and, in particular, the shock of teaching Gulf students after having previously taught more motivated students in Europe, Latin America, and SE Asia. He said:

What surprised me initially with my Kuwaiti students was their lack of any kind of work ethic, lack of interest in anything other than their immediate interests, and frankly, childishness. I had been warned of this by colleagues in the region, though it was still a surprise, especially as I was teaching officers on a military base. Having taught both in Europe, Latin America, and the Far East . . . I had been used to . . . adults who were there to learn, to participate . . . to be engaged. I had to change my approach radically, though. After wanting to quit after the first week . . . [laughs] . . . somehow I got used to them and they got used to me. Or maybe it was just me [laughs]!?

Other participants picked up on cultural differences that may have actually been more to do with being busy professionals rather than the broader national culture, such as the businessmen teacher J found himself teaching in the Czech Republic, who rejected his attempts at a CLT approach because:

They were lazy! No, they were hardworking businessmen who saw their English classes as some kind of break and we'd go out for lunch and whatever, they'd ask me questions about America, ask me questions about my family. I'd ask questions about the Czech Republic . . . there was not much structure, I don't think they thought that they needed English classes per se, they just wanted to maintain where they were.”

Institutional Reasons

Curricula, syllabi, and materials. Lack of resources forced some teachers to change their approach often at a very short notice after arriving at a new post. Teacher A, though a relatively experienced trained teacher with the equivalent of a PGCE from his native Ireland, a TEFL Certificate, and several years of teaching behind him, spoke of his shock on arrival at his institution in Sudan:

Well, when I got there . . . there were huge classes of up to 60 students without any resources, without even a proper blackboard, and the CLT I'd been trained in was all dealing with small, highly motivated groups of European language students, that's what it was tailored for, and that's what I taught in Dublin, those French and continental European teenage students coming to Dublin to learn English, so it was very different, it was a huge shock. I quickly got in touch with Hywel Coleman, who was at one of the northern universities [in the UK] and he was doing a project into teaching ESL/EFL to large classes, and they had material which they freely distributed . . . and it was extremely helpful.

Lack of resources also forced a change in approach according to teacher N, who had just completed a CELTA certificate course and found himself in Hungary. CLT methods did not seem to

be working, so he tried a project-based approach, which, though it engaged students, seemed to produce little language competence. As he recollected:

I still remember the school in Hungary, they didn't have materials or course books so it was very much 'make it up as you go along'. I tried to do some project work. I had my students do a project about like. . . a tourist guide to Hungary. I thought 'that's a great idea, they can be creative,' but they just sort of copied it off the Internet. I mean it looked great, and they printed it off, but there hadn't actually been much engagement or of learning English, and I remember frustratingly thinking 'How do I get around that?'

A large syllabus was problematic for teacher J while teaching in Korea. Though he was able to apply some aspects of his CLT approach, he felt unable to utilize it fully and achieve what he felt was real student competence in structures and skills. As he says, "The syllabus was way too much, way too much; the target language we had to cover . . . it was kind of like here [the UAE] sometimes. You just had to cram it all in." Curriculum constraints and materials also forced changes in teachers. Teacher P recounts his experience in Saudi Arabia teaching business English, where he found his CELTA background of little use due to the curriculum:

[In] Saudi Arabia, I worked for a sub-contractor in Riyadh, because I was finishing off my Master's then, and that was mainly business English . . . quite different again . . . and I'm not sure that the CELTA background was an awful lot of use at that point. It tended to be more . . . I guess again more mainstream type teaching techniques. Fairly large classes there, [mainly] reading and writing, with far less focus on oral English.

Two teachers worked on military bases in the Gulf, and the rigid structure of the materials and syllabus forced changes in their approaches. Teacher D, who had earlier defined his approach as eclectic, retaining many aspects of CLT, noted the change as follows:

When I got to the Middle East, that became a very kind of formulaic, book-driven teaching method. I worked for the military in Saudi Arabia; it was the American Language Course for military personnel. Basically, it was a book every 4 weeks, then a test, then a book for 4 weeks, and then a test again, a book for 4 weeks then a test throughout the year. And at the end of the year the student got a grade that allowed them to go and study at an air force base in America . . . or not [laughs]! All the materials were provided by the American government.

In Kuwait, he also taught the same course, and found the materials "so dry, very prescribed ...very tedious, very formulaic."

Teacher R, who also worked in Kuwait on a military base, found exactly the same: a forced shift in teaching approach dictated by an extremely prescriptive course. On arrival at a tertiary-level technology college in the UAE, teacher D again found the curriculum dictating his approach in that teachers were allotted specific skills. On the first day of the semester, his line manager said,

‘OK, you will be a writing teacher this semester,’ which surprised me as . . . as you know the idea of splitting skills in EFL is a very old idea, which even at that time was kind of very out of date, but at that time they had writing teachers and reading teachers, so there’d be the receptive skills and the productive skills as they called them. You have a writing teacher and a speaking teacher, and a reading and listening teacher, and they were timetabled like that, separately, and that’s all they were responsible for.

Methodological reasons. After his experience in Sudan with large classes bereft of materials, teacher A encountered a very different issue. Fifteen years later in the UAE where technological innovation side-lined traditional pedagogy and methodologies, teacher A noticed something of a gap. The new college policy of laptop learning for all students required teachers to rewrite all courses for online forums. There was an emphasis on projects and a movement away from any form of explicit language teaching. Teacher A found this a destabilizing time; he was forced to abandon his CLT methodology or indeed any form of traditional pedagogy. With no place for textbooks and with little explicit teaching of English skills, grammar, lexis, etc., ESL teachers were pushed into unfamiliar territory. Teacher A stated:

In 2000 the laptop initiative seemed to involve tearing up the old methodology . . . in terms of what you did in the classroom. In some ways it was exciting and innovative, in others it was challenging and . . . also quite destabilizing . . . because the old certainties were not there anymore. I felt that things were questioned, and cast aside, things that were still very valid and useful, and as you probably know, you sometimes feel unsure of your rights to professionally question some things . . . you know I can remember at one stage, you probably remember this too, there was a downgrading of for example . . . grammar was out for a while. You know I don’t feel I’m being unduly critical.

Teacher A considered that the institution’s project-based learning (PBL) approach and emphasis on technology, while interesting and innovative, had forced teachers to abandon important aspects of pedagogy and ultimately undermined students’ skills in core English skills. Teacher A continued:

Well . . . [grammar] . . . was just not seen as a priority, it was seen as a bit of a waste of time, it was felt the students would just pick it up incidentally. Then suddenly it came back, because people could see it was obviously important, and we needed it, to explicitly teach it . . . I think with PBL it was just felt they would pick it [grammar] up, and that was felt the same with vocabulary etc., too. So I think in some ways it was good, I had to challenge my own thinking, but in other ways it was bad, a certain baby going out with the bath water too, but that’s probably happening in lots of contexts, and I feel that technology and the constantly changing profile of students who have learnt different ways of interacting with information and communicating is posing quite a challenge to educators, obviously.

Teacher J found something similar in the UAE context, and had to change his methodology from the CLT in which he was schooled and by which he was able to employ successfully in Korea. However, teacher J seemed to be relatively unruffled by the change. In the interview, he explained:

My methodology? It's changed, I'm more laid back here kind of, and some levels [of teaching] are project based here. When I do find time to teach *English* [original emphasis, laughs], I work through a kind of casual way. I try to get them to work through group and pair work. I guess . . . and I know this methodology goes against popular trends, current trends . . . but I explain grammar a lot, I find myself explaining things a lot here, more than I ever did before in my teaching career.

Teacher D describes the PBL approach that was introduced in his college in the UAE, but despite the dramatic change he had to make in teaching style, he remained positive about it, more so than teacher A, for example:

About 10 years ago, they decided that they should take this task-based learning approach, that it should be all about experience and doing things that were real. And so the language became integrated with the content subjects, and it was used to achieve real things . . . rather than contrived language classroom things. Which I think was a very good . . . approach to take.

Upcoming changes in the institutions seemed not to perturb him, and his eclectic approach allowed him to adapt to institutional changes. Teacher D:

I think even project-based learning has died a little bit now, and we are into kind of modular approach to courses, which is going to dictate *again* the way we approach language teaching [his emphasis]. Yes, even . . . in whatever institutionalized approach to language or to learning that has been imposed . . . I have always kept things, some of those things I know worked.

Experiential Reasons

Newly qualified teachers (NQTs). One of the six teachers experienced difficulties several times in applying his taught CLT methodology both in Egypt and the UK, which he laid at the door of his lack of experience. However, it is also a possibility that cultural and institutional elements account for his perceived lack of experience. (It should also be noted that the CELTA is a qualification to teach English to adults, not to teach children). This participant describes his perceptions of his CELTA course in relation to his first teaching position at an Egyptian primary school, which he recalls as something of “a baptism of fire.” After attempting (and failing) to implement his CLT methodology, he then switched to a disciplinarian, book-based approach, resorting to banging on the table when discipline broke down, and if that failed, walking out of the classroom. He indicated,

I want to be honest; it [the CELTA] didn't really prepare me for a class of 25-30 rowdy, rumbustious youngsters. I mean it gives you the knowledge in English language and structures and functions, you get to do a little bit of teaching practice. But to be honest with you, I don't think it really prepared me, I felt that

the 2 years of my first teaching job was a preparation if you like. The CELTA doesn't really give you enough experiences with challenging scenarios. You usually get a bunch of volunteer students who are very pleased to see you and they're as good as gold. I mean, it set me off on the track, but I certainly didn't feel I was qualified after it!

Later after completing a PGCE in the UK, he worked as a language support teacher in a secondary school, teaching ESL to mainly Pakistani-origin students, but he still described himself as feeling under-equipped to teach, and "very unsure of my skills and ability in terms of teaching effectively."

Practical (Experiential) Knowledge

Experiential knowledge was the most frequently-given reason for diverging from CLT methodology; it was cited 14 times by the interviewees. Teacher P, who had almost 20 years of experience in the UK, China, Japan, Saudi Arabia, and UAE, had clearly evolved a teaching style to suit what he believed his learners wanted, particularly, he said, with reference to his Saudi Arabian students. Only on arrival in the UAE was he made to question the approach he had developed after being observed by a line manager who considered it "far too teacher lead." On reflection, he explained,

I'd certainly got much more into that mold I think . . . at King Fahad University . . . it's actually in the literature, I think it's Adrian Holliday . . . he writes about teaching performances. The teacher puts on a great show, and the students sit there and passively watch it. I probably started to go too far towards to that. So when I got to HCT . . . in conjunction with the supervisor, I started to move away from that, trying to do more kind of discovery-type learning.

This participant later justified his teaching style and argued, based on his experience, that he would adapt it to whatever teaching situation he found himself in, with a particular emphasis on student needs:

To be honest if somebody said 'What is your teaching style?' I don't think I could say. And I was once criticized—I think that's the right word— but I thought I was doing the right thing—about something I wrote . . . in a paper . . . about teaching techniques and methodology and that. A tutor actually criticized this and said 'This just looks like a rag bag of techniques, are you telling me that you will do anything if it works?' and my response was 'Actually, yes.' I look at the students, and think 'Are our students capable of this, are they capable of, for example, discovering things for themselves?' And if they like active things, I'll go with that. But if the needs of the course are that they improve their reading for an IELTS exams in a 6-week period, then I will go back to probably teaching reading strategies in a very traditional manner . . . I think the bottom line is very, very much: what do these students need?

He went on to give a specific example where he addresses students' needs, in this case employing a traditional grammar class to meet what he considered to be a gap in the students' knowledge:

A good example is I'm doing level 1 writing at the moment, and . . . some teachers I know basically just fire lots of writing activities at the students as if they are simply going to get better by writing, writing, writing. I mean obviously lots of practice helps, but some teachers just go in and it's like: 'OK, here's task 1, here's task 2, here's another task 1' [speaking of IELTS writing tasks] and get them to write them, correct them and give them back. Whereas with a class I've got at the moment we're supposed to be . . . writing an assessment piece on the past tense. So I just chucked the writing book out the window last week and gave them a good old fashioned grammar lesson on how the past tense was, because it didn't appear to me that they knew, they didn't really know, and they were just guessing . . . And then we did some activities to use the words and I thought that was an effective way, an *effective* way to focus on the form on what they had to do [original emphasis]. But I find some colleagues, they would say 'I'm not a grammar teacher, I'm a writing teacher' and just give them a past tense writing question, without them having checked if they know the past tense and how it works.

When asked about his teaching approach, teacher A gave an insightful and philosophical insight into how he had moved away from CLT and embraced a wide teaching repertoire, and how he had actually entered into, as he terms it, a meta-educational perspective on the classroom, looking far beyond the nuts and bolts of the profession in terms of inspiration. He stated,

Well I go back to the old Richards and Rogers cop-out, the eclectic approach, but I think CLT had lost its gloss anyway, as I think questions were asked as to what was lost in terms of adopting CLT, things like the grammar and, you know, content aspects of language teaching were lost for a while . . . [it] . . . was a lot more on communication, so you know if you can communicate it didn't really matter how you did it, as long as the student was understood or was confident. But I think there's now an eclecticism, there has been a revival of a need for real competency in skills, especially in our environment where students are studying in English, or working in English, so a return to ways of getting them to be better in all the skills, writing, reading etc. . . . not necessarily that they are getting better [laughs], but at least professionally there has been an acknowledgement that that is important, while before it wasn't acknowledged.

Teacher P's critique was not just limited to CLT but to education and educational policy as a whole. He went on to explain that he had adopted a more philosophical viewpoint both on education as a whole and on the Arabian Gulf in particular:

I've also feel professionally I've become interested in broader issues, it's not so personal, things like policy and education in general—rather than just English language and the classroom context—even our mission here and preparing people for work, and the questions related to that, I mean, is that a valid mission for education? And the context of the Gulf too, and the issues associated with that. I find that interests me more than the kind of language focused concerns, you know the kind of old fashioned rarified PhD research into why Arabic readers can't spell for example, or another second language inter-language error analysis, it doesn't turn me on any more, though it used to [laughs]! I mean since starting a doctorate, I

feel I've moved from the classroom and the language and almost entered a meta-educational analysis to the whole thing of what I'm doing, an almost existentialist philosophy of education, whereas when you start it's very technical, I do this and I do that, and you worry about how to get through the 45 minute lesson, it's almost like I'm fixing a car, whereas now I'm musing do I need the car [laughs]? Or that it looks good but it doesn't go . . . or even what was the point of it in the first place?! Has it really benefitted us?!

Teacher N also arrived at a similar conclusion, acknowledging that his methodological approach has changed many times since starting his career. In his position at the time of the study, it had changed again, but unlike earlier in his career when, in more than one situation, he admitted in his own words that he “had no idea what he was doing,” his doctorate had awarded him confidence in methodological shifts. Teacher N stated, “I think [my methodology] has changed, and lot of it was due to . . . the development I got when doing the doctorate . . . about my search sort of for . . . methodological stability—and not finding it! It really started when doing the doctorate and that gave me confidence in my own . . . subjectivity.”

Like teacher P, teacher J (teaching in the UAE at the time of the study) arrived at a teaching style that was very much teacher-lead with an emphasis on explanation to his students, which is in sharp contrast to his initial CLT training. Also, like teacher P, teacher J justified his change in teaching based on his understanding of the needs of his students. He described his approach as follows:

I know this methodology goes against popular trends, current trends . . . but I explain grammar a lot, I find myself explaining things a lot here, more I than I ever did before in my teaching career. Not just through examples, I want the students to know these things, and I find myself explaining more, and when I do that, I think, I have this idea the students will understand my explanation better. I never did that before . . . [but] here is my understanding. The girls have listened to English a lot; they've had a lot of exposure, but maybe not to very good English. A teacher presenting is something they can keep up with. So that's why I do what I mentioned before, it's a time saver.

Teacher D questioned many of the premises of his training early on, which he characterized as consisting of elements of CLT and the direct method. Even at the time of his training, he felt some of the elements of his training bordered on the foolish, and he ignored some of his training and put into practice ideas he found valid. This is how teacher D described it:

There was a period, wasn't there, where they took the direct method to the extreme, where you weren't allowed to speak the learners' language, you learnt the language through osmosis [laughs] . . . that whole Rinvolucris thing, where you know, you are sitting around in circles, throwing pillows at each other, I could never get into those kind of things [laughs]! I mean I could never really get into that approach anyway . . . but that was the kind of approach that was the most acceptable. In fact, in teaching practices, it was very much frowned upon to use *any form* of translation to help students which even then, even though I didn't know much about it, it seemed to be ignoring something that would facilitate the whole process [original emphasis]. They were evangelical at that time about the whole idea—you know, keep all other

languages out, just work out meanings of words. They put a great deal of emphasis on the teacher's communicative ability . . . And yet you knew perhaps the word in Spanish, or the word in French, or even in Greek or whatever. That was precisely what you wanted . . . and obviously in any normal classroom that's what you'd do, you'd translate. But if you were being observed . . . you couldn't do that.

Frustration with the CLT/direct method training he had been schooled in caused teacher D to create his own methodology almost immediately. Teacher D stated,

As soon as I started teaching properly overseas, I created a hybrid of my own which worked for me, and it used the value that I saw in the way *I had been taught* languages in school, and the way I had been taught *to teach* languages [original emphasis]. Which were kind of two diametrically opposed elements to an approach, two ends of a spectrum: grammar translation, and this communicative direct method.

As he mentioned, there were elements of CLT and the direct method which teacher D considered valuable and retained in his hybrid approach. Upon returning to the UK after working in the Arabian Gulf, he was keen to get acquainted with language teaching methodology. He said, "I thought the time spent in Saudi and time I spent in Kuwait had slightly de-skilled me. And I wanted to get back into a normal EFL classroom. So I was teaching throughout that year, but only part-time. So by the time I got here I was getting back up to date with the current sort of EFL approaches and things." Like teachers N, A, J, and P, teacher D, irrespective of his teaching situation, took a pragmatic and eclectic approach to teaching, adopting whatever approaches he felt would work despite the institutional constraints. He said, "in whatever institutionalized approach to language or to learning that has been imposed . . . I have always kept things, some of those things I know worked."

Teacher R concurred and spoke of the way things had fallen in and out of favor over his teaching career:

I suppose I have developed quite a bag of tricks over the years in terms of teaching. The CLT I was schooled in I have largely dropped here in the Gulf, to be honest with you. I just feel . . . learners [in the UAE] are lacking in study skills, yet paradoxically they seem to respond better to traditional teaching methods. If you play language games with them too much, they can accuse you of just 'playing'! So I do a bit of everything, even drilling which they seem to enjoy. I go to TESOL Arabia every year [a regional EFL conference], and I remember a year or two ago, a speaker mentioned the benefits of reading aloud, as if it was a . . . a new technique, or a new dawn [laughs]. I've been doing it for years here, it seems one of the best ways to keep the class focused and effectively manage them.

CLT's Continued Relevance For the Participants

It is perhaps important to note that although all of the participants deviated from CLT at various stages in their teaching career, each one reported that CLT did, in fact, remain their chosen approach in a variety of teaching situations. In some cases, the CLT methodology seemed to be accepted unquestionably by students, but in others, initial acceptance was less forthcoming. As

teacher N noticed at the British Council in Hong Kong, new students seemed surprised at the in-house CLT methodology. Here, he detailed the cultural shock:

in-terms of students from the Hong Kong education system, which tends to be very rote-learning based, and very teacher-centered. When they . . . came to . . . courses in the British Council they would be very taken aback, at least initially, that we were expecting them to talk to each other, to participate . . . once they cracked the . . . change, the fear of that, they'd be fine, but sometimes it took a little bit of time to work on them.

In total, the teachers detailed 11 different countries as varied as Japan, Hong Kong, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, Korea, and Spain where CLT remained their chosen approach. These responses are detailed in Table 2 below.

Teacher	Teaching situation	Total
P	Japan (private language institution), Saudi Arabia (University co-sessional course)	2
A	Malaysia (International Islamic University, foundations and co-sessional courses)	1
J	Korea (University)	1
D	Spain, Greece (private language institution)	2
N	UK (ESL language support in secondary school), Hong Kong (British Council)	2
R	Spain, Mexico (private language institutions), Indonesia (University foundations and co-sessional courses)	3
Grand Total		11

Table 2. Teachers Citing Examples In Which Initial CLT Training Was Successfully Applied

Discussion

It should perhaps be seen as no surprise that these participants, all highly experienced ELT professionals, have progressed in terms of their early skill acquisition from Cert TEFL recruits to a level where some, as teacher A eloquently phrased it, have reached a philosophical, meta-educational view of the classroom. For some participants, the actual teaching approach has become an application of what works based on their long experience, a mix of methodologies, and techniques with no particular affiliation to any particular school. In many ways, this shift mirrors the Dreyfus (1986) model of progression from novice to expert, in which these teachers inhabit a point in their careers where they no longer rely on rules, plans, or maxims but instead rely on an intuitive grasp of situations based on deep, tacit understandings. As Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986) remarked, “Human understanding was a skill akin to knowing how to find one’s way about in the world, rather than knowing a lot of facts and rules for relating them. Our basic understanding was thus a knowing how rather than a knowing that” (p. 4). The participants’ levels of experience and lack of adherence to any particular methodological dogma endorses Loughran’s (2010) point that “coming to understand that there is not one correct and best way of doing teaching is embedded in experience” (p. 14).

It may be argued that some of the teachers have slipped into a rut in regard to their teaching. For example, both teachers J and P adopted teacher-lead approaches because these appeared to work and were effective ways to manage the class, though both teachers were aware that this could leave them open to criticism. Teacher P conceded that his line manager criticized his approach, and teacher J acknowledged his “lecturing” approach was controversial and “against current trends.” However, with 11 unsolicited endorsements of CLT, it is clear that the participants did not totally discarded the CLT methodology in which they were originally schooled. Some, such

as teacher P, actually explicitly stated they have “returned” to some of the aspects of CLT in their current teaching situation, recognizing that their approach had become too teacher-centered. In short, although the continuing relevance of aspects of CLT was not something actively sought out in the research nor pursued in interviews, it is worthy of mention and possibly further investigation.

In conclusion, the research sample indicated that with a total of 41 responses of divergence from their schooled CLT methodology, each of the teachers adopted different approaches for a variety of reasons, embracing eclecticism in their teaching largely based upon whatever “worked,” generally for experiential reasons rather than cultural or institutional considerations. It is perhaps pertinent to note that such a favoring of an eclectic methodology amongst an experienced body of teachers is hardly new, and indeed echoes the findings of Dr. Henry Sweet (1899) who wrote over 100 year ago:

But none of these methods retain their popularity long—the interest in them soon dies out . . . [they] have all had their day. They have all failed to keep a permanent hold on the public mind because they have all failed to perform what they promised: after promising impossibilities they have all turned out to be on the whole no better than the older methods . . . A good method must, before all, be comprehensive and eclectic. (p. 3)

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