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IAFOR Journal of Education

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Edited by Dr Bernard Montoneri

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Catalino N. Mendoza is an academic consultant, module designer and developer, writer, professor/lecturer, research editor and thesis and dissertation consultant. He has to his credit almost two doctorate degrees – Doctor of Management Science and Doctor of Philosophy in Human Resource Management, and is a candidate for Doctor of Business Administration. He was an HR, Management, and Effective Communication consultant (both in government and private companies) was formerly the Coordinator, Head, and College Dean of CBA, MBA, MBBA, MBBHRM, PhD, and PhDBM in various colleges and universities in the Philippines and visiting professor/lecturer both in the graduate and undergraduate schools. He also served as resource speaker, panel discussant and participants in various seminars in the graduate and undergraduate programmes and in the government and private agencies/companies both local and international. He is also an awardee in the 2009 International Business and Economics Research and International Teaching and Learning Research Conferences held in Las Vegas, Nevada, United States, October 5–7, 2009 and published books entitled *Human Resource Management Practices in the Philippines* and *Phenomenological Study of Philippine Women at Forty in Germany* by Lambert Academic Publishing Company in August 2012 and August 2013, respectively. He is a former Director for Publications, Research, Linkages and Liaison and professor in the graduate school, college of business and accountancy, college of engineering and college of tourism and hospitality management and college of education in the University of Batangas, Philippines. He is now working at the Faculty of Arts and Sciences in both Graduate and Undergraduate programs, is a member of the ISO Internal Audit Team, and Chair of the Ethics Committee on Research Development and Innovation Center of Our Lady of Fatima University, Pampanga Campus, Philippines.

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Daniel Velasco earned his BA in both English and French from UCLA, and his MEd from National University. He spent the first part of his career in the field of international/cross-cultural education as an instructor, administrator, student counsellor, and academic director at a variety of post-secondary institutions. His role as an international student counsellor prompted him to diversify his education, and he soon earned an MA in psychology from Antioch University, and started a private practice specialising in positive psychology. He continued on to The Chicago School of Professional Psychology, where he earned a PhD in International Psychology. Dr Velasco currently resides in Japan, where he is a mental health counsellor, associate professor, researcher, and public speaker. He regularly lectures on intercultural communication, teaching strategies, positive psychology, and counselling strategies with a focus on adaptation and acculturation. He is an active member of the Japanese Psychological Association (JPA), the American Psychological Association (APA), the International Council of Psychologists (ICP), the International Mental Health Professionals Japan (IMHPJ), the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT), and Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL).

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Nick Chown is an independent autism advocate, mentor, researcher and trainer. He has undertaken research on support for students with autism at university, barriers to learning for students with autism in further education, autism awareness in the police service, viva protocols for doctoral students with autism, and diagnostic pathways for autistic adults. His most recent published research – undertaken in conjunction with various university colleagues – involved the development of a framework for "inclusive" research in autism. In addition to leading a team of independent researchers in the field of autism, he has also been engaged with a university project mentoring autistic adults. He is currently undertaking an investigation of autism research over the past 20 years and writing entries for an encyclopedia of autism. His book entitled *Understanding and Evaluating Autism Theory* was published in November 2016. He is a member of the editorial board of the *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*. Prior to this, he had a lengthy career in corporate risk management.

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Editors' Introduction

It is our great pleasure and honour to introduce the September 2017 issue of the *IAFOR Journal of Education*. This issue is a selection of papers submitted directly to our journal as well as studies presented during various conferences, including:

1. The IAFOR International Conference on Education – Dubai 2017 (IICEDubai2017), held at the InterContinental Festival City Event Centre, Dubai, UAE, February 26–28, 2017. Conference Theme: “Educating for Change”.
2. The IAFOR Asian Conference on Education & International Development 2017 (ACEID2017), held at the Art Center Kobe, Kobe, Japan, March 26–29, 2017. Conference Theme: “Educating for Change”.
3. The 102nd US National Communication Association Annual Convention in Philadelphia (NCA) in 2016: *Communication's Civic Callings, 2016*. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA, November 10–13, 2016.

The first paper, co-authored by Akihiro Saito and Michael E. Smith, is entitled “Measurement and Analysis of Student (Dis)engagement in Higher Education: A Preliminary Study”. This article reports on an exploratory questionnaire project on student disengagement in a higher education setting in Japan. In response to their own and others' observations of a range of student behaviors in higher education, the authors sought to measure student disengagement in their teaching context. They identified a 5-factor structure of student disengagement and discuss possible intervention measures to monitor and promote student engagement.

The second paper, entitled “Discourses on Empowerment in Adult Learning: A View on Renewed Learning” is authored by Luisa Daniele, a researcher working at the Italian Agency on Active Labour Market Policies, a governmental agency with the responsibility of monitoring and evaluating labour market policies, including training policies for employed and unemployed adults. A critical reflection is developed in the paper on the dimension of empowerment in the European discourse, starting from some operational definitions used in official documents. The author analyses the shift in the European documents from 2000 to recent years, from a lifelong learning vision to an adult education approach, basically labour market oriented, thus leaving aside the social cohesion and self-emancipatory dossiers. Against this background, a theoretical approach derived from the categories of transaction and reflexivity is suggested, setting out from the works of John Dewey. This paper investigates whether the categories of experience, problem posing and emancipation are more suitable for a long-term project on adult learning than the categories of activation, problem solving, and empowerment.

The third paper, entitled “Factors Affecting Teachers' Perceived Proficiency in Using ICT in the Classroom”, is co-authored by Prema Basargekar and Chandan Singhavi. This study is based on the primary data collected by Professor Chandan Singhavi, who is pursuing her PhD in the area of identifying factors affecting successful implementation of ICT at the school education. Dr Prema Basargekar is her PhD guide. The survey data is collected from the teachers working in Maharashtra region from India. One of the focus areas of the research is to identify the barriers faced by the teachers in implementing ICT in the classroom. It is expected that research outcomes will benefit school management to develop new policies to mitigate some of these barriers.

The fourth paper, entitled “The Dynamics of Decentralization of Higher Education Delivery and Local Politics in the Philippines: The Case of Two Mandaue City Colleges in Cebu Province”, is written by Ronald A. Pernia. It looks at the experience of a city government in the Philippines which has two similarly named local colleges and how later on it created a conflict of legitimacy that prompted actions from the Commission on Higher Education – the national government agency tasked to oversee higher education in the Philippines. This study starts by introducing the context of the decentralization law of 1991 and how it allows local governments to embark on establishing their own local versions of higher education institutions and then it analyzes the local socio-political condition upon which the local college and local government are situated by looking at the responses from interviews, focus group discussion and pertinent documents. This study was anchored on an educational politics framework and revealed that the democratic opening engendered by the decentralization law to allow local governments to establish post-secondary schools are confronted with tensions. However, despite this conflict there were accounts of positive impact noted in this study as a result of the venture of the city government into higher education. As such, this study suggested policy directions and practical considerations for national governments vis-à-vis the LGU’s role as enabler and/or regulator of higher education. In addition, using the concept of “politics” as a constructive force in effecting positive changes must be pursued for future research.

The fifth paper, co-authored by Jerome St-Amand, Stéphanie Girard and Jonathan Smith, is entitled “Sense of Belonging at School: Defining Attributes, Determinants, and Sustaining Strategies”. This study focuses on the sense of belonging at school. This important component of school life may have a positive impact on motivation to learn, which is considered essential for success. In their article, the authors propose a review of the existing literature related to the sense of belonging while emphasizing on its attributes and determinants. Then, they describe instruments that have been used to measure it. Finally, they conclude with strategies and recommendations for stakeholders to help them build and sustain such a sense amongst their students.

The sixth paper, entitled “Friends with Benefits: Causes and Effects of Cheating During Examinations”, is authored by Leo Andrew Diego. This study argues that learners’ illegitimate means of responding to the triggering failure and frustration during examinations are not to be counted as an excuse for them to be recognized as highly innovative. Through making friends of their peers, tolerating their dishonest behavior by giving the answer because of friendship, gaining confidence through social approval, for everyone does it, feelings of being intelligent because of cheating practices and manipulating gadgets to copy clear-cut answers should not be tolerated by teachers. The rules and codes must not merely rest in the enrollment forms or written school policies, but it must be in action, meaning to say in constant reminders given and intervention by teachers who have full authority and responsibility to hone learners in the light of honesty and maturity as enduring values in the arena of life. In this context wherein friendship was found as being manipulated and utilitarian in character, honesty is not just a policy; rather, it is the only policy for the learners to stand on a high moral ground and build self-confidence in the long run.

The seventh paper, entitled “Self-efficacy Reduces Impediments to Classroom Discussion for International Students: Fear, Embarrassment, Social Isolation, Judgment, and Discrimination”, was written by Junko Maeda. This study was an in-depth exploration of the adverse emotional factors that impede discussion participation. Using a qualitative approach, 23 international students at one university were interviewed, and their responses analyzed. Students reported that fear, embarrassment, social isolation, judgment, and discrimination were barriers to

participation. These findings were discussed in the context of a framework for reducing negative emotional states, employing self-efficacy theory. This framework was applied to the interview results and the author's observation of international students' behavior at dormitories and university offices. These findings suggest a possible intervention approach for educators to help international students express themselves in the classroom.

The eighth article, written by Singhanat Nomnian, is entitled "Politician-Turned-Doctoral Student's Narrative Identity at an Australian University: A Case Study". The study highlights the participant's transition from politics to academia that requires his action, reflection, and experimentation through venturing himself into his new role, adapting himself to the academic and research community, and negotiating his previous professional political experiences with his imagined academician. The participant's academic and social contexts in living and studying in Australia are connected by using academic and communicative English. As a mature-age learner, he reconstructs his academic self into the Australian higher education and employs his former political experiences and connections as a strong foundation to gain his imagined expectations. His narratives of life and career transitions through investing in higher education have illustrated that his personal growth and satisfaction have been enhanced. In an era of aging society, higher education can enhance adult learners' life-long learning that can enlighten their life and career aspirations.

The ninth article, entitled "Hearts Grow: Contemplative Learning for Inner Stability Development in Female Prison Inmates", is co-written by Somsit Asdornnithee and Proetphan Daensilp. Due to great risks of emotional stress, including as serious as suicide found in female prison inmates in Thailand, there have been a number of projects introduced to make a change in the quality of life in prisons. However, works that can count for much in long-term development of the quality of life with the decrease in the recidivism rate are those associated with the inner skills. Inner stability is one of the important qualities signifying one's own sustainable wellbeing. This is why applying contemplative learning process with female prison inmates could respond to such needs and allow inner transformation to happen in them. This article will elaborate on the details of the learning process facilitation appropriate for the inner stability development in female inmates, and also on their inner experiences, including some transformation found during and after the program.

The tenth article, authored by Stefan Battle, is entitled "White Teachers' Reactions to the Racial Treatment of Middle-School Black Boys". It recounts a study of White teachers' responses to provocative fictionalized vignettes of classroom interactions between White teachers and middle-school Black boys. These vignettes reveal levels of stereotyping and chastising exploitation that seem to perpetuate a belief that young Black males are not as academically proficient as their White counterparts. Originating from Battle's professional experience as a middle-school School Social Worker/Guidance Counselor in the United States, the vignettes are suggestive of racial, social, and cultural differences between White teachers and their Black male students. The study participants were White teachers who were asked to talk and write about the actions and behavior of the teachers in the vignettes. Their analyses of how the fictional teachers behaved toward their students considered familial, social, and professional influences on teacher-student interactions. Study participants, who indicated they had received multicultural training through professional development in their school district, overwhelmingly condemned dehumanizing practices. The results indicated that such professional development likely led to an appreciation and awareness of students' racial, social, and cultural differences and an increased sensitivity to fairly and respectfully working with Black male students.

Please note that we welcome original research papers in the field of education submitted by teachers, scholars, and education professionals, who may submit their manuscripts even though they did not participate in one of the conferences held by IAFOR. We also welcome book reviews, reviews of the literature in the field, and contributions introducing key educational scholars.

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Best regards,

Bernard Montoneri, Lucy Spence, Yvonne Masters and Massoud Moslehpour

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**Measurement and Analysis of Student (Dis)engagement in
Higher Education: A Preliminary Study**

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Abstract

Higher education is attracting more participation from an increasingly diverse student body. This diversity invites concerns on effective instructional delivery as the extent of students' engagement in learning now varies widely. Anecdotes on students' "undesirable" dispositions in course participation are not uncommon in higher education settings. This project set out to develop a questionnaire, developed for higher education in the Japanese context, on a range of student dispositions. The scale was a five-point Likert instrument designed to interpret learners' disengagement as an attitudinal disposition. The paper discusses the conceptual contours of disengagement as a student disposition that provided the basis for the context-specific scale items. It reports the procedures taken to obtain the factor structures of the dataset. The questionnaire was administered to 145 engineering students in Japan. An exploratory factor analysis revealed a five-factor solution – lack of commitment, distractedness, lack of preparedness, anti-social orientation, and lack of focus. Avenues for further research are suggested, and implications for practice are discussed.

Keywords: higher education; learner engagement; student attitudes; rating scales.

Introduction

Participation in higher education is increasing worldwide, and the demands placed on post-secondary education are changing (Laurillard, 2012). A much larger proportion of the population take on a degree program at universities, and higher education has become much less elitist. In Japan, this trend was observed earlier than in other parts of the world. The relaxation of regulations governing the organization of universities and their education provision took place in the 1990s (Amano, 2014). This liberalization of higher education led to a rapid increase of tertiary institutions. This phenomenon was accompanied by a steady rise in the numbers of university goers. Higher education enrolment in Japan is now as high as nearly 75% (Kariya, 2011) with 56.7 % for enrollment in 4-year institutions in 2014 (see Harada, 2015). However, enrollments are decreasing quickly as the number of 18-year-olds continues to drop in an increasingly aging population.

In the mid-2000s, following an extended period of economic stagnation, Japan seemed to enter a new phase of economic recovery. The role that public reforms played was important in laying the foundation for growth during this period. From the late 1990s onward, at the center of the government's reform measures for an economic turn-around was the tertiary education system. Particularly notable was the Koizumi administration's partial privatization of national universities (Yamamoto, 2004). These higher education institutions now operate as corporations with considerable autonomy from centralized control. Education is a political issue as it is framed and funded by the state to a great measure, and this invites competing pressures from market and business industry as well as from academia and education lobbyists. There is now a general and widespread recognition that tertiary education is a driving force in boosting economic competitiveness in a knowledge-driven globalized economy (Newby, Weko, Breneman, Johanneson, & Maassen, 2009). This entails that higher education provides conditions for learners to develop a reasonable level of academic achievement and practical skills across disciplines, while simultaneously, balancing these skills with professional knowledge. This trend has been gaining traction in higher education both abroad and in Japan. It is now the role of tertiary education institutions to provide the conditions and opportunities for shaping the student mindset toward lifelong learning and personal development.

Increasing participation in higher education worldwide has brought greater diversity to the student body in terms of academic bent (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009). Increasing enrollments suggest that the degree of academic orientation and commitment of students is accordingly varied. Within a university, the range of dispositions and ability within courses is diverse. In the sociological literature, it is axiomatic that a household's standard of living is implicated in access to higher education, and books in the home are a proxy for cultural capital in the family (Kariya, 2011). The economic and cultural capital and students' dispositions nurtured by these resources increase both the chance of enrolling in higher education and students' academic success at university (e.g., Kariya, 2012). These socio-economic indicators and cultural background variables translate into observable differences, such as whether students have relevant background knowledge and a curiosity about a particular subject. Namely, there are now a considerable number of students who would not have considered or been able to go to university a mere generation or two ago.

Thus, it is not just that enrolment rates are higher than at any other time in history, the emphasis is now on concerns about effective teaching and outcome. Conceiving ways to actively engage students in their learning now poses a real challenge. In the Japanese higher education context as well as in other parts of the world, the challenge that educators face is how to empower

students so that they take greater autonomy for their learning. Addressing this concern requires learner-centered teaching methods such as an active learning approach, which more effectively stimulates students' use of higher cognitive activities that a successful student would use spontaneously (American Psychological Association [APA] Work Group of the Board of Educational Affairs, 1997; Cavanagh, 2011; Prince, 2004). Concord between the current instructional models, new pedagogical trends, and students' needs are necessary as Japanese society continues to evolve as a post-industrial knowledge-based economy. This paper addresses one roadblock to this endeavor common in Japan: teachers sometimes find that students do not engage in a way that is expected or desired for learning and success in higher education settings. For instance, Escandon (2004) refers to lesson disruption in a Japanese tertiary setting, "The class objectives cannot be achieved because most of the students avoid learning ... or keep other fellow students from engaging [in] learning practices, [and] teachers have to commit themselves to disciplining students instead" (p. 3). While acknowledging that these unnervingly "undesirable" dispositions ought not to be interpreted from the instructor's perspective alone, as we discuss subsequently, the paper reports on a project in which a scale was developed to measure students' disengagement as a disposition in higher education.

Engagement is a key construct linked with learning and academic success, such as higher grades, completion rates, and achievement test scores: Evidence suggests that engagement is responsive to changes in pedagogic practices and holds great potential as a key target of intervention and improvement efforts (Fredricks, Filsecker, & Lawson, 2016). The scale reported in this study was designed to measure the dispositions of students displayed in relation to current university learning, with the scale being the interpretative continuum of the dialectical attitude of compliance with and resistance to the institutional assumptions which shape "desirable" forms of engagement in tertiary education settings in Japan.

Literature Review

The literature on engagement abounds with a variety of theoretical inclinations and pedagogical focuses (see Christenson, Reschly, & Wylie, 2012). While there is much variation regarding how engagement has been defined and researched, there is some agreement that it is a multifaceted construct (Fredricks, Filsecker, & Lawson, 2016). In the sociological literature, some undesirable forms of engagement are conceived as resistance, which represents students' reactions to a school's attempts at defining them as a person of less worth than others in a way that often results in their exclusion from the path to academic achievement (Alpert, 1991). From this perspective, failure to learn emerges as a result of political resistance, not of an innate disability. The literature states that resistance could take shape in a subtler form. Students can minimize participation in school practices while displaying exterior conformity to the ideological assumptions of schooling as a mode of quiet subversion (Giroux, 1983). In more psychologically-oriented studies, undesirable forms of participation are understood as misbehavior which indicates a behavior that is perceived *by the instructor* to interfere with the primary vector of the learning activity. Other scholars have addressed the issue using school connection and life course theories to explain the role engagement plays in whether or not a student completes his or her schooling (Fredricks, 2014). Along with this line of inquiry, some studies report students' perspectives, which suggest that they view schooling as standing in the way of them socializing with their peers, leading them to invest minimal effort in their school work.

Some past studies operated within only the teacher and school's perspective and tended to misconstrue the meaning of students' oppositional dispositions (Alpert, 1991). Alpert argues

that both conceptions of students' dispositions as resistance and misbehavior are limiting as some oppositional dispositions could be construed as legitimate modes of participation in a democratic society of which the schools are a part. Students' limited engagement in classroom discussion and criticism of the instructor over instructional delivery, for example, can be commonly observed phenomena. Notably, these modes of rejection and challenge are revealed without resorting to violence or leading to class disruption. Hence, while investigating disengagement as an oppositional disposition is important, labeling these as mere misbehaviors can be inaccurate as they do not involve formal rule violation. In the Japanese higher education context, McVeigh (2002) and Escandon (2004) reported their observations of disengagement in the form of students' "disruptive practices" that are manifested as students' resistance – apparent apathy, neglect, and lack of interest, among others. The theoretical position adopted by McVeigh regarding resistance was unlike that which had been described in the sociological literature. Rather, he states that resistance "designates actions and attitudes that do not directly challenge but scorn the system. This form of subtle resistance ignores ... and is a type of diversion ... from ... the dominant structures" (McVeigh, 2002, pp. 185–186). Drawing upon McVeigh's (2002) conceptions based on anecdotes and his personal observations in the Japanese context, Escandon (2004) enumerated possible forms of resistance in the following categories 1 to 7.

1. Bodily dispositions: These describe physical conditions in which students are positioned. These conditions are thought to exercise impact over whether desirable or undesirable learning comes to be shaped.
2. Absence: Expressed in students' attitude and behavior that denigrate the importance of attending and participating in class activities.
3. Unresponsiveness: Displayed in students not responding and pretending not to know.
4. Neglect and forgetfulness: These behaviors manifest as willful inattention and a learned neglect of in-class activities, translating into forgetfulness as regards learning materials and assignment due and exam dates.
5. Indifference: This form of resistant attitude manifests itself in a range of behaviors such as sleeping in class, daydreaming, and not taking notes.
6. Inaccuracy: This is observable in end-products, such as disregarding lecture points and task instructions, such as essays.
7. Rudeness: This is manifested in behaviors which are disrespectful to the teacher and peers, such as chattering with friends and ignoring requests to be quiet (pp. 6–8).

We stress that these are not empirically established categories and only informed the construction of the questionnaire items that we have modified and added to as reported subsequently (see Appendix). We therefore avoided making any presumption about whether the items in our questionnaire would cluster together in the same manner as the asserted categories as above may imply. We note that there is a difference between asserting these categories from the instructor's personal observation and demonstrating these as well as latent explanatory factors in an empirically based manner. McVeigh (2002) and Escandon (2004) are among the few scholars who have investigated disengagement in higher education in Japan. However, neither of them examined the extent of Japanese tertiary students' dispositions *per se*. Escandon attempted to ascertain whether students would assess a list of simulated student behaviors as being disruptive or not disruptive as well as their perception of the extent of these behaviors being observed within the research site (see Escandon, 2004). Therefore, in order to buttress our understanding of current students' dispositions in the Japanese context, we sought to measure their dispositions as reported by students themselves.

Methodology

Participants

A convenience sample of 145 engineering students at a regional university in the northern part of Japan participated voluntarily. The authors, Saito and Smith, teach English as a Foreign Language to first- and second-year students. In some of his classes at the university, Saito distributed information about the project which included details such as the purpose of the study, the research policy assuring participants' anonymity and privacy, and an estimate of the time required to complete the survey online. Participants' privacy and anonymity throughout the research process included explaining the use of quotations, and informed consent that they could withdraw from the project at any time without incurring any penalty. Written consent was obtained from those who agreed to take part in the survey. Initially, 146 responses were returned, but one incomplete survey was excluded from analysis. The sample was dominantly male ($n = 123$, 84.8%), and the proportion of females was 15.2 percent ($n = 22$). Their ages ranged from 18 to 21. The participants majored in six different areas of study including system and information engineering ($n = 48$), mechanical engineering ($n = 26$), electronic-electrical engineering ($n = 25$), civil engineering and architecture ($n = 23$), design engineering ($n = 13$), and bioenvironmental science/engineering ($n = 10$).

Apparatus

The current study sought to empirically explore the structure of students' dispositions through the questionnaire items (Appendix). The current study, like other studies of learner engagement, did not draw upon any single definition or conceptualization of the multifaceted construct of disengagement. We sought to examine a wide range of undesirable dispositions such as disengagement to determine whether context-sensitive learner dispositions could be measured, what perceptions and behaviors they displayed, and how their responses related to one another. The following priorities guided the development of the instrument: (a) the need for a context-specific questionnaire, which taps into dispositions relevant to a higher education setting in Japan; (b) the instrument to which respondents can respond in their first language, Japanese; and (c) the context-sensitivity informed by local professionals' observations and experience as well as the literature.

The item pool of the scale was drawn from the conceptions of student dispositions as observed in Japanese higher education contexts (Escandon, 2004; McVeigh, 2002). We added a group of items to this list of dispositions so that we would be able to see the degree to which students were adaptable to more dialogic, active learning approaches, as noted earlier, toward which current higher education pedagogical practices are increasingly inclined. This *ad hoc* construct reflects student attitudinal dispositions toward a classroom pedagogic style, which draws upon the more active learning mode of education (Cavanagh, 2011; Prince, 2004). A total of 34 items were selected from the item pool initially. These items constituted the self-report questionnaire consisting of two parts. In Part 1, 34 Likert-scale items elicited participants' self-reports of their attitudes including behavioral dispositions in relation to university learning. Part 2 asked participants' demographic information such as gender and major. The Likert-scale items were created and refined in accordance with guidelines for the development of a valid and reliable inventory (Dörnyei, 2003).

In Part 1, a five-point Likert scale where 1 represents "never" and 5 represents "frequently" was used for all the items (never = 1, rarely = 2, sometimes = 3, occasionally = 4, frequently =

5). These 34 five-point Likert scale items were randomized in order in an online format. The questionnaire items were drafted in Japanese and reviewed by two English-Japanese teachers with seven years of experience for translation accuracy and readability for Japanese students. The questionnaire was pilot-tested with three engineering students (aged 19, 20 and 21). Based on the feedback obtained from these informants, the wording in the questionnaire items was revised for accuracy and validity.

Procedure

A cover letter was distributed among potential participants, which included an explanation of the aim of the study and assured potential participants' anonymity and right to withdraw in the midst of participation. This was done through some regular classes at Saito's workplace. In this way, informed consent was obtained from all the potential participants. Participants were asked to respond to items on the final Japanese version of the online questionnaire. They entered their responses manually from chosen computers or mobile devices online outside of class time. The data entry period lasted for two months. The completed questionnaires were computer-coded. The data were screened and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences 22.0. We used exploratory factor analysis, which was designed as a means to explore a dataset as well as to develop an instrument which could be utilized and refined through other inferential options such as confirmatory factor analysis, among others, to test hypothetical constructs (see Costello & Osborne, 2005, p. 8).

The data were subjected to tests of normality and skewness. A graphical inspection of the data indicated that the distributions for a large majority of the items were bell-shaped, except items 6 (skewness = 2.26, kurtosis = 5.89) and 28 (skewness = 2.89, kurtosis = 9.68). The literature suggests that factor analytic procedures that employ maximum likelihood extraction methods are not adversely affected if skewness is smaller than 2.00 and kurtosis not larger than 7.00 (Fabrigar, Wegener, MacCallum, & Strahan, 1999). Because they exceeded these thresholds, items 6 and 28 were excluded from further analysis (see Appendix). The values of skewness and kurtosis of the remaining 32 items came in the ranges between +.037 and +1.95, and between -.89 and +5.89, respectively. For these items, maximum likelihood exploratory analysis was used with a threshold of .45 for factor loadings as a result of the study's sample size of 145 (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2009).

Results

Factor Structure

A factor analysis on the 32 items was performed using maximum-likelihood extraction with promax rotation. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin values exceeded the recommended value of 0.6 (Kaiser, 1974), and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity reached statistical significance ($p = .000$), supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix. An initial analysis was run to see eigenvalues for each factor in the data. Based on the minimum eigenvalue of 1 and a threshold of .45 for factor loadings (Hair et al., 2009), nine cross-loaded items (1, 9, 12, 14, 17, 19, 24, 33, 34) were culled. The same procedure was iterated three more times, and further seven items (2, 3, 4, 10, 21, 25, 32) were dropped. The remaining 16 items yielded a five-factor solution accounting for 65.8% of the total variance, with KMO = .819, and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity reached statistical significance ($p = .000$), indicating a reasonable factor analysis (Bartlett, 1954).

Table 1 shows the factor loadings after rotation. The four items that clustered on Factor 1 accounted for 34.0% of the common variance. These items reflected students' behavioral tendency such as absence (*I repeatedly cut class*) and failure (*I fail exams*). We named this factor *lack of commitment* because these items indicate students' inability to act while they are responsible for attendance and preparation as necessary requirements. Factor 2, which accounted for 12.3% of the common variance, included five items that related to non-participation and diverting elements, such as chatting and socializing with peers while attending class. Therefore, we labeled this factor *distractedness*. Factor 3, which explained 7.9% of the common variance, included three items. These items indicated the degree of students' engagement with course requirements, such as homework and assignment preparation, and thus, it was named *lack of preparedness*. Factor 4 included two items, accounting for 7.5% of the total variance, with the factor loadings of .70 and .90. This factor was labeled *anti-social orientation* because the items were related to students' willingness to collaborate with peers who they do not know. Factor 5, the proportion of variance explained by this factor was 6.6%, with factor loadings of .64 and .84. Factors 4 and 5 were measured by only two items each, but we decided to retain these as independent components in terms of interpretability; both pairs of items loaded on each component in a conceptually meaningful way. Furthermore, inspection of scree plots revealed a clear break after the Factor 5, and these five factors met the Kaiser greater than 1 criterion (Kaiser, 1960). Table 1 displays the estimate of reliability for each extracted factor. The extracted factors demonstrated good internal consistency, ranging from .74 to .80. In brief, five factors were extracted from the 16 items. These components represent lack of commitment, distractedness, lack of preparedness, anti-social orientation, and lack of focus factors, which together are hypothesized to constitute disengagement among this particular sample of students. The mean scores of the five factors were lower than the midpoint (3) of the 5-point Likert scale: lack of commitment ($M = 1.88$), distractedness ($M = 2.12$), lack of preparedness ($M = 2.36$), anti-social orientation ($M = 1.85$), and lack of focus ($M = 2.43$) (Figure 1). The mean values indicate that instances of resistance and misbehavior are not widespread but less than moderate as far as our results suggest.

Table 1: Factor-loadings for exploratory factor analysis with maximum likelihood rotation of disengagement items (N = 145).

Statement	Loading	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
F1 Lack of commitment ($\alpha = .79$)			
5 I repeatedly cut class.	1.02	1.99	1.014
7 I oversleep and cut class.	.618	1.97	1.076
8 I cut class and do something of priority outside school (e.g., socializing with friends, part-time job, family, etc.).	.563	1.56	.686
23 I fail exams.	.505	1.99	1.024
F2 Distractedness ($\alpha = .77$)			
26 I chat about things unrelated to lecture contents.	.711	2.18	.887
13 I pretend as if I were paying attention, but I am actually doing something else such as texting on my phone and doing assignments for another course.	.681	2.15	.974
29 I disregard requests to be quiet and soon get back to chatting with friends.	.654	1.48	.718
11 When called on I discuss the question being asked of and/or the response with fellow students before giving an answer.	.596	2.37	.912
27 I use digital devices such as smartphones for non-class	.484	2.43	1.026

purposes during class.			
F3 Lack of preparedness ($\alpha = .80$)			
15 I do not remember that I had assignments to do until I come to class.	.787	2.71	.971
20 I attend class without completing homework.	.718	2.28	.924
16 I forget assignment deadlines and exam dates.	.509	2.10	.963
F4 Antisocial orientation ($\alpha = .77$)			
30 In group or pair work, I will not talk to the other student(s) if they are people I don't know.	.907	1.79	.843
31 I will not do pair work if the other student is a person I don't know.	.700	1.90	.915
F5 Lack of focus ($\alpha = .74$)			
18 I daydream during class with my mind focused on nothing in particular.	.842	2.59	.902
22 I cannot concentrate in class.	.643	2.27	.966

Note. Percentage variance explained: total variance, 68.30; F1, 33.97; F2, 12.33; F3, 7.91; F4, 7.47; F5, 6.63.

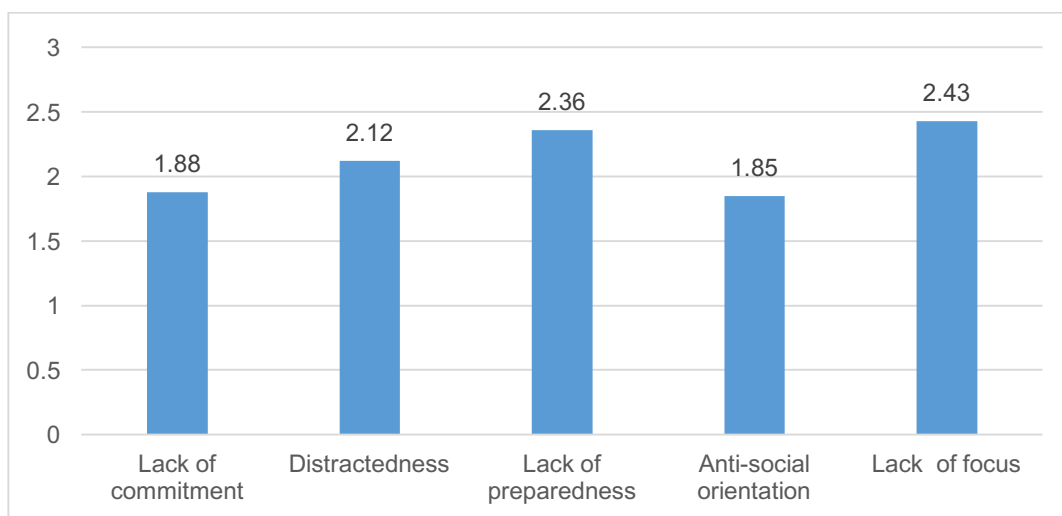


Figure 1: Factors influencing student disengagement with mean values.

Participants chose one from a set of response options on a 5-point scale as regards frequency of a particular behavior stated in each question: “never = 1”, “rarely = 2”, “sometimes = 3”, “occasionally = 4” to “frequently = 5”.

Means of Observed Variables

The mean scores of variables for lack of commitment come in the range between 1.56 and 1.99, with the mean for the four variables being 1.88 (Figure 2). This result indicates these behaviors as indicated in the item statements are only marginally observed among the study's participants. A slightly smaller mean for Item 8 might be construed that only a handful of the students cut

class for miscellaneous reasons outside school.

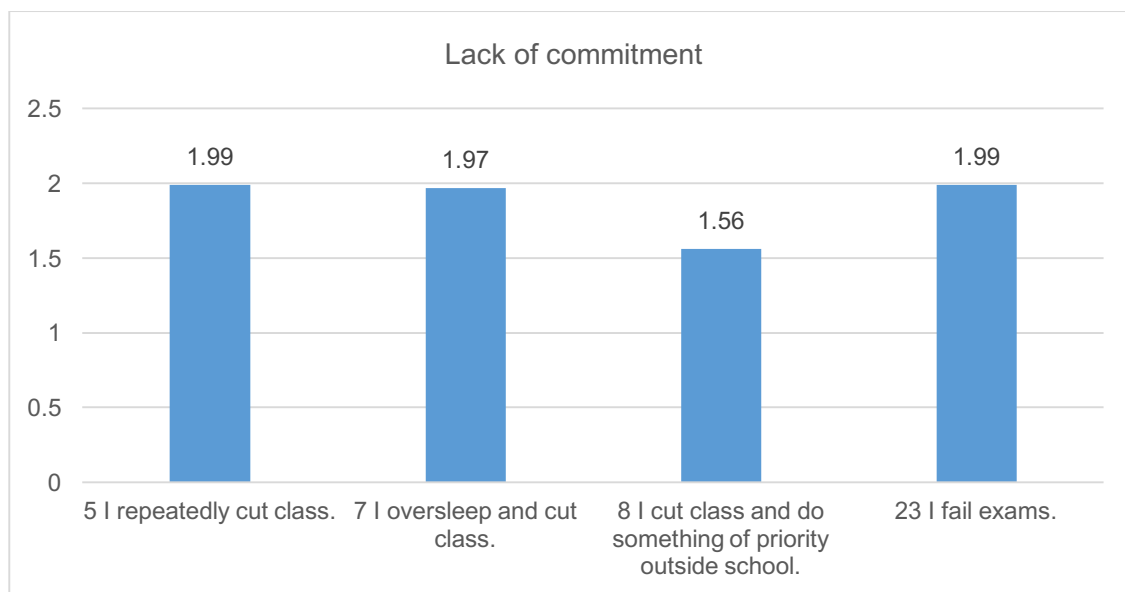


Figure 2: Mean values of measured variables influenced by lack of commitment.

Participants chose one from a set of response options on a 5-point scale as regards frequency of a particular behavior stated in each question: “never = 1”, “rarely = 2”, “sometimes = 3”, “occasionally = 4” to “frequently = 5”.

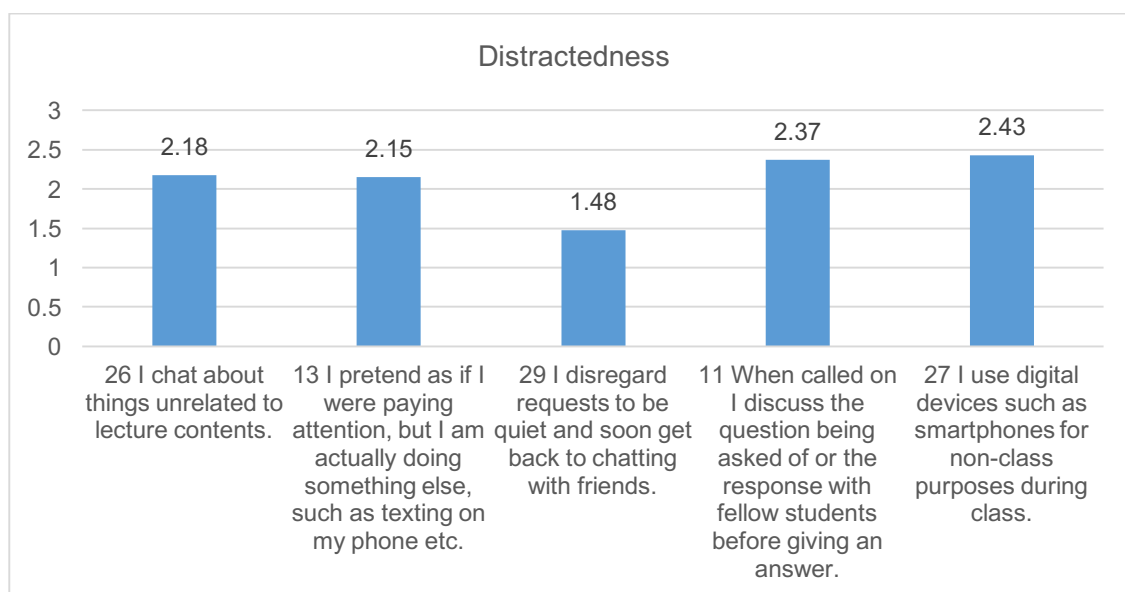


Figure 3: Mean values of measured variables influenced by distractedness.

Participants chose one from a set of response options on a 5-point scale as regards frequency of a particular behavior stated in each question: “never = 1”, “rarely = 2”, “sometimes = 3”, “occasionally = 4” to “frequently = 5”.

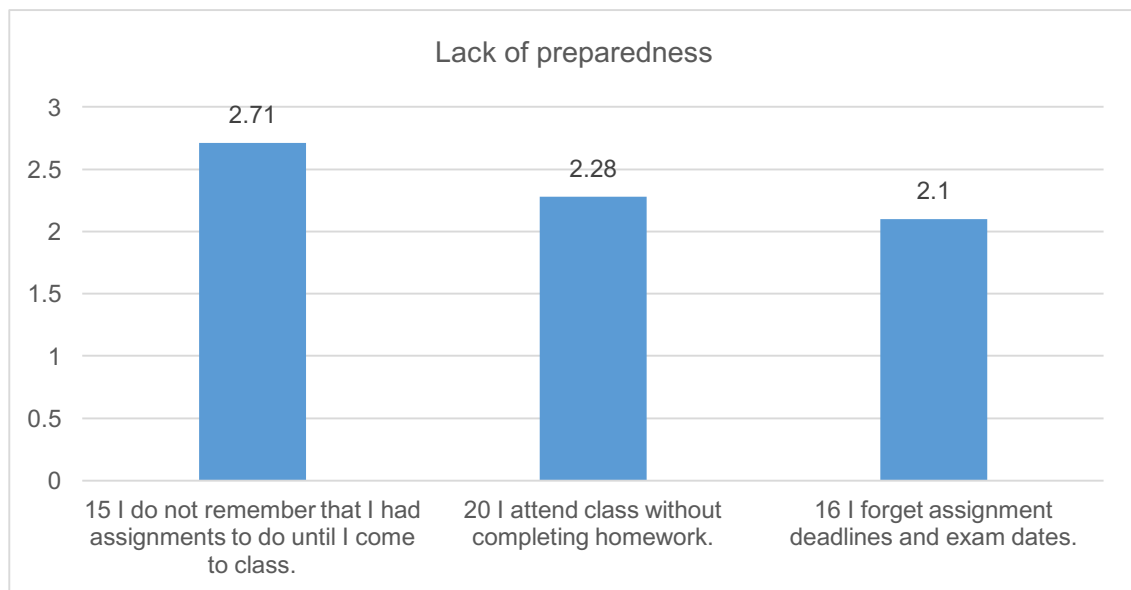


Figure 4: Mean values of measured variables influenced by lack of preparedness.

Participants chose one from a set of response options on a 5-point scale as regards frequency of a particular behavior stated in each question: “never = 1”, “rarely = 2”, “sometimes = 3”, “occasionally = 4” to “frequently = 5”.

Responses on items for distractedness indicate that several distractive behaviors, such as using digital devices and chatting, can be observed (Figure 3). The means for these items come in the range between 1.48 and 2.43, with the mean for the five items being 2.12. The mean for Item 29 was as small as 1.48, indicating most participants’ responses came between “never = 1” and “rarely = 2”. This result might mean many participants are inclined to respect instructors’ request and comply with the behavioral expectations of the class. This characteristic resonates with the discourse of “the well-disciplined behavior of Japanese people”, with “conduct in daily life, social solidarity, and education at home” being “the major components of the moral upbringing of Japanese people” (Iwasa, 2017, p. 1). Meanwhile, responses to the items of lack of preparedness (Figure 4) show a certain degree of carelessness in participants preparing for studies, such as routine homework assignments. However, the level of carelessness becomes moderate when their failure to act entails adverse consequences, such as exam and assignment due dates (Item 16).

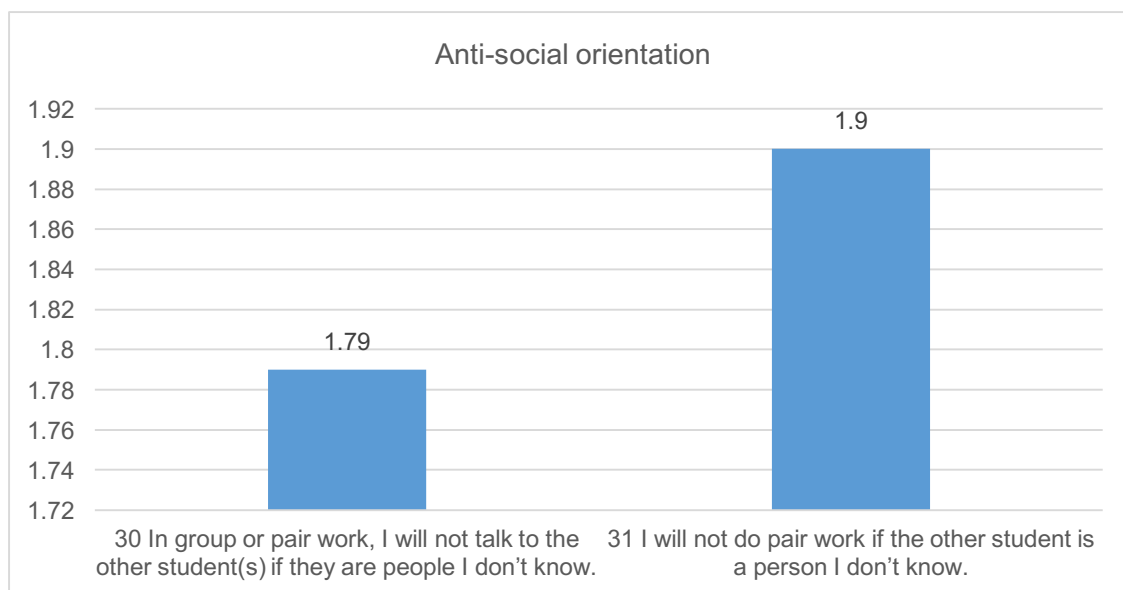


Figure 5: Mean values of measured variables influenced by anti-social orientation.

Participants chose one from a set of response options on a 5-point scale as regards frequency of a particular behavior stated in each question: “never = 1”, “rarely = 2”, “sometimes = 3”, “occasionally = 4” to “frequently = 5”.

The graphs in Figure 5 show that the mean values for anti-social orientation is well below the mid-point of 2.5. This result can be interpreted as a general willingness among participants to cooperate with peers in their studies. In the meantime, the graphs for the statements about lack of focus (Figure 6) show some degree of lack of concentration; although a follow-up survey is necessary to identify the reasons for this scattering of attention.

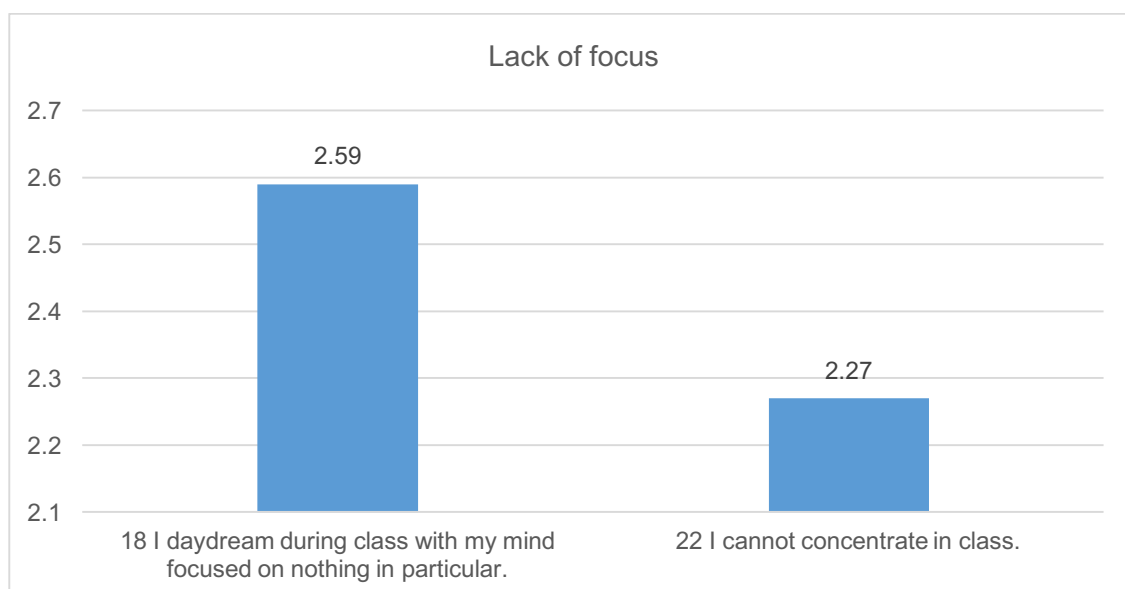


Figure 6: Mean values of measured variables influenced by lack of focus.

Participants chose one from a set of response options on a 5-point scale as regards frequency of a particular behavior stated in each question: “never = 1”, “rarely = 2”, “sometimes = 3”, “occasionally = 4” to “frequently = 5”.

Discussion

The project sets out to measure and interpret students' disengagement as attitudinal and behavioral dispositions in a higher education setting in Japan, drawing on the scholarly observations of local tertiary students (Escandon, 2004; McVeigh, 2002). Overall, the results provided good support for the metric properties of the instrument and the five-factor structure of student disengagement as an attitudinal/behavioral disposition with this sample. The study has three implications. Methodologically, we have tested a new measurement scale to assess students' disengagement as an attitudinal disposition informed by the context-specific concerns as well as the literature. Theoretically, the latent structure of student disengagement has been identified with empirical evidence. Practically, the findings open the path to the development of potentially important educational interventions. For example, the means for lack of preparedness ($M = 2.36$) and lack of focus ($M = 2.43$) factors are slightly higher than those of the other latent factors. These factors play a greater role than other factors in shaping students' course participation or lack thereof. We argue that structures ought to be installed which help predispose students to study preparation whilst focusing on the goals to be achieved in university learning. In the introduction section, we identified some challenges we encountered, such as diversity in students' knowledge base and repertoire of skills, practical teaching design, and learner-centeredness in active learning. The curricular structure and interventions could be redesigned so as to help dispose students to developing positive behavioral patterns for participating in learning. In order to achieve this, a mechanism ought to be built in such that the gap between declarative, "university" knowledge and professional, functional knowledge can be decreased. Bridging this gap may be sought, to raise one example, by installing learner-centered, constructive alignment in the curriculum (Biggs, 2014), which is rarely found in higher education settings in Japan, whereby "what the student does is actually more important in determining what is learned than what the teacher does" (Shuell 1986 as cited in Biggs & Tang, 2011, p. 97).

On a more micro level, we argue, a mechanism that helps generate positive behavioral patterns, such as preparing for class participation as well as investing time in outside class assignments, might be of worth. Although Japan's university dropout rate was 10% as at 2005 – the lowest among the 27 developed countries (Matsutani, 2012) – interventions might be possible to further improve this figure. Theories of achievement and motivation state that students' desires to expand their knowledge, understanding, and skills are major contributors to their level of engagement in academic tasks; particularly important is consideration of the extent to which students hold valued long-term goals and the extent to which they perceive their current learning experiences as leading to the attainment of those goals (Miller, Greene, Montalvo, Ravindran, & Nichols, 1996). Miller et al. indicates "the need to emphasize the coordination of proximal goals with distal valued outcomes (future consequences) since the latter may prove to be important for sustaining effort in academic areas of low interest to students" (p. 416). In a similar vein, Jang (2008) argues that providing a rationale that helps students identify a lecture's otherwise hidden value, understand the worth of their effort, discover the usefulness of the lecture, and discover the personal meaning in the lesson. Jang states that when this instructional strategy is successful, it "can help create an opportunity for students to perceive, accept, and personally endorse – hence internalize the self-system – the value of the learning activity" (pp. 798-799). At any rate, there needs to be a system which sustains our practice and that helps students envision the link between their learning experiences and their career paths beyond university. At this micro level, as the identified latent factor anti-social tendency indicates, we contend that creating an inclusive environment and atmosphere which nurtures mutual respect and support among students would be an asset in helping shape more

interpersonal, peer interactions and discussion participation that could potentially lead to cooperative, active engagement. Palloff and Pratt (2005) identifies a learning community as a vehicle through which a course is efficiently conducted: “[b]y learning together in a learning community, students have the opportunity to extend and deepen their learning experience, test out new ideas by sharing them with a supportive group, and receive critical and constructive feedback” (p. 8). Likewise, Elboj and Niemela (2010) have observed an increase in dynamic and supportive interactions along with the solidarity among students by providing them with dialogic and collaborative learning environments. In a series of these efforts to enhance the quality of education, the instrument as we propose here could be used to assess the usefulness of pedagogical interventions by monitoring possible flux in student attitudinal and behavioral patterns and identifying the structure which potentially helps shape positive patterns.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have proposed a scale to measure student disengagement in a tertiary setting in Japan. We have identified the five-factor structure, and the metric properties of the scale were generally well supported. This instrument might be put to use for a diagnostic purpose in higher education. The mean value for each item and factor was below the mid-point of 2.5 on a five-point scale, except Items 15 and 18. This can be construed that most students at the university are well-behaved and diligent, and receptive to the active, collaborative learning style that we facilitate in our English as a foreign language classrooms. This result is in line with our observation of student behavior and performance in our classes at the university. Meanwhile, some limitations warrant caution. First, the measures were self-reports, which might have invited bias in terms of social desirability (Oppenheim, 1992) and self-deception (Hopkins, Stanley, & Hopkins, 1990). Under certain circumstances, people might intentionally claim that they are better than they are, while unconsciously minimizing faults and maximizing virtues in order to maintain a sense of self-worth. It ought to be noted, however, that self-reports offer a range of advantages and may constitute the method of choice for exploring a construct which involves both intra- and extra-psychic processes, such as resistance and misbehavior (Alpert, 1991). Nevertheless, the reliability of the questionnaire should be further reinforced through other means, such as reports via students’ self-observation notes, and interviews and focus-groups. Second, because participation in the study was voluntary, it is possible that the participants were the “well-behaved” of the students who were approached. Third, the validity of the instrument was explored among the convenience sample of engineering students only. The scale needs to be cross-validated with larger student cohorts across disciplines and institutions: Factor structures should be further corroborated by conducting confirmatory factor analysis with a larger dataset.

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Appendix

English Version of the Original Questionnaire Items

Item N	How much do you agree with these statements regarding your behavior? 1 = Never; 2 = Seldom; 3 = Sometimes; 4 = Often; 5 = Very often
1	I sit near the back of the classroom.
2	I sit alone away from other students in class.
3	I attend lectures without sufficient sleep or with fatigue from part-time work or club activity.
4	I avoid making eye contact with the teacher when he/she is going to call on students.
5	I repeatedly cut class.
6	I do not attend class on key dates such as quizzes and exams.
7	I oversleep and cut class.
8	I cut class and do something of priority outside school (e.g., socializing with friends, part-time job, family, etc.).
9	I do not respond when the teacher calls on me.
10	I pretend not to be aware of being called upon by the teacher.
11	When called on I discuss the question being asked of and/or the response with fellow students before giving an answer.
12	I pretend as if I have thought out the teacher's question.
13	I pretend as if I were paying attention, but I am actually doing something else such as texting on my phone and doing assignments for another course.
14	I forget to bring necessary materials to class.
15	I do not remember that I had assignments to do until I come to class.
16	I forget assignment deadlines and exam dates.
17	I nap in class.
18	I daydream during class with my mind focused on nothing in particular.
19	I do not take notes of important points in class.
20	I attend class without completing homework.
21	I resort to copying fellow students' assignments or work.
22	I cannot concentrate in class.
23	I fail exams.
24	I get the exam details from friends.
25	I fail to meet assignment requirements.
26	I chat about things unrelated to lecture contents.
27	I use digital devices such as smartphones for non-class purposes during class.
28	I groom myself in class (e.g., do makeup, look in the mirror).
29	I disregard requests to be quiet and soon get back to chatting with friends.
30	In group or pair work, I will not talk to the other student(s) if they are people I don't know.
31	I will not do pair work if the other student is a person I don't know.
32	I do not take a course if I have to do a presentation in class.
33	I do not take a course if it has group- or pair-work activities in class.
34	I will not take a course if it has a teacher hovering over in class to talk to individual students.



**Discourses on Empowerment in Adult Learning: A View on
Renewed Learning**

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Abstract

The paper examines critically the dimension of empowerment in the European discourse, starting from some operational definitions used in official documents. The author analyses the shift in the European documents from 2000 to recent years, from a lifelong learning vision to an adult education approach, basically labour market – oriented, thus leaving aside the social cohesion and self-emancipatory dossiers. Against this background, a theoretical approach derived from the categories of transaction and reflexivity is suggested, setting out from the works of John Dewey. This paper investigates whether the categories of experience, problem posing and emancipation are more suitable for a long-term project on adult learning than the categories of activation, problem solving, and empowerment.

Keywords: empowerment; adult education; European policy; reflexivity; Dewey.

Introduction

Some Operational Definitions of Empowerment

The basic question addressed in this paper is: Is empowerment a key concept for Adult learning? The paper examines the dimension of empowerment in the European discourse, starting from some operational definitions used in international and European Commission documents. It investigates whether the categories of experience, problem posing and emancipation are more suitable for a long-term project on adult learning than the categories of activation, problem solving, and empowerment. The shift in international and European documents from 2000 to recent years, from a lifelong learning vision to an adult education approach, basically labour market – oriented, are analysed in the first section of the essay. Against this background, a theoretical approach derived from the categories of transaction and reflexivity is suggested, setting out from the reflections of Dewey (1916; 1925; 1933; 1949) and Mezirow (1978; 2000).

In this perspective, it is first of all necessary to analyse the context of the notion of empowerment, by analysing some selected operational definitions given in official documents from the European Commission and from international agencies:

Empowerment is the process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. Central to this process are actions which both build individual and collective assets, and improve the efficiency and fairness of the organizational and institutional context which govern the use of these assets. (Alsop, Bertelsen, & Holland, 2006, p. 1)

Confident, informed and empowered consumers are the motor of economic change as their choices drive innovation and efficiency (Commission of the European Commission, 2007, p. 2). Empowered and informed consumers can more easily make changes in lifestyle and consumption patterns contributing to the improvement of their health, more sustainable lifestyles and a low carbon economy (p. 11).

Strengthening girls' and women's voice, and facilitating their participation and empowerment, is at the heart of the Commission services' and the EEAS' efforts to enhancing gender equality through external relations. (European Commission, 2015, p. 10)

The concept of empowerment in these definitions seems to be related to notions such as agency, autonomy, self-direction, self-determination, liberation, participation, mobilization and self-confidence (Ibrahim & Alkire, 2007). The term empowerment, as an umbrella concept, has been developed in social and educational literature and policy documents since the 1960s, and it has been used to describe the empowerment of marginalized individuals or groups (e.g., minorities, disabled people, women) to mobilize self-activation against social constraints or to encourage the development of entrepreneurship. Even among scholars, many definitions of empowerment have been given since the 1980s: Rappaport (1984) defines empowerment as “a process: the mechanism by which people, organizations, and communities gain mastery over their lives” (p. 2). Craig and Mayo (1995) describe empowerment as being about collective community and class conscientization, so as to challenge the powerful and ultimately to

transform the reality through conscious political struggle. For Zimmerman (2000), empowerment is a tripartite concept articulated at the individual, organisational and community levels. Albertyn (2001), from a similar position, estimates that empowerment is recognizable only if change occurs at each of three levels: micro (attitude, feeling and skills), interface (participation and action around the individual, and macro (beliefs, action and effects).

Moser (1993) like Narayan (2005) refers to expanding assets and capabilities to participate in, influence, and control institutions which affect everyday life; Grootaert and van Bastelaer (2002) introduce the notion of social capital and social institutions building as a further feature of empowerment. Alsop (2006), to the contrary, puts emphasis on the individual's capacity to make effective choices, that is, to obtain the desired actions and outcomes.

From Development and Emancipation to Functional Learning and Empowerment

In relation to adult learning, the notion of empowerment appears only in the late 1990s when the market labour-oriented dossier and economic issues prevail on the first enunciation on adult learning policy. The notion of lifelong learning in the contemporary world can be traced back in the 1960s, to the definition given by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), to meet the challenges of a changing world. The second International Conference on Adult Education held in 1960 on the theme *Adult Education in a Changing World* stated that:

Recognizing the importance of Adult Education in a world of rapid change, this Conference urges all Member States of UNESCO to invest a higher proportion of their resources in the development of Adult Education (p. 2).

The following Faure Report, in 1972, *Learning to Be* (UNESCO) underlined that “we propose education as the master concept for educational policies in the years to come for both developed and developing countries” (Faure, Herrera, Kaddoura, Lopes, Petrovsky, Rahnema, & Ward, 1972). Thus a holistic interpretation of lifelong learning is usually adopted in relation to the Faure Report, which claimed that:

Every individual must be in a position to keep learning throughout his life. The idea of lifelong education is the keystone of the learning society. The lifelong concept covers all aspects of education, embracing everything in it, with the whole being more than the sum of its parts. There is no such thing as a separate “permanent” part of education which is not lifelong. In other words, lifelong education is not an educational system but the principle in which the over-all organization of a system is founded, and which accordingly underlies the development of each of its component parts (pp. 181–82).

As Schuetze (2006) stated, Faure's idea of lifelong education “formulated the philosophical-political concept of a humanistic, democratic and emancipatory system of learning opportunities for everybody, independent of class, race or financial means, and independent of the age of learner” (p. 290). However, in parallel with this humanistic interpretation of lifelong education, the OECD reframed its lifelong discourse in more economic and employability terms as suggested in its report, entitled: “Recurrent Education: A Strategy for Lifelong Learning” (1973) and underlined by Gelpi (1980) who pointed out that “in the industrialized countries at the time of the economic boom of the 1960's, the ideology of lifelong education =

general education reflected in effect the necessity for the rapid training of workers at average and higher levels in the vocational field” (pp. 1–2).

Twenty-eight years after the Faure Report, lifelong education has been transformed into lifelong learning. In 1996 UNESCO’s Delors Report it was underlined that learning was a key to the twenty-first century, and learning throughout life will be essential for adapting to the evolving requirements of the labour market and for better mastery of the changing time-frames and rhythms of individual existence. Further, it was emphasized that:

There is a need to rethink and broaden the notion of lifelong education. Not only must it adapt to changes in the nature of work, but it must also constitute a continuous process of forming whole beings—their knowledge and aptitudes, as well as the critical faculty and ability to act. It should enable people to develop awareness of themselves and their environment and encourage them to play their social role and work in the community (p. 21).

Several studies share the same conclusions: the presence of three main phases and points of view on lifelong learning (Antikainen, 2009; Matheson and Matheson, 1996; Bagnall, 1990). The first phase is represented by the humanistic concept, and the focus during the 1960’s would have been on more comprehensive and integrated goals such as developing more human individuals and communities able to face social change. The second phase, after the 1980’s, is connected with retraining and learning new skills that would enable workers to cope with the change in the labour market and new technologies. The more economic point of view taken by the both the OECD and the European Union, as Holford & Špolar (2014) pointed out, is also related to recurrent education: education after compulsory schooling to alternate with periods of work and other social activity. In the third and present phase lifelong learning has become more individual-oriented: Griffin (1999) points out that emphasis in the lifelong learning discourse on the learner could also be interpreted as assigning more agencies to individuals in contrast to the previous thrust on institutions, and structures. This means that the welfare state tries to abdicate its responsibility to provide opportunities in the labour market.

The Delors Report established the basis for the lifelong and life-wide prospect of lifelong learning, giving way to the non – formal and informal learning to be recognised in the context of the “learning society”, but some scholars observe that “by highlighting economic concerns, the dominant discourse on lifelong learning offers a narrow and fragmented appreciation of women and men’s roles in societies. In Europe, where there were record numbers of unemployed in the nineties, lifelong learning was reintroduced to mean mere retraining” (Medel-Añonuevo, Ohsako, & Mauch, 2001, p. 5).

Within a framework of global crisis, job uncertainty, decreasing demand for low-skilled labour, and increased demand for highly qualified workers, lifelong learning “has gradually come to be appropriated more and more within the narrower instrumentalist discourse of further training and professional development” (Wain, 2001, p. 187).

In 1994 the European Lifelong Learning Initiative (ELLI) and the European Commission organised the “First Global Conference on Lifelong Learning - A Survival Concept for the 21st Century”, which stressed the importance of lifelong learning as initial and continuing education:

Education policy must provide for a continuous series of "second chance" trains and lifelong occasions to re-adapt, to develop one's intellectual and human potential, and to unlock the human creativity essential to coping with global change in such areas as the environment, population, employment and communications (p. 3).

Even in the UNESCO's CONFINTEA V, held in Hamburg in 1997, lifelong learning had a central role, both connected with the economic rationale and the wider societal objectives: "a contrast is often made between Faure's (1972) maximalist, humanistic and liberating view of lifelong education, with a more pragmatic and economic perspective – adopted by international organisations such as the OECD, the EU, and the World Bank – tending to treat lifelong learning more instrumentally, as a means to achieve employability" (Holford, & Špolar, 2014, p. 38).

Education was raised to the attention of the European Commission's policies only with the *Maastricht Treaty*, (Treaty on European Union [TEU], 1992) when it was only a marginal concept, but the growing international competition showed the need for economic development through education policies: "the Commission began to show interest particularly in vocationally-oriented areas of lifelong learning such as school-to-work transitions and 'adult anti-illiteracy campaigns'" (Holford, Riddell, Weedon, Litjens, & Hannan, 2008, p. 46).

1996 was proclaimed the European Year of Lifelong Learning, which had the main purpose to "make the European public aware of the importance of lifelong learning, to foster better cooperation between education and training structures and the business community, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises, to help to establish a European area of education and training through the academic and vocational recognition of qualifications within the European Union, and to stress the contribution made by education and training to the equality of opportunities" (European Parliament and Council Decision n° 95/2493/EC of 23 October 1995 establishing 1996 as the European Year of Lifelong Learning, p. 1)

The main contribution to the global debate was the life wide and lifelong approach as defined by the cradle to grave formula, putting in the centre of the discussion not only the economic aspects of learning but also issues such as "personal growth, participation in the democratic decision-making process, recreational learning and active aging", as claimed by the European Commission (ibidem, p. 1). Next in the European strategy was the large debate on new basic skills: information technology, foreign languages, entrepreneurship and social skills.

As Holford & Špolar underline, "If the key characteristic of lifelong education as conceptualised in the 1970s (and used in the UNESCO vocabulary until CONFINTEA V) was its humanistic dimension, when lifelong learning emerged in national and international policies in the 1990s, the emphasis was firmly on aiding economic performance, whether individual or societal... Human capital has been closely associated with neo-liberal ideology; this approach can be seen in the *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* (CEC, 2000)." (2014, p. 41).

The *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* derived from the conclusions of the Lisbon European Council, in 2000 when the Lisbon Strategy was launched, in order to make "the European Union the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world" (Commission Staff Working Paper, *A Memorandum on Lifelong Learning*, 2000, p. 3).

The conclusions of the Lisbon European Council confirmed that "the move towards lifelong learning must accompany a successful transition to a knowledge-based economy and society.

Therefore, Europe's education and training systems are at the heart of the coming changes" (Commission Staff Working Paper, *A Memorandum on Lifelong Learning*, 2000, p. 3).

The six key messages contained (new basic skills for all; more investment in human resources; innovation in teaching and learning; valuing learning; rethinking guidance and counselling and bringing learning closer to home) were intended to create a framework for an open debate: the action plan which stemmed from the *Memorandum* consultation, *Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality* (Commission of the European Communities [CEC], 2001) changed the priorities, "indicating a clear neoliberal agenda for economic growth through education and Adult learning" (Holford and Špolar, 2012).

In the following years, the European Council launched the *Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training (ET2020)* (Council of the European Union [CEU], 2009): while in the document active citizenship and personal fulfilment is related to economic growth and employability, a deeper analysis of the document reveals that lifelong learning is only ancillary to employability rather than to social cohesion, active citizenship and personal fulfilment.

What is particularly remarkable here is that the European Union has been successful in shifting the policy discourse from collectivities (communities or social classes) to individuals. The social justice dossier still evoked in the 1960s and 1970s through the emphasis on citizenship has been turned into inclusion: there is no room for social distribution, but only for functional integration. "The recent developments of Commission proposals reveal a strong preference for a liberal social model, even in relation to learning policies." (Somek, 2013, p. 49). The individual has been put at the centre, even in the bargaining procedures for training and education at workplaces: the Individual Learning Account - ILA, theorized and applied as an approach in the nineties, especially in peripheral and smaller contexts has produced the prevalence of stronger and explicit demand for training and education (those who already have an easy access to training and education) thus leaving implicit and hidden the weaker components (those who are, in fact, most in need of training and education).

In the following years, the European Council launched the *Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training (ET2020)* (CEU, 2009): while in the document active citizenship and personal fulfilment is related to economic growth and employability, a deeper analysis of the document reveals that lifelong learning is only ancillary to employability more than to social cohesion, active citizenship and personal fulfilment.

The *Agenda for New Skills and Jobs: European Contribution Towards Full Employment* (CEU, 2010) and the *Renewed European Agenda for Adult Learning* (CEU 2011) recognize the role of lifelong learning to cope with the economic and employment crisis. "The crisis has highlighted the major role which adults can play in achieving the *Europe 2020* goals, by enabling adults – in particular the low-skilled and older workers – to improve their ability to adapt to changes in the labour market and society. Adult learning provides a means of up-skilling or reskilling those affected by unemployment, restructuring and career transitions, as well as makes an important contribution to social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development" (CEU 2011, 372/01, p. 1).

Adult learning is tightly tied to the broad empowerment concept and its characteristics: activation of the individuals, adaptation to changes (flexibility, *in primis*) in the society and labour market. As Holford and Mohorčič (2014) claim, "Though still given an important

position in policy, its focus has shifted towards areas which were seen as bringing employability, employment and income. The Adult learning agenda has narrowed, concentrating on more specific areas such as basic skills, increasing the proportion of 30–34 year-olds who have completed tertiary education (to 40% by 2020), and monitoring the Adult learning sector (including through the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competences PIAAC)” (p. 45).

The contemporary European discourse on Adult learning has given rise to an “emerging right to individuality” (Franck, 1999, p. 1), which is parallel to the decline of the community. “Individual freedom and empowerment are evaluated from a functional perspective if their realization is viewed as desirable with regard to what they contribute.... It becomes possible, then, to imagine a functional form of emancipation, that is, emancipation from being dysfunctional, or, put differently, emancipation in the state of liberalization and privatization” (Somek, 2013, p. 61). Empowerment when concerning individuals or groups is always involving activation on the basis of an empowering intervention such as a psychological counselling or a sociological project or developing management. In the empowerment approach, social change starts from individuals, basically considered, or grouped together by some common features. The activation of mere individuals or grouped individuals are functional to the economic issues of the European Union: empowerment is relevant to obtain more efficient production, better and cheaper products, or “to help individuals adjust to globalisation and technological change” (CEC, 2008 – 412, p. 5). In a few words, to come back to our adult education and training issues, in the Renewed Social Agenda it is clearly stated that, “Education and investing in human capital formation in general is critical to ensure labour participation and social inclusion and to enhance the competitiveness of the EU” (CEC, 2008 – 412, p. 6) Two decades after the Faure’s Report and the raising of lifelong learning to the attention of the EU policy agenda, the social and cultural issues related to adult learning seems to be considered as irrelevant and redundant in comparison with the skills maintenance and competitiveness dossier.

For a Different Notion of Adulthood

In this section a notion of adulthood different from the neo-liberal paradigm so far illustrated, is suggested. This conception of an adult as being characterized in relation to his or her functions – workers, citizen, father and mother – as we have examined in the previous section, seems to be the premise of another definition, in which the adulthood is conceived as the arrival point of a cycle, that through subsequent “stages” leads the individual to his psychic and physiological maturity (Alberici, 2002, p. 78). Both the functional and the stadial approach, placing emphasis on an adult conceived as the product of evolutionary phases or social roles, they pay little attention to the process that leads the individual to become an adult, which is basically a process of learning and reflexivity.

Many factors (precarious living conditions, economic globalization, technological changes, crisis of traditional gender roles, etc.) undermine the adult model as a result, the final product of a unique stadial development. “Facing these changes, it seems relevant to identify possible and different adult identities as plots, paths of growth involving individuals, but also as indispensable fulcrums and pivots to orientate the development of the society” (Alberici, 2002, p. 78).

Overcoming a dichotomous conception of adult identity, either as a response to functional tasks, or as fulfilment of social roles in the community, there appears to be a third line of

research in the field of adult education, the one linked to the interaction of these components with a dimension of self-care, that is expressed in the need and the ability to reflect on him- or herself, on his or her path and also in the projection of a possible future.

This emphasis on the complexity and versatility of being adult does not justify adulthood as an unstructured, disengaged, weak condition, on the contrary, it leads to an evolutionary continuity, in which individuals continuously redefine new objectives in terms of personal, professional, social fulfilment. Adulthood is no longer the quiet harbour of the ‘Prudent Man’, but rather a continual work of weaving which is characterized by a transition from one apical phase in the process of defining adult identity, to another. As a result, the multidisciplinary approach is the only one able to investigate and interpret the multiple assets and paths in adulthood. And, again, the permanent state of change and transformation justifies the paradigm of lifelong learning, putting a specific accent on reflective and experiential learning. In this field of investigation, learning is basically a process of meaning construction, where the apical and everyday experiences become the substratum of knowledge through continuous reorganization of heuristic, explorative and investigative functions. Knowledge and learning are so configured as part of an eminently constructivist approach.

From these premises, even learning and cognitive processes are part of a process of development and transformation: knowledge for the adult not only has an individual value, but is also something that is produced and reproduced, it is exchanged and negotiated during activities and social practices.

From Activity to Experience, from Problem Solving to Problem Posing

In this paragraph, the notions of experience and reflexivity are explored as possible alternatives to the already discussed notion of activity and empowerment. This different approach to learning and education in adulthood gives way to the definition of learning given by Dewey (1916) as “a continual reorganization, reconstruction and transformation of experience” (p. 50). Dewey distinguishes carefully between activity and experience: only the attribution of a sense and significance makes mere activity an experience, “Mere activity does not constitute experience. It is dispersive, centrifugal, dissipating. Experience as trying involves change, but change is meaningless transition unless it is consciously connected with the return wave of consequences which flow from it. When an activity is continued into the undergoing of consequences, when the change made by action is reflected back into a change made in us, the mere flux is loaded with significance” (Dewey, 1916, p. 163).

An educative experience is one in which we find a connection between how we act on things and what happens to things or to us in consequence; the value of an experience consists in the awareness of a continuity, which consists in a relationship among events. But what is the direction of this continuity? Any experience is, after all, a social experience, is accomplished in contact and communication, and requires a transmission from humans who have preceded us, it is therefore not merely individual experience, but on the contrary, “There are sources outside an individual that give rise to experience and external conditions always affect educational experiences” (Dewey, 1916, p. 24). The experience in Dewey is therefore perceived as the totality of natural phenomena, in their relations and transactions with the individual.

The second essential principle for discriminating the experiences leading to learning from those which do not is in fact, that of interaction. Interaction assigns “equal rights to both factors in

experience-object and internal conditions” (Dewey, 1938, pp. 38–39). Moreover, “any normal experience is an interplay of these two sets of conditions. Taken together, or in their interaction, they form what we call a situation” (Dewey, 1938, p. 39). As a result, the individuals always live in “the series of situation” (Dewey, 1938, p. 41), and the conceptions of situation and of interaction are inseparable from each other. The two principles of continuity and interaction are connected to one another. They are the longitudinal and lateral dimension of the experience.

The other capital aspect in Dewey is reflective learning: according to Dewey reflective thinking is somewhat uncomfortable and it causes perplexity when an individual encounters a situation whose “whole full character is not yet determined” (Dewey, 1933, p. 157). The internal experience for the learner is one of disequilibrium, until the search for a balance drives the learner to do something to resolve it, thus starting the process of enquiry and reflection.

To have a genuine process of reflective thinking it is necessary to be able to linger in the doubt and the perplexity of having no precise judgment on a fact or experience. This means that reflective thinking, and the process of enquiry, should be actively taught: in other words, adult learning should be concerned also by this question – how to teach adults to think – “One man’s thought is profound while another’s is superficial; one goes to the roots of the matter, and another touches lightly its most external aspects. This phase of thinking is perhaps the most untaught of all, and the least amenable to external influence whether for improvement or harm. The common assumptions that, if one only thinks, one thought is just as good for his mental discipline as another, and that the end of study is the amassing of information, both tend to foster superficial, at the expense of significant, thought” (Dewey, MW 6, p. 210). “The result of the process of enquiry is “enriched meaning and value in things” (Dewey, 1929 (LW 1; EN, p. 20), which means that present things are charged with significance because they are signs of absent things and this suggestion is confirmed by the present experience. We are still in the continuity of experience, “inferring signs in the present things and giving them a significance makes the individuals more able to impress direction to themselves and to their environment, as it gives increased power of control” (Dewey, 1929, LW1; EN p. 83).

Following the suggestions from Dewey’s works, we can observe that the accent on problem solving adopted in measuring the performance of adults (International Adult Literacy Survey – IALS (1994–1998); Second International Adult Literacy Survey – SIALS (1999–2000); Adult Literacy and Lifeskill – ALL (2001–2004); Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies – PIAAC (2010–2012) should not leave aside the question of how adults learn to solve problems and if it is possible to teach how to improve this cognitive process.

In this context, the work of Mezirow (1978) is relevant, as this author elaborated an approach to reflective thinking where, starting out from the works of Dewey, he subsequently develops a critique of the premises, the conditions preceding the inquiry and the problem solving. In this regard Mezirow states that Dewey meant critical thinking as the process by which assumptions are examined and validated, but he never explicitly differentiated between reflection on the content of an issue or on problem solving process and the function, here called “reflection on premises” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 7), which implies a review of the assumptions.

Therefore, according to Mezirow, while Dewey explains reflective thinking as a tool for problem solving, transformative theory emphasizes the process of reflection as a process of critical revision of the premises, such as the patterns and perspectives of meaning, with reference to the problem setting or problem posing process.

In Mezirow's thought, through reflection, we can analyse objectively the logic used to give interpretation of everyday life, so as to become critically aware of our own presuppositions and to challenge our established and habitual patterns of expectation and meaning perspectives.

The central function of reflection in Mezirow is identified as that of validating what is known. Reflection, in the context of problem solving, commonly focuses on procedures or methods. It may also focus on premises. Reflection on premises involves a critical view of distorted presuppositions that may be *epistemic*, *sociocultural* or *psychic*, meaning schemes and perspectives that are not viable are transformed through reflection. Uncritically assimilated meaning perspectives, which determine what, how, and why we learn, may be transformed through critical reflection, "Reflection on one's own premises can lead to transformative learning" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 57).

The transformative theory embraces not only the methods of analysis of experiences, but also the structures that the adult uses in the process of interpretation of the experience and the process of modification of the same structures. So, for Mezirow transformative thinking in adult education is first of all emancipatory as it explores new and different hypothesis from those commonly accepted from previous relationships with oneself and with the society. Transformative learning involves a particular function of reflection: reassessing the presuppositions on which our beliefs are based and acting on insights derived from the transformed meaning perspective that results from such reassessments. "Emancipatory education is an organized effort to help the learner challenge presuppositions, explore alternative perspectives, transform old ways of understanding, and act on new perspectives". (Mezirow, 2003, p. 212)

Against this background, the collective action, so often evoked in the paradigm of empowerment, is only consecutive to the acquired awareness of the social inequalities and asymmetrical power relationships that perpetuate this inequalities, "Learners need to become critically reflective of how these factors have shaped the ways they think and their beliefs so they may take collective action to ameliorate them" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 28). In this context central to the goal of Adult learning in democratic societies is the aim of helping learners become more aware of the context of their understandings and beliefs, more critically reflective on their tenets, and more effective in taking action. In this context, curriculum, instructional methods, material assessment, and faculty and staff development should address both learner objectives and this goal of education.

Adult Learning, Competent Oligarchy and Functional Illiteracy

This passage deals with the contemporary state of the art in the field of adult education and learning in the industrialized countries. At the end of the section some experiences relevant at the beginnings of adult education in Italy are evoked as suggestions in order to get out of the described *impasse*.

In all the industrialized countries we are witnessing a trend towards a basic division of the population into layers, represented by advantaged groups with higher level of alphabetic culture and larger disadvantaged groups with a consumerist push, though excluded from a valid cultural fruition and with few instruments to allow a deep analysis of symbols and meanings of the current culture. This majority is not only represented by a marginalized component, but

also by people who actively participate in the benefits of economic development at least with a high consumption capacity.

As an example, what we observe in Italy, in recent years, is that even though the prolongation of school years (compulsory school lasts 10 years, from 6 to 16 years old) has guaranteed primary literacy for all, the current trend of diffusion of illiteracy maintains a connotation opposite to the democratic development of the society. In fact, the spread of illiteracy in every advanced country seems to go along with a lack of awareness on the part of the illiterate themselves about the limits resulting from the regression of their literacy skills: on the contrary, the process of development of contemporary society in the last century was driven by the claim for a more central role on behalf of those who were held in the margins of communication and knowledge processes. In short, it is alarming that the spread of media and internet has suggested a perception of adequacy related to the possibility of easy access to information and fast communication, nevertheless omitting the ability to approach a wealth of knowledge of greater consistency, stability and depth, but with a greater effort in the access. "The illiteracy seems to be accompanied by a failure in the capacity of reflection, which corresponds to a reduced ability to interpret phenomena in rapid transformation as are those of the modern world... the illiterate component of the society is opposed to the elite with advanced literacy skills, which enable a high level of understanding: the latter represents the new oligarchy" (Vertecchi, 2001, p. 47).

Another concerning phenomenon can be observed in the characteristics of the Italian population as measured in IALS-SIALS surveys on literacy skills and more recently in PIAAC: level 3 of competence (intermediate) are growing only very slowly in the younger age groups who already participate in the labor market (26–35 years old). The slow increase of skills in younger ages does not seem to go hand in hand with the expansion of access to secondary education in Italy from the 1980s to today: this could therefore bring us to conclude that without a policy for the maintenance of acquired skills the fall of skills and competences cannot be effectively tackled, including the key competences related to numeracy and literacy.

Against this contemporary scenario, it is interesting to recall the first experiences that characterize the beginnings of adult education in Italy, primarily those referring to *It's Never Too Late* TV programmes in the 1960s – aiming at fighting illiteracy, and the right to 150 paid hours for study leave – a policy for the education of workers during the 1970s. On November 15, 1960, a series of television broadcasts started in Italy, entitled *It's Never Too Late*, that would bring, in the next eight years, more than one million illiterate people to achieve a primary school certificate. The program was conducted by an elementary school teacher, Alberto Manzi, had a thrice-weekly structure, included lessons in Italian and mathematics and could be followed over two thousand receiving points scattered throughout Italy: in bars, cafes, clubs of the peninsula. The program *It's Never Too Late* was later awarded by UNESCO (Teheran 1965, World Conference on Literacy) as one of the best television programs for the fight against illiteracy. The evolution of adult education, in the following years, is parallel to the claim for the right to study for workers, consisting of 150 hours of study leaves a year, which has been gradually recognized in national contracts, starting from the textile sector in 1957, and finally fully established in the Workers' Statute in 1970.

In both experiences, the *It's Never Too Late* courses for literacy on the television during the 1960s, and the claim for the right to 150 paid study hours during the 1970s, some common traits explain their success, which can be useful to recall at present: first of all an associative or collective context that, more than to focus on the individual, offers meanings and values in order to motivate to learning; then, an adult education strategy which focuses on training needs,

and not only on the activation of a passive subject; a meaningful and transformative learning particularly relevant for the weaker side of the demand for education, which brings to increase lasting and fruitful skills, not only adaptive but also reflective competence so as to give tools to the individuals to renew skills and knowledge.

Conclusions

The article moved from an initial question: Is empowerment a key concept for adult learning? Through the analysis of the international and European documents on adult education and learning the shift from a lifelong learning to a labour-market oriented paradigm has been argued, as well as the swap between the emancipation dossier – with its inclusive, collective and democratic issues – and the empowering dossier, where the functional aspects of learning are emphasised; communities are reduced to targets (of disadvantaged categories; of census; of entrepreneurs) and citizens are reduced to consumers; workers are required to be active and functional and not good learners and a short-term evaluation of learning and teaching is prevailing.

The author's suggestion, moving from Dewey's and Mezirow's works, is to restore the notion of experience and emancipation in the paradigm of adult learning, so as to overtake the neo-liberal paradigm of empowerment.

Even at the local level, in national policies, experiences that have been successful in tackling functional illiteracy should be rediscovered and launched. The author quoted two experiences in Italy during the 1960s and the 1970s (*It's Never Too Late* television programmes to fight illiteracy and the claim for 150 paid hours for study in national agreements) which were characterised by some common traits, that should be now be brought to light again, such as a collective context; meanings and values in order to motivate especially the weaker side of the demand for learning; a transformative learning which brings to increase not only adaptive skills, but also lasting and reflective competences in order to renew learning throughout life.

Global neo-liberalism insists on considering us as individuals who compete – winning or losing – in the labour market. Still, the neo liberal paradigm recognizes the right to study and to training: we should consider to use this right to acquire the capacities of a freely thinking human being and citizen, acting with creative and social needs, not only as human capital.

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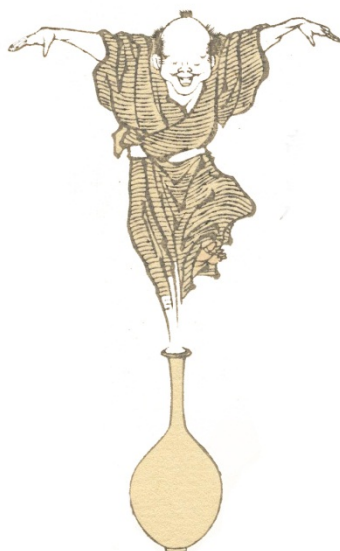
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Factors Affecting Teachers' Perceived Proficiency in Using ICT in the Classroom

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Abstract

Effective implementation of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) plays an important role in school education, especially in a developing country like India, to improve the quality of education. School teachers' lack of confidence and motivation for using ICT is one of the major barriers of its implementation in schools. These barriers can be either non-manipulative (i.e. which cannot be changed) or manipulative (i.e. which can be changed with the help of school/government policies). This paper studies the impact of non-manipulative and manipulative teachers' factors on their perceived proficiency in using ICT in the classrooms. It uses the primary data of 515 school teachers from the Maharashtra region of India teaching at high-school level (8th grade to 12th grade). The study concludes that both non-manipulative as well as manipulative teachers' factors are important in affecting teachers' perception regarding their own proficiency in using ICT in the classrooms. The study also provides some suggestions to improve the perception by changing some manipulative factors.

Keywords: ICT; manipulative and non-manipulative teachers' factors; teachers' perceived confidence.

Introduction

One of the major challenges in school education in a developing country like India is to bring better quality and standardization. Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) can be a very valuable tool to tackle this problem. ICT not only helps in the teaching and learning process, it also helps in assessment and evaluation, as well as in promoting inclusive education (Tikam, 2013). ICT can provide better access to educational resources, improve the quality of learning, improve teachers' productivity and can act as an effective tool to bridge the digital divide between various socio-economic strata. It also enhances students' participation which improves their success rate (Naji, 2017). Success or failure of ICT implementation depends on how teachers perceive themselves to be proficient in using ICT in the classroom. Teachers' perception related to their proficiency is influenced both by non-manipulative teachers' factors (demographic characteristics of the teachers) and manipulative teachers' factors (such as language of delivery, school board, training facilities, etc.) This paper studies the influence of non-manipulative as well as manipulative teachers' factors in forming their perception relating to their proficiency in using ICT in the classroom. It uses the primary data of 515 teachers teaching at high school level (8th grade to 12th grade) from Mumbai Metropolitan Region, Maharashtra, India.

Literature Review

ICT stands for a diverse set of technological tools and resources used to communicate and to create, disseminate, store and manage information. Existing research has proven a positive relationship between the active and positive role of the teachers and the successful implementation of ICT in the classrooms (Granger et al., 2002). Afshari et al. (2009) made a distinction between non-manipulative and manipulative teacher factors. Non-manipulative factors are those such as a teacher's age, work experience, gender, etc. which cannot be influenced by the external environment or by the school. Manipulative factors are those such as the school board, the language of delivery, teachers' training programs, infrastructure, etc. which can be influenced by the external environment or by school management. This classification is also adopted by other researchers such as Drent and Meelissen (2008).

Many authors have made an attempt to see the effect of personal attributes of the teachers on successful implementation of ICT. Buaneng-Andoh (2012) stated that personal characteristics like gender, age, educational qualifications and teaching experience of the teachers play an important role in effective implementation of ICT in the classrooms.

Gender is one of the attributes which affects the attitude towards computers. The discussion on 'gender' as an attribute affecting teachers' factor is important as it might have a long-term impact on implementation of ICT in the classrooms. It can also throw some light on policy implication at the school as well as at the governmental level. Volman et al. (2005) reported that girls show a lower attitude to learning ICT based skills from secondary school onwards which later is reflected in lower self-confidence in using computers. Jamieson-Proctor, Burnett, Finger and Watson (2006) found that female teachers are less likely to use ICT in classrooms compared to their male counterparts on account of a lower level of confidence.

Teaching/working experience of teachers is another attribute which may influence implementation of ICT in the classrooms. The existing research shows that there are mixed results to be found in the relationship between teacher's work experience and their use of ICT in the classrooms. For example, Hernandez-Ramos (2005) stated that teachers' understanding

of the use of technology for education as well as overall work experience will have a positive impact in building a positive attitude towards ICT. Lau and Sim (2008) also demonstrated that experienced teachers are more willing to use technology in the classroom. At the same time Wachiuri (2015) found that there is no correlation between teacher's work experience and their use of ICT in the classrooms. Baek, Jong, and Kim (2008) found the opposing relationship between work experience and ICT use in the classroom. They argued that more experienced teachers are in fact reluctant to use technology in the classrooms as compared to non-experienced and young teachers. Afshari et al. (2009) also pointed out that teachers with fewer years of experience are likely to use computers more than teachers with more years of experience. These two opposing views might also imply different policy perspectives with respect to selection of schools, teachers for implementation of ICT in the schools as well as for development of course material for teachers' training program in ICT.

Teachers' experience of working with computers is found to have a positive relationship with their use of ICT in the classrooms (Lou and Sim, 2008; Hernandez-Ramos, 2005). The authors further state that exposure to technology and knowledge of software application is vitally important for successful implementation of ICT. Gilakjani (2013) mentioned that computer self-efficacy or teachers' judgment related to their own proficiency in computers plays an important role in their using ICT in the classroom.

Manipulative teachers' factors relate to school environment such as the type of school board, language of delivery, teachers' training program facilities and the type of subjects taught by the teachers. These factors can be controlled or changed by designing and implementing effective policies at the school and the governmental level.

In most of the developing countries such as India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka, there are two types of Educational Boards which govern the school system. The Education Board is a controlling authority of an education system or a unit of it. The State sponsored school system is governed by Secondary School Certificate (SSC). Private school education is governed by different boards such as the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), Indian Certificate for Secondary Education (ICSE) and International Baccalaureate (IB). Education boards have a very important role in designing the school curriculum and other school administration, which in turn has an impact on ICT implementation at the school level. State sponsored schools which are governed by the SSC board mainly cater to mass education and mostly use regional language as the medium of delivery. Private schools governed by other boards mainly cater to a better socio-economic class and use English as a language of delivery.

Language of delivery can also act as one of the factor affecting use of ICT. In many developing countries like India and Bangladesh many schools are using regional languages as a language of delivery. English being the dominant language of computer software, it also supports ICT and ICT supported tools. ICT is integrated in the school syllabus in two ways. Firstly, it is used as one of the compulsory subject which is taught at higher grades such as 9th grade onwards. Secondly it is used as an effective tool to teach various subjects such as mathematics, social sciences or languages. ICT will become truly effective only if it is used as a tool to teach other subjects and not as a separate tool. For this purpose, it is most essential that electronic content is available in regional languages in which the majority of the children are learning. Lack of appropriate ICT content in the regional languages is one of the challenges of the use of ICT (Khan, Hasan and Clement, 2012).

Many studies such as Bingimlas (2009), Unwin (2005), Galanouli, Murphy and Gardner (2004) have pointed out the importance of teachers' training programs for integrating ICT successfully in the school education. Teachers' training programs not only help in building technology literacy, but also motivate teachers to use ICT in the classrooms (Hennessy, Harrison and Wamakote, 2010; Abuhmaid, 2011). Lack of in-service training is cited as one of the major barriers for integrating ICT in the classroom by many studies (Gotkas and Yildirim, 2009; Ali, Haolader and Muhammad, 2013). Kay (2006) analyzed the gender differences in pre-service teachers before and after a training program (laptop program). The authors conclude that though there were significant differences in the attitude before the program, they were mitigated after the program.

The existing research showed that personal characteristics of the teachers have a significant impact on the successful implementation of ICT in the classroom. It also pointed out that external environment like teachers' training programs; government policy; infrastructural availability can bring out positive changes. It is observed that comparatively less study is done in the context of developing economies like India. Developing countries can use ICT as one of the tools to bridge the digital divide between urban and rural schools or between private and public schools. In fact, there is a risk of widening this divide if the positive actions are not taken on time. It is in this context that this study is related to identifying teachers' factors affective their perceived proficiency in implementing ICT in the classroom.

Objectives

The main objective of the study was to ascertain the impact of non-manipulative and manipulative teacher factors on teachers' perception related to their proficiency in using ICT in the classrooms. The specific objectives were as follows:

- To discover the impact of non-manipulative teacher factors such as age, gender, work/teaching experience, experience of working with computers, on teachers' perception of their proficiency in using ICT in the classroom.
- To explore the impact of manipulative teacher factors such as school board, language of delivery, teachers' training programs facilities and the subjects taught on teachers' perception related to their proficiency in using ICT in the classroom.

Methodology

The study used the primary data of 515 teachers teaching 5th to 10th grade. They were surveyed from Mumbai Metropolitan region, Maharashtra, India. They represent different schools from different boards such as SSC board, CBSC board, ICSE board or IB board. They came from schools providing education using different languages of delivery such as English medium schools or Regional medium schools.

Teachers' perception related to their proficiency in using ICT in the classroom was investigated using a Likert scale of 16 parameters.

Table 1: Teachers' perception related to their proficiency.

1	I can use power point in my class
2	I can use email to communicate with other teachers and students
3	I can create a document in Microsoft word
4	I can print a document in Microsoft word
5	I can use formula in spreadsheet
6	I can teach my students creating newsletter using desktop publishing
7	I can select appropriate software to use in my teaching
8	I can design technology enhanced learning activities for my students
9	I can teach my students to use appropriate software to use in their projects
10	I can teach my students how can they make their own webpages
11	I can use internet in my class to meet certain learning goals
12	Computers help students to understand concepts clearly
13	I can teach students to use graphics software to create pictures
14	I can teach students use scanners to capture graphics, photos and/or text
15	I can teach students import clipart into text
16	I can teach my students browsing WWW

'1' represents the lowest rank and '5' represents the highest rank. The mean of these 16 parameters is taken as an index of teachers' perceived proficiency in using ICT in the classroom. An ANOVA test is used to see whether the difference across the categories is statistically significant or not.

Results

The data analysis is done in two parts: Descriptive analysis and inferential analysis. The descriptive analysis provides the profile of the surveyed teachers and their own perception related to computer proficiency. The inferential analysis shows the relationship between different manipulative and non-manipulative factors and teachers' perception related to proficiency in using ICT in the classroom.

Descriptive Analysis

The basic profile of the surveyed teachers is given in Table 2.

Table 2: Profile of the surveyed teachers.

Sr. No	Particulars	Categories	Number	Percent
1	Gender	Male	128	25
		Female	387	75
		Total	515	100
2	Age category	21 years to 30 years	93	18
		30 years to 45 years	269	52
		46 years and above	113	22
		Non reporting	40	8
		Total	515	100
3	Language of delivery	English	369	72
		Regional	146	28

		Total	515	100
4	Work experience	1 year to 5 years	124	24
		6 years to 15 years	166	32
		16 years and above	203	39
		Non reporting	22	4
		Total	515	100
5	Experience to work with computers	1 year to 5 years	263	41
		6 years and above	183	36
		Non reporting	69	13
		Total	515	100
6	Subjects taught	Technical	217	42
		Non-technical	208	40
		Technical + Non-technical	90	17
		Total	515	100

The table reveals that nearly 75 percent of the surveyed teachers are female. More than 50 percent belong to the age group of 30 to 45 years. Most of them are teaching in English medium schools. Around 39 percent of the surveyed teachers have work experience more than 16 years. Forty-one percent have experience in working with the computer for at least 1 to 5 years. There is a good mix of teachers teaching technical and non-technical subjects.

Perception Related to Computer Proficiency Score

The surveyed teachers were asked to provide their perception related to their proficiency in using ICT in the classroom. The Likert scale was used to measure it ranging from 1 scoring the lowest to 5 scoring for highest perceived proficiency. 15 parameters were used to cover various uses of ICT in the classroom ranging from simple using power point presentation in the class to helping students to make their web pages. The scale used to measure perceived proficiency of the teachers is taken from Papanastasiou and Angeli (2008). It is modified to suit Indian context. The details of the same are given in Table 3.

Table 3: Details of the perception related to Proficiency in ICT score.

Sr. no	Parameters of proficiency in ICT	Number	Mean	Std. Dev	Minimum	Maximum
1	I can use power point in my class	508	3.95	1.04	1.00	5.00
2	I can use email to communicate with other teachers and students	503	3.86	1.07	1.00	5.00
3	I can create a document in Microsoft word	508	4.06	.98	1.00	5.00
4	I can print a document in Microsoft word	509	4.05	1.05	1.00	5.00
5	I can use formula in spreadsheet	499	3.89	1.11	1.00	5.00
6	I can teach my students creating newsletter using desktop publishing	492	3.61	1.14	1.00	5.00

7	I can select appropriate software to use in my teaching	499	3.75	1.09	1.00	5.00
8	I can design technology enhanced learning activities for my students	499	3.60	1.15	1.00	5.00
9	I can teach my students to use appropriate software to use in their projects	500	3.71	1.09	1.00	5.00
10	I can teach my students how can they make their own webpages	500	3.26	1.24	1.00	5.00
11	I can use internet in my class to meet certain learning goals	500	3.76	1.18	1.00	5.00
12	I can teach students to use graphics software to create pictures	498	3.45	1.28	1.00	5.00
13	I can teach students use scanners to capture graphics, photos and/or text	495	3.50	1.19	1.00	5.00
14	I can teach students import clipart into text	499	3.70	1.19	1.00	5.00
15	I can teach my students browsing WWW	503	3.93	1.05	1.00	5.00
	Overall Proficiency score	515	3.74	0.95	.00	5.00

The overall score of perception related to proficiency in ICT is 3.74 out of maximum 5. It ranges from minimum zero to maximum 5. The data shows that it ranges widely across different parameters of proficiency. It is found to be higher in using computers for routine functions like creating a word doc (4.06), printing a document (4.05) and using power point presentation in a classroom (3.95). It is lower in more technical use of computers such as helping students to make their own web pages (3.26), teaching with the help of graphic software (3.45) and using the scanners to capture graphics, text, etc. (3.50).

Inferential Analysis

ANOVA was used to discover the impact of non-manipulative and manipulative factors on teachers' perceived proficiency in using ICT in the classroom.

Impact of Non-manipulative Factors

A number of non-manipulative factors such as gender, age group, teaching/ working experience, experience to work with the computers, and the type of subjects taught by the teacher were considered for further analysis.

Impact of Gender on Teachers' Perceived Proficiency in Using ICT

The surveyed teachers were classified into male and female s to examine the impact of gender on their perceived proficiency in using ICT in the classroom.

H₁: The difference in gender of teachers affects their perceived proficiency in using ICT in the classroom.

Table 4: Perceived proficiency in using ICT as per the gender.

Sr. No	Gender	Number	Mean	S.D	Minimum	Maximum
1	Male	128	3.58	1.12	.00	5.00
2	Female	387	3.82	.88	.00	5.00
Total	Total	515	3.76	.95	.00	5.00

The mean of perceived proficiency in using ICT of female teachers is higher than that of male teachers. It is found that the difference across the categories of the gender is statistically significant as $p < 0.05$. This finding is different from that reported in the existing literature.

Impact of Age Group on Perceived Proficiency in Using ICT

The surveyed teachers were classified into 3 categories as per the age group 21 years to 30 years, 31 years to 45 years and 46 years and above.

H₂: The difference in age-group of teachers affects their perceived proficiency in using ICT in the classroom.

Table 5: Perceived proficiency in using ICT as per the age group.

Sr. No	Age Group	Number	Mean	S.D	Minimum	Maximum
1	21 years to 30 years	93	3.97	.83	1.00	5.00
2	30 years to 45 years	269	3.71	.93	.00	5.00
	46 years and above	113	3.69	1.04	.00	5.00
Total	Total	475	3.76	.94	.00	5.00

The mean of perceived proficiency score is highest for the age group of 21 years to 30 years and lowest for the last group of 46 years and above. The difference across the groups is found out to be statistically significant as $p < 0.05$. This finding confirms some of the earlier studies by stating that younger teachers are relatively more confident and enthusiastic to use ICT in the classroom.

Impact of Work/Teaching Experience on Perceived Proficiency in Using ICT

In order to see whether work experience has any impact on the perceived proficiency or not, the surveyed teachers were classified into three groups such as working experience up to 1 to 5 years, 6 to 15 years and 26 and above.

H₃: The difference in working/ teaching experience of the teachers affects their perceived proficiency in using ICT in the classroom.

Table 6: Perceived proficiency in using ICT as per the working/teaching experience.

Sr. No	Teaching/Working experience	Number	Mean	S.D	Minimum	Maximum
1	1 year to 5 years	124	3.96	.81	1.00	5.00
2	6 years to 15 years	166	3.74	.94	.00	5.00
3	16 years and above	203	3.69	1.00	.00	5.00
Total	Total	493	3.77	.94	.00	5.00

The mean of perceived proficiency in using ICT is higher in the first category of 1 to 5 years of work experience and lowest in the third category of work experience of 16 years and above. The difference across the three categories is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). This finding goes in tandem with our earlier finding of perceived proficiency with the age group of the surveyed teachers.

Impact of Experience to Work with Computers on Perceived Proficiency in Using ICT

The surveyed teachers were classified into three groups such as working experience up to 1 to 5 years, 6 to 15 years and 26 and above.

H₄: The difference in teacher's experience to work with computers affects their perceived proficiency in using ICT in the classroom.

Table 7: Perceived proficiency in using ICT as per the experience to work with computers.

Sr. No	Experience to work with computers	Number	Mean	S.D	Minimum	Maximum
1	1 year to 5 years	69	3.76	.98	.00	5.00
2	6 years to 15 years	263	3.67	.93	.00	5.00
	16 years and above	183	3.90	.95	.00	5.00
Total	Total	515	3.76	.95	.00	5.00

It can be seen that with rising years of experience to work with the computers the mean of perceived proficiency in using ICT is also rising. The difference across the categories is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

Impact of the Type of Subjects Taught on the Perceived Proficiency in Using ICT

It is believed that some of the subjects like mathematics, science and computers (technical subjects) might be more easily learnt with the help of technology as compared to other subjects such as languages, social sciences, etc. (non-technical subjects). In order to find out whether the perceived proficiency differs due to the type of the subjects taught or not, the surveyed teachers were classified into three groups such as those who teach technical subjects, those who teach non-technical subjects and those who teach both type of subjects.

H₅: The difference in the type of subjects taught by the teachers affects their perceived proficiency in using ICT in the classroom.

Table 8: Perceived proficiency in using ICT as per the subjects taught.

Sr. No	Subjects taught	Number	Mean	S.D	Minimum	Maximum
1	Technical	217	3.72	1.02	.00	5.00
2	Non- technical	208	3.73	.95	.00	5.00
3	Both	90	3.95	.73	2.00	5.00
Total	Total	515	3.76	.95	.00	5.00

It is seen that the mean of perceived proficiency in using ICT in the classroom amongst the teachers teaching technical subjects (like mathematics, science and computer) is not so

different than the teachers teaching non-technical subjects (like languages, social sciences, etc.). Also the mean of perceived proficiency of teachers taking both technical as well as non-technical subjects is higher than other two categories. The difference across the categories is not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$).

Impact of Manipulative Factors on Perceived Proficiency of Teachers in Using ICT in the Classroom

Manipulative factors included in this study are related to school environment such as type of school board, language of delivery and the teachers' training program facilities.

Impact of Type of School Board on Teachers' Perceived Proficiency in Using ICT

The surveyed teachers belong to four different types of boards. They are as follows:

- a. Secondary School Certificate (SSC board) – These schools are also popularly known as state board school run with the help of state government grant
- b. Central Board of Secondary Education – CBSE
- c. Indian Certificate for Secondary Education (ICSE)
- d. International Baccalaureate (IB)

There is a significant difference between the SSC board schools and other board schools. Most of the other board schools are privately run. They have better amenities and they mainly cater to higher socio-economic strata in the society as compared with SSC board school. They all are English medium schools. Most of the SSC board schools are catering to mass education and many of them are regional medium schools. In order to find out whether the type of board has any impact on teachers' perceived proficiency in using ICT, they were classified into two groups: SSC board and other boards. This classification also reflects the difference between state board schools and private schools.

H_{06} : The difference in the type of school board will not have any impact on perceived proficiency in using ICT in the classroom.

H_6 : The difference in the type of school board in which teachers are working affects their perceived proficiency in using ICT in the classroom.

Table 9: Perceived proficiency in using ICT as per the school board.

Sr. No	School Board	Number	Mean	S.D	Minimum	Maximum
1	SSC	353	3.65	.96166	.00	5.00
2	Other Boards	159	4.03	.88175	.00	5.00
3	Total	512	3.77	.95261	.00	5.00

The mean of perceived proficiency in using ICT is lower for teachers working in SSC board than that of other boards. This difference is found out to be statistically significant ($P < 0.05$). As mentioned earlier, most of the SSC board schools cater to the mass education where the infrastructural resources are relatively less as compared to other board schools.

Impact of Language of Delivery on Teachers' Perceived Proficiency in Using ICT

Language of delivery can have a strong impact on the teachers' perceived proficiency in ICT. In order to see that the surveyed teachers were classified into two groups such as those who are working in regional medium schools and in English medium schools.

H₇: The difference in language of delivery of the school affects teachers' perceived proficiency in using ICT in the classroom.

Table 10: Perceived proficiency in using ICT as per the language of delivery.

Sr. No	Language of delivery	Number	Mean	S.D	Minimum	Maximum
1	English	369	3.88	.86	.00	5.00
2	Regional	146	3.47	1.09	1.00	5.00
Total	Total	515	3.76	.95	.00	5.00

The data analysis reveals that the mean of perceived proficiency in using ICT for teachers working in English medium schools is significantly higher than that of teachers working in regional medium schools. This difference across the two categories is statistically significant as $p < 0.05$.

Impact of Teachers' Training Programs on Teachers' Perceived Proficiency in Using ICT

Teachers' training programs play an important role in building computer skills and in creating positive attitude towards using ICT in the classroom. The surveyed teachers were asked about the type of training taken by them to improve their proficiency. It is as follows:

Table 11: The list of training modules to improve proficiency of teachers in using ICT.

Sr. No	List of the modules
1	Introductory course on internet use
2	Introductory course on general application (Basic word, spreadsheet, presentation)
3	Advanced course on applications (advanced word processing, relational databases, visual learning environment etc.)
4	Advanced course on internet use (creating website/home page, video conferencing etc...)
5	Equipment specific training (interactive white board software, laptop, etc..)
6	Courses on pedagogical use of ICT in teaching and learning
7	Subjects specific training on learning applications (tutorials, simulations, etc...)
8	Courses on multimedia (using digital video, audio equipment)
9	Participating in online communities (e.g. mailing list, twitter, blogs etc..) for professional discussion with other teachers
10	ICT training provided by school staff
11	Personal learning about ICT in your own time
12	Other training related to ICT
13	How to use ICT to support assessment of learning
14	Planning and implementing e-learning in your class or school

The list covers a variety of training modules ranging from a basic introductory course such as using internet to advanced courses such as use of multi-media, simulations, etc. The teachers were classified based on the number of modules they had covered in the overall training programs such as: training facility not accessed, 1 to 4 modules, 5 to 10 modules, and above 10 modules.

H₈: The number of Teachers' training program attended by teachers affects their perceived proficiency in using ICT in the classroom.

Table 12: Perceived Proficiency in using ICT as per teachers' training program facility in terms of number of modules covered in the training programs.

Sr. No	Category of training modules	Number	Mean	S.D	Minimum	Maximum
1	0	36	3.50	.87	1.00	5.00
2	1-4	88	3.60	.91	1.00	5.00
3	5-10	156	3.86	.99	.00	5.00
4	Above 11	60	3.88	.88	1.00	5.00
	Total	340	3.76	.95	.00	5.00

The data analysis shows that the mean of perceived proficiency in using ICT in the classroom is rising as per the rising number of modules covered in the training program. The difference across all the categories is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). It can thus be concluded that teacher training programs have an impact on perceived proficiency in using ICT in the classroom.

Summary of Findings

Table 13 gives the summary of inferential analysis about acceptance or rejection of hypotheses.

Table 13: Acceptance and rejection of hypotheses.

Sr. no	Hypotheses	Between the groups and within the groups
1	Gender	Null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypotheses are accepted
2	Age group	Null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypotheses are accepted
3	Teaching/working experience	Null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypotheses are accepted
4	Experience to work with computers	Null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypotheses are accepted
5	Subjects taught	Null hypothesis is accepted and alternative hypotheses are rejected
6	School board	Null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypotheses are accepted
7	Language of delivery	Null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypotheses are accepted
8	Null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypotheses are accepted	Null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypotheses are accepted

Discussion

Our study showed that both non-manipulative and manipulative factors play an important role in developing teachers perceived proficiency in using ICT in the classroom. In non-manipulative factors, gender, age group, work experience and experience to work with the computers are found out to be significant factors.

Our study reflected that female teachers have higher level of perceived proficiency in using ICT in the classroom than their male counterparts. This is in contradiction to the existing research. The existing literature states that female teachers are less proficient in using ICT in the classroom. This might be due to two facts. Firstly, the proportion of female teachers is significantly high at school level as it is considered to be an appropriate (safe, respectable, etc.) job for educated females in the Indian context.

Secondly, all the state board schools (SSC) have a compulsory component of teacher training programs in ICT where most of our surveyed female teachers are working. This finding may have a positive implication for school management and policy makers. Implementation of ICT may not face a gender barrier of as the proportion of female teachers is larger than that of male teachers.

Age group and working/teaching experience has a negative relation with the perceived proficiency in using ICT in the classroom. The existing research also shows that younger teachers and teachers with less number of years of experience are more enthusiastic to use technology in the classroom. This may be due to various reasons. Firstly, teachers from higher age-groups and having longer experience may feel threatened due to new technologies such as ICT and using computers in the classrooms. The feeling of getting easily replaced by the technology might have created a negative attitude in using it. Secondly adopting ICT also means changing pedagogy and moving towards encouraging self-learning process rather than teaching and instructing in the classroom.

Experience to work with the computers has a positive relationship with perceived proficiency in using ICT in the classroom.

It might be perceived that ICT can be used more effectively for teaching technical subjects like mathematics or science rather than non-technical subjects like languages or social sciences. Our study showed that the type of subject category taught by the teachers has no relationship with perceived proficiency in using ICT in the classroom. This indicates that teachers perceive that both technical as well as non-technical both the subjects can be effectively taught with the help of ICT.

Manipulative factors cover type of school board, language of delivery and teachers training program facilities. The study shows that teachers working in State education board (SSC) has relatively lower perceived proficiency in using ICT in the classroom as compared to the teacher working in other boards (CBSC, ICSE and IB). State education board schools are also public grant schools or popularly known as public schools. Most of the other board schools are private schools. These schools also reflect the socio-economic status of the children admitted in these schools. Most of the children from weaker socio-economic background attend public schools which are free, whereas children from better socio-economic background attend private schools.

Our study showed that perceived proficiency of teachers in private schools is higher than that of public schools. This indicates that socio-economic context of the school and availability of infrastructure has an impact on teachers' perceived proficiency in using ICT in the classroom. The study finds that the language of delivery has a very strong impact on perceived proficiency in using ICT in the classroom. The teachers working in the regional medium schools were found to have substantially low perceived proficiency in using ICT in the classroom as compared to English medium schools. This result goes in tandem with the existing literature which states that due to inadequate support of software and e-content in regional languages, the integration of ICT in regional language schools is lesser than in English medium schools. This is a major challenge for a developing country like India as majority of the children attending regional medium schools and public schools are also coming from weaker section of the society. ICT can encourage inclusive education in a true sense only if it can enable education in regional languages.

The study further confirms that teachers' training programs have a positive impact on teachers' perceived proficiency on using ICT.

Recommendations

The study provides the following suggestions:

- The existing research unanimously agrees that teachers play a vital role in successful implementation of ICT in the school. Therefore, the importance of building the proficiency of teachers to use ICT cannot be overstated. The school management and policy makers can consider the non-manipulative and non-manipulative factors to improve the teachers' proficiency in using ICT in the classroom.
- Non-manipulative teachers' factors are related to their demographic characteristics. It is found that age group and working experience of the teachers have a negative relation with the perceived proficiency. Hence, it is suggested that special teachers' training programs can be organized for more experienced and mature teachers. Teachers having more number of years of experience and belonging to higher age-group often face a fear of getting replaced by new technologies like ICT. The training should also be oriented in removing these fears and building a positive attitude for using ICT in the classrooms. Training in building technical competencies should also be complemented with training in changing the mind-set.
- Manipulative factors are under control of the school management. As it is found that the teachers from the SSC board school have lower perceived proficiency in using ICT, it is recommended that the state government and school managements of these schools should take active efforts to build teachers proficiency. Compulsory teachers training programs is one such positive move which is recently taken by many state governments. Along with that it is also necessary to provide the supporting environment to the teachers in terms of infrastructure, incentives and time availability. Attaran, Alias and Siraj (2012) pointed out that effective implementation of ICT in schools requires creation of learning culture which requires top management's support, investment in technology such as internet, portal development, computer equipment and other required machinery, common mission and values among all the stakeholders and strong course material in electronic format.

- It is seen in our study that teachers from regional medium school have significantly lower perceived proficiency in ICT as compared to the teachers from English medium school. This can be on account of inadequate resources such as appropriate software and e-content in regional language. Attention must be given to build-up these resources in the regional language. It may have a long-term impact of increasing or mitigating the digital gap in the country. Development of e-content in regional languages is essential if ICT is to be used for bridging the digital divide between public and private schools.
- This study as well as the existing research has shown that teachers' training programs are important to build-up their capabilities and attitudes. These training programs need to be appropriately designed and conducted based on the proficiency level, age group, work experience and the subjects taught by the teachers. As use of ICT will lead to more self-study oriented learning, the teaching pedagogy also needs to be changed. The teachers need to mould themselves as facilitators rather than as instructors. The training programs should also focus on changing their mind-sets and building a positive attitude towards using ICT in the classrooms.

Conclusion

This study focused on finding out the impact of non-manipulative and manipulative teachers' factors on their perceived proficiency in using ICT in the classrooms. It has a special reference to a developing country like India where there is a huge variation in the standard and quality of school education due to divergent socio-economic backgrounds of population. The study finds that teachers' perceptions are affected by non-manipulative as well as manipulative factors. It further recommends that intervention in terms of creation of e-content in regional languages and encouraging teachers training program in ICT will go a long way in improving their perceived proficiency in using ICT in the classrooms.

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The Dynamics of Decentralization of Higher Education Delivery and Local Politics in the Philippines: The Case of Two Mandaue City Colleges in Cebu Province

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Abstract

This study explores how the decentralization law of 1991 in the Philippines has provided the conditions for the interface of higher education and politics by virtue of Local Government Units (LGUs) establishment of Local Colleges and Universities (LCUs). Anchored on educational politics framework, it specifically looks at the experience of Mandaue City which presently has two similarly named local colleges, one is Commission on Higher Education accredited and LGU supported, while the other has been deemed to have “no legal personality” but has persisted to operate nonetheless. This would create a conflict of legitimacy and later on manifest issues and challenges naturally beyond the immediate domain of education, but one that must be harnessed constructively given the realities of Philippine politics i.e. power struggle and political dynamics. The democratic opening engendered by the decentralization law to allow LGUs to establish post-secondary schools are beset with growing political tensions and contestations. Yet, there were also narratives and evidence of positive impact brought about by the decentralization of higher education. Using key informant interviews, focus group discussion and document reviews, this study contends that public educational ventures such as LCUs serve as a microcosm of the larger problem in Philippine higher education: improved access to higher education, but quality is deteriorating. As such, this study hopes to suggest several policy directions and practical considerations for national governments vis-à-vis the LGUs role as enabler and/or regulator of higher education.

Keywords: Philippines; local colleges and universities; local government units; commission on higher education; decentralization; politics of education.

Introduction

The transition of the Philippines to a decentralized form of government has been noted as a form of democratization of the country after the fall of the authoritarian regime of Marcos (Brillantes, 1996; Bird and Rodriquez, 1999). While there exist a plethora of studies examining the impacts of decentralization in the country, most of them concluded that its promise and potential have not been fully realized due to elite capture, lack of accountability mechanisms and patronage politics (cf. Ishii, Hossain and Rees, 2007; Yilmaz and Venugopal, 2013; Shair-Rosenfield, 2016). Others however argued that compared to other Asian countries, the decentralization program of the country “has attained better performance” (Guess, 2005, p. 217) and local governments have become “more innovative, experimental and enterprising under decentralization” (Capuno, 2011, p. 65). In addition, the “shifting of power to sub-national governments had the potential to transform some of the most significant actors and relationships including, among others, the developmental capacity of states and the strategic calculations of politicians, non-governmental organizations and voters” (Eaton, 2001, p. 101).

Specifically, with the enactment of the Local Government Code (LGC) of 1991 or Republic Act No. 7160, the decentralization law of the country, various social services originally controlled by the national government and its line agencies were devolved to the local level i.e. barangays (villages – the lowest political structure), municipalities, cities and provinces. These added duties, responsibilities and power devolved to the local level involves the following social service sectors: agricultural extension, community based forestry, field health and hospital services, public works, school building, social welfare services, tourism, telecommunications and housing (LGC, 1991). Whereas the LGU’s role with respect to the education service sector is only limited and confined to the construction of school buildings and classrooms and maintenance aspects (Brillantes, 2003; Atienza, 2006; Go, 2016, p. 1), however embedded in the LGC are salient provisions that provided enabling mechanisms for various explorations in local autonomy and public welfare. This democratic space allows LGUs free rein in guiding the path of their local development (Cariño, 2002, 2004; Dayrit, 2005; Legaspi, 2003, cited in Saloma, Jayme Lao and Advincula-Lopez, 2013). Essentially, the Code provides the opportunity for local governments in the country to venture into the tertiary level of education by establishing public colleges named as Local Colleges and Universities financed directly from its local treasury.¹

Given this legal provision, several LGUs in the country initiated the creation of local public higher education institutions (HEIs). In the past few years, the country has witnessed a dramatic increase of LGU-run colleges nationwide. In 2015, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) listed 101 LCUs nationwide, offering technical and vocational training and degree-granting programs (Commission on Higher Education [CHED], 2016). Given its preference to serve the poor and marginalized sectors of the Philippine society at the local level, the role that LCUs play in addressing the country’s higher education problem are immense (Chao, 2012; Dayrit, 2005).

This study looks at the two cases of Mandaue City Colleges in the city of Mandaue in the province of Cebu. It was selected due to its peculiar case of having a similarly named college

¹ In the Philippines, local government funded tertiary schools are variously called “local college”, “community college”, “municipal college”, “city college”, “public college”, “local university and colleges” and “local colleges and universities”. Based on CHED Memorandum Order No. 32 Series of 2006, a “local college or university” refers to a public higher education institution established by the LGUs through an enabling ordinance, and financially supported by the concerned local government unit.

within the same LGU; one is accredited by the CHED and financially supported by the city, and the other operates privately under the administration of the former College Administrator of Mandaue City College (MCC) in 2005, who claims to be the “real” and “legitimate” Mandaue City College, but was not given government authority. This issue is very controversial to the point that the CHED Region VII and Mandaue City Government filed a legal action against the former MCC Administrator to stop the operation of this other school. Most importantly, on July 4, 2011, even CHED Chairperson Dr. Patricia Licuanan by virtue of Commission En Banc Resolution No. 163-2011 issued a public notice informing that the Mandaue City College under the administration of the former college administrator “has no legal personality to operate a local college and the degrees offered are spurious and illegal and shall not be recognized by the Commission” (Cuyos, 2011, para. 3). As such, it would be very interesting to look into how this conflict came about and how does this figure in the whole dynamics of decentralization of higher education and politics in the Philippines.

The study has three main objectives: (1) to identify the experience of Mandaue city in its decision to venture into higher education availing on the opening in the Local Government Code; (2) to identify how the ‘MCC conflict’ inform about the nature and condition of higher education system in the Philippines in general, and the state of LCUs specifically; and (3) to determine the extent of how the peculiarities of local politics affects the public venture of LGU into higher education as shown in the experience of the conflict in Mandaue City College.

Framework and Research Method

The politics of education or educational politics is an eclectic field that seeks to incorporate notions of authority, power and influence in the distribution of scarce and valued resources at different levels of the education sector (Johnson, 2003; Wong, 1994). It also looks at the enduring value conflicts of efficiency, quality, equity and choice in educational settings, whose intellectual roots and development can be traced to political science (Stout, Tallerico and Scribner, 1994; Malen, 1994; Wong, 1994; Scribner and Layton, 2003; McLendon, 2003a; 2003b; Scribner, Aleman and Maxcy, 2003). Anchored on the core ideas of political science, the field of educational politics argues that “school governance and decisions are embedded in the core practices of our political systems” (Wong, 1994, p. 22), prescribed ways in which most educational policies are influenced by the larger political institutions and processes of decision-making. It also deepens both the conceptual and practical understanding of power structure and democratic exercise (Wong, 1994).

The use of “politics of education” as a framework of analysis for this study was essential and valuable in understanding how local political dynamics shape and influence the whole educational-governmental enterprise. Candelaria (2012) argued that the problem of public education in the third world especially in the Philippines is a political problem and therefore requires a political solution.

Methodologically, the primary source of data for this research is key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs). KIIs were used to extract the experiences of the respondents to reveal the behavioral patterns of the actors, and to check and validate the accounts of other interviews conducted (Pierce, 2008). Focus group discussion is used in examining what, how and why people think about the issues of import to them without compelling them into making decisions or reaching a consensus (Liamputtong, 2011). The respondents were asked about their experiences in their capacities as college students, graduates and teachers, college administrators, city government officials and national

government agency official. Specific questions about whether there was a necessity to create a tertiary school in the city funded by the local government, what sort of issues and problems the college have confronted, what were the impacts and contributions of the college to the city and its people and how they were affected by the conflict that arise due to the existence of two similarly named colleges in their locality were probed from the respondents.

This research study also used document review like school records, newspaper articles and government documents pertaining to LCUs. Document review helps to “develop novel accounts and interpretations of significant events” (Burnham, Lutz, Grant & Layton-Henry, 2008, p. 208). The interviews, FGD and document gathering were conducted between January 2015 and April 2016. Informed consent from all respondents was secured prior to the said methodologies for ethical consideration.

Literature Review

Higher education institutions (HEIs) in the Philippines are either colleges or universities, and are generally classified as private or public. Public HEIs are further classified as State University and College (SUC) or Local College and University (LCU). SUCs are fully funded by the national government as determined by the Philippine Congress. LCUs, on the other hand, are run by local government units. Over the past years, public higher education in the country has been characterized by the rise in the number of SUCs as the LCUs set up by provinces and cities exercise their autonomy (Tan, 2012; CHED, 2012; 2013; 2015). The 1991 Local Government Code provides LGUs i.e. a barangay (village), a municipality, city, or a province, in the country opportunity to venture into the tertiary level of education by establishing public colleges named as Local Colleges and Universities financed directly from its local treasury. Based on the LGC (1991), specifically Section 447(a) (5)(x) (Municipality), 458(a)(5)(x) (City), and 468(a)(4)(iii) (Province), an LGU can establish a local college provided that, “[s]ubject to the availability of funds and to existing laws, rules and regulations, establish and provide for the operation of vocational and technical schools and similar post-secondary institutions and, with the approval of the Department of Education, Culture and Sports, fix and collect reasonable fees and other school charges on said institutions, subject to existing laws on tuition fees.”

The name Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS) was changed in 1994 to Department of Education (DepEd), when the Republic Act 7722, otherwise known as the “Higher Education Act”, was enacted creating the Commission on Higher Education (CHED). CHED is now tasked to supervise both public and private institutions of higher education and the degree-granting programs in the country; hence LCUs are under CHED’s sphere of regulation.

With this legal opening, it encourages LGUs nationwide to establish their own version of local centers of higher learning. Over the years, the country has witnessed a substantial growth of LGU-run colleges nationwide, from 46 LCUs in 2003 to 101 public colleges in 2015 (CHED, 2016). Unfortunately, the expansion of educational opportunities brought about by these HEIs is accompanied by a deteriorating quality of education in the country (Corpus, 2003; Durban & Catalan, 2012). Specifically, for LCUs, it was reported however that only a few of the courses offered in these schools have permits from the government and are operating for commercial benefit (Chua, 2011).

CHED Chairman Patricia Licuanan (2012) sums up the deteriorating quality of higher education of the country specifically about the condition of local colleges and universities, among others: poor performance in licensure examinations, inadequate faculty credentials, only 100 or 5.6 percent have adequate facilities out of more than 1,800 HEIs, and programs have increased beyond the original mandate. Montemar, Recio, Hecita and Dela Cruz (2013) argued that the problems in LCUs cannot be divorced from the realities of the larger problems that characterize the Philippine higher education system. Admittedly, while the entry of local government units into higher education have addressed only the ‘equity’ and ‘access’ gap in higher education, the decentralized set-up has affected the state of ‘quality’ of HEIs in the country (Montemar et.al, 2013). It was even argued that the development of LCUs is affected by the local political dynamics (Montemar et al., 2013).

Socio-Demographic Profile of Mandaue City

Mandaue City College is located in Mandaue City in Cebu Province. Mandaue City is a first income class highly urbanized city (i.e. with an average income of PHP 400 million or more) in the region of Central Visayas, Philippines. Mandaue City is situated on the coastal region of Cebu Province. It borders Mactan Island on the east side where Lapu-Lapu City is located, Cebu city in the south and west, and by the Municipality of Consolacion in the north. The city has an area of 2,518 ha (6,220 acres). As of 2015, the city has a population of 362,654 (PSA, 2015). Mandaue City is composed of 27 barangays all are classified as urban. The largest population is located in barangay Pakna-an (26, 943).



Figure 1: Location of Mandaue City in Cebu. (Wikipedia, 2014. Retrieved August 25, 2017 from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mandaue>).

Mandaue City is considered as Cebu’s new economic driver with more than 10,000 business and industrial establishments and considering 40% of Cebu’s export companies are found in Mandaue. The city is home to several institutions of academic learning. There are 53 private schools in Mandaue City (DepEd, 2015) several of which provide educational services to the city covering pre-school up to post-graduate level. In addition, there are 23 public secondary schools and 27 public elementary schools (DepEd, 2015) delivering basic education to the city. However, in spite of the presence of many higher educational institutions in the city, it is inherently private; hence, it imposes high tuition and other fees which is beyond the financial capacity of its poor and underprivileged constituents (Manalang, 1992; Joshi, 2007).

Profile of Mandaue City College

Mandaue City College (MCC) is the only CHED-accredited local government higher educational institution in the City of Mandaue (DepEd, 2015). It was initially established by the enactment of Sangguniang Panglungsod (City Council) Ordinance No. 10-2005-324A, which was subsequently revised on October 11, 2010 pursuant to City Council Ordinance No. 12-2010-58, known as the “Revised Charter of the Mandaue City College”. The college charges PHP 100 per unit and miscellaneous and other fees of about PHP 1,500. The programs offered by the college includes nine bachelor’s program and their specializations and three specialized diploma courses e.g. among others, Bachelor in Elementary Education (BEEd), Bachelor in Secondary Education (BSEd), Bachelor of Science in Business Administration (BSBA) and Bachelor of Science in Information Technology (BSIT).

Results and Discussion

Decentralization Experience of Mandaue City College: Invoking Pro-poor Policy for Delivering Higher Education Service at the Local Level

In a city surrounded by big industrial establishments and major private higher educational institutions, the creation of a public college that caters primarily to children of poor and underprivileged families is a massive task for any LGU whose mandate under the LGC of 1991 is only in the basic education sector. As intimated by the City Councilor, who sits as the Chairman of the Committee on Public Works and Infrastructure in an interview, he asserted that the creation of MCC as very appropriate taking account of the economic condition of the city that, “[M]andaue city is the most progressive city in the entire province of Cebu. Education then is very vital in a highly-urbanized local government like Mandaue especially job opportunities abounds. There are many industries like the call center and malls in which would look for potential employees. This is where college education comes into play. These industries will be looking for applicants with qualified degrees mostly with college degrees, before they will be hired. So if you are a college graduate, whom the MCC aims to produce, chances are great for you to be employed.”

Moreover, the establishment of MCC is a response to the need for a more affordable alternative from private colleges noted by the Office of the Mayor’s Executive Secretary. When argued if there was a need to create a local college, the former OIC of MCC and now the Dean of School Education and Director of Research argued that there are students who cannot afford to go to private colleges and even to public state colleges. This is true even if the city has grown so big economically and geographically proximate to the provincial capital, Cebu City – the hub of major universities in the region and the province. Most students noted in the FGD, conducted on February 4, 2016 at the campus of the MCC funded by the LGU, the problem of affordability and accessibility in established universities in Metro Cebu and even in Mandaue City that constrained them from studying.

Like any other educational endeavor, the venture however is engulfed with various challenges typical of the Philippine higher education system. Most of the respondents cited the following problems:

1. Lack of sufficient classrooms and school buildings conducive for learning e.g. not well-ventilated, no electric fans, few chairs, smells bad, spaces are cramped;

2. Inadequate instructional materials like books, poor laboratory facilities like computers and other pedagogical tools for the improvement of teacher and student intellectual growth;
3. No permanent school site, as the college shares several facilities of the building with other departments of the city government. Students confided several uncomfortable encounters with patients e.g. some were dying and some were dead, inside the school premises because the public city hospital is inside the shared facility in the Sports Complex;
4. Bureaucratic red tape in procurement procedures with respect to the delay of funds essential for the everyday maintenance and operation of the school;
5. Insufficient budgetary allocation from the city as the college receives an annual budgetary subsidy from the city of PHP 10,000,000 for all its operation. This appropriation is very “small” and “meager” as acknowledged by most officials both from the city government and the college.

Notwithstanding problems of school facilities and limited budget, there is an overriding general understanding from most respondents of the importance and necessity of the establishment of the MCC. The Vice Chairman of the Local School Board (LSB) and concurrently the Barangay Chieftain of Subangdaku (one of the barangays in Mandaue) and President of Alliance of Barangay Captains/Chieftain (ABC) of Mandaue City asserted in an interview that the creation of a local college like MCC is thought to be a creative mechanism that attains the same goal and mission as giving free college scholarships for poor but deserving constituents of the city, “[t]o help our brothers and sisters avail of college education”.

He added that, “[s]pending on social services like the creation of a local college is a form of human development as the city helps its poor constituents to be ready for the real world competition as it alleviates their burden, especially that college education is very expensive in the country.”



Figure 2: The Mandaue City College campus in the City Sports Complex (photo taken by the author).

The college has no separate and permanent school site, but it is sharing with other local government offices like City Health Center and the Fire Department; thus, the presence of vehicles owned by government employees inside the campus.

Aware of the limited budget appropriated to the college (i.e. 10 million annually in a city that earns an annual average income of 400 million or above) and the request for greater budgetary

allocation every fiscal year, the Executive Secretary reminded that the city administration had to temper it because the local college is not the only service the city provides. It was asserted however that the college is not an income-generating project of the city government. If anything, the City Vice Mayor, College Administrator and the Assistant College Administrator for Administration have shared the same sentiment that MCC is a form of basic service as it provides cheap and affordable tuition fee for its people.

Generally, most of them argued that the whole enterprise is geared towards the long-term goal of educating the local populace providing necessary skills for their future endeavors, to have a better chance of getting a good job. An alumna shared in an interview, he graduated with honors with the degree of Bachelor of Secondary Education Major in Filipino in 2014, and he was very grateful for the learning and values he received from his teachers. He learned the “observance of proper communication”, “how to work and behave with peers and fellow professionals”, and “be dedicated to your work and industry” which aids him in working as a Call Center agent. Most importantly, most of students noted in the FGD that:

Students like me personally have to say thank you for the city government and the college officials for all the things they have done for the school. If not for them, we wouldn't be here. (Student A)

If the students of the University of the Philippines are called as *Iskolars ng Bayan* (scholars of the nation), we are scholars of the city of Mandaue. (Student B)

Even though these are all the facilities we have, despite the dilapidated infrastructure, we are still very dedicated. We are very thankful because we still have a school. (Student C)

Because the city government subsidizes for our study, there is no reason for us to be lazy because the college has not forsaken us through the establishment of the college. (Student D)

Politics in the MCC: How the Local College Became a Site of Power Struggle

As can be noticed from the beginning, the college was initially established in 2005 through an enabling ordinance however it was changed in 2010 pursuant to another local legislation. The city college was saddled with controversies which rendered the city of Mandaue with two similarly named Mandaue City Colleges. Originally, MCC was established in 2005 during the incumbency of the former mayor who was suspended by the Ombudsman due to improper use of funds in 2007 as confided by the Vice Chair of the Local School Board (LSB). Being unable to run for office since he served office for three successive electoral cycles already, his son ran in his stead in that year's local election but was defeated by the current City Mayor. He is on his last term and has previously served office from 2007 to 2010, 2010 to 2013, and 2013 to 2016, winning in three successive mayoral elections. On May 2016, he ran successfully for Congress winning as Sixth District Representative of the Province of Cebu (Gitgano, 2016).

The conflict began, as intimated by the former OIC MCC College Administrator, Executive Secretary and the Vice Chair of the LSB, during the interim period when the former mayor was serving suspension allowing the Vice Mayor in 2007 to assume the Mayoralty, revealing several anomalies concerning government funds that were not liquidated from the college administrator. Most officials both from the college and city asserted that they made repeated

demands for the then administrator to render accounting of the college expenses; unfortunately, he did not satisfactorily comply. Thus, the OIC Mayor appointed a new college administrator. She was the interim MCC college administrator during the 2007–2011 period before the college in 2012 selected a new college administrator who serves presently.

The incumbent administrator at the time (in 2007) stood in firm stand that he is the “rightful” administrator as per city ordinance. It was noted in their school’s website that:

Under City Ordinance No. 10-2005-324A – an Ordinance Establishing the Mandaue City College and authorizing the appropriation of funds therefor, specifically Section 6: (a) The President – the administration of the City College shall be vested in the President. He shall be appointed by the Board of Trustees for a term of six (6) years; Provided, That the President of the City College may be reappointed after his term shall be expired. (Agustillo, n.d.).

Thus, technically he is the “rightful” president. Embattled, confused and gradually developing into a media story for local and national broadsheet (“Police arrest Mandaue”, 2008; Basilan, 2011; “Options for Mandaue”, 2011; Cuyos, 2011; Perolina, 2011), the Regional Office of the Commission on Higher Education have intervened. The Education Specialist Supervisor of CHED Region VII recalled in an interview that CHED only mediated to have a smooth operation of the college:

[W]hen we went there, we have empty knowledge about their operation or the nitty-gritty details of the issue or the gravity of the whole situation. We went to understand what’s happening and base on our study from both parties, we submitted a report to the City Council. We found out that, based on the local ordinance, the college administrator who was removed has the right to stay until six years. However, there were members of the city council who opposed to the leadership of the administrator and was asked to step down, graciously. It was this time then when the two parties filed cases and counter lawsuit against one another.

Defiant, the ousted administrator established a separate campus bearing exactly the name of the Mandaue City College located in a different barangay within the city. In effect, there are two similarly named city colleges in the province and in Mandaue City. Given this, CHED Region VII and Mandaue City Government filed a legal action against the former MCC Administrator to stop the operation of this other school. Likewise, CHED, thru the Office of the Chairman Patricia Licuanan issued a Notice to the Public (Cuyos, 2011) declaring that the MCC created by the former administrator has no legal personality.

Undeterred, this administrator intimated in an interview that the intervention of CHED thru the issuance of the closure order is very misleading, as its real mandate is only to control private colleges. He said CHED’s role vis-à-vis LCUs is to monitor them only, not to “control” citing that CHED does not have regulatory powers. He claimed that this is attributed to CHED’s incompetence and dalliance with politics, noting that “as a national agency, CHED should not involve themselves in politics. They should be neutral.”² He argued also that “CHED does not have the power to close colleges, but they only have the power to recommend for closure. It is the court that has the right to issue closure orders, as CHED does not have the police power.”³

² This was noted by the former MCC Administrator who was removed from office and created a new city college named similarly. He is the president of this established school.

³ This was noted in an interview by the former MCC administrator.

This is the reason why the LGU has not enforced the closure order since the court has yet to render its final decision.

In addition, he pointed out that it is the intervention of politics which serves as the reason how and why there exist two similarly named local colleges in Mandaue City.

It becomes the reason why there are two Mandaue City Colleges because if politics will involve in local colleges; the problem is, if the president is not with the mayor (politically or ideologically), the present mayor will create his own college because, the first thing he will do is to take out the present president and change it to his own men. That is the problem of most local colleges nationwide. There is really too much politics.⁴

Meanwhile, while all this unfolds, some students were taken aback. Several students call to mind their experience in the FGD how in every school competition they joined in people would confuse them from the other campus. They even mentioned moments when they encounter several students from other school asserting that theirs is the “real” and “legitimate” college and “CHED is not an accrediting body”. Most of them shared that ultimately the existence of two MCCs “divides and confuses the general public”. Doubtless, all of the students understand too well the root cause of the matter.⁵

By now, we all know who those people who rule the school are and the city before. We also have to understand and accept the reality that this is really all about politics. Just this last semester, this issue again surfaces back due to several flyers and pamphlets with words “WE ARE THE REAL MCC” written over it. I asked those classmates where they got those flyers; they said it was distributed in the city plaza by some students. I asked why and they replied that their college president is running for Congress. Those flyers really contain the name of MCC. It made me wonder why the city government allowed this from happening. The city government through the office of the Mayor is very powerful. In the many years when this issue begun, until now it remained unresolved and unanswered. Our future is at risk because the elections are fast approaching. (Student H)

The student was referring to the May 2016 Elections which interestingly the college president of the “other MCC” competes for a congressional post challenging the outgoing Mayor. When probed on the rationale over his decision to enter the political fray, though he eventually lost, he interprets as such to “show that the real problem of the MCC conflict is politics, and the solution is inherently political”.

As of now, the case of two Mandaue City Colleges is still pending finality in the local courts. Observing the due process of law, the city government of Mandaue cannot forcibly close the operation of the other MCC. After all, as intimated by the Executive Secretary to the Office of the Mayor, they will just simply open to another area and resume its operation.

⁴ This is noted by the former MCC administrator in an interview.

⁵ Such remarks were noted by most interviewed students in an FGD session conducted.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study began with three main objectives: (1) to identify the experience of Mandaue city in its decision to venture into higher education availing on the opening in the LGC; (2) to identify how the “MCC conflict” informs about the nature and condition of higher education system in the Philippines in general, and the state of LCUs specifically; and (3) to determine the extent of how the peculiarities of local politics affects the public venture of LGU into higher education as shown in the experience of the conflict in Mandaue City College. Using the “politics of education” framework, it was shown how the experience of Mandaue City in its decision to venture into putting up a public college has been viewed as a form of pro-poor educational investment intended to address higher educational gaps at the local level (Bird and Rodriquez, 1999). This is confirmed by the narratives of some students and graduates who articulated on the positive impact of the government venture into higher education, despite the challenges of inadequate facilities, limited funding and issues of quality assurance.

Anchored on the salient provisions of the decentralization law of the country, the venture into higher education of Mandaue city government however was beset with challenges that are naturally outside the domain of education arena, i.e. power and politics. This occurred due to the public nature of the educational endeavor as the college is financially dependent to the city government. In addition, the venture was riven with local oppositional politics, questions of legitimacy and authority, intervention of a higher education regulatory body and nuances of power struggle which affects the operations and functions of such schools. In practical setting, the controversy showed the political dimension of the educational venture. It was apparent from the onset that the Mandaue City College was created by a political leadership amidst an environment vulnerable to the local political dynamics and various policy actors. In the case study presented, it was apparent that the LGU-run public college has transformed into an arena of local political struggle, turning the educational venture into what Johnson (2003, p. 58) considered as a “political enterprise”.

Moreover, this study reveals contestations for power and cleavages of power relations that exist in education in the Philippines (Candelaria, 2012; Contreras, 2013). The MCC experience showed that the school has come to be understood as a political arena rife with macro and micro-political processes (Wong, 1994; Strout et. al., 1994; Scribner et. al., 2003; McLendon, 2003a; 2003b; Björk and Blasé, 2009; Fiske, 1996). Ultimately, the decentralization law of 1991 provided the conditions for the interface of higher education and politics in the country by virtue of LGU’s establishment of local universities and colleges (Chao, 2012).

As such, this study raises important practical consideration about the proactive role of the national government as an enabler and regulator of higher education. For future research, it would be interesting to look if the national government whose legal mandate is enshrined under the Philippine Constitution (1987) which aims to “protect and promote shall protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels, and shall take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all (Section 1, Article XIV)” allows LGUs to venture into higher education under the decentralization law of 1991. Should the State respond more to the problems of “quality” education, instead of simply encouraging LGUs to put up local public higher educational institutions? The State must institute clearer directives and policy guidelines that depart from excessive commitment to “expansion” of higher education, to focus more on improving the structural and curricular gaps that undermines that condition of Philippine higher education.

Also, the discourse of “politics” as a process of attaining ends that must be harnessed constructively so as to effect positive changes not simply as a mechanism for personal aggrandizement and serving one’s political aspirations, should be pursued extensively (Candelaria, 2012). It must be noted that despite the influence of politics in the creation and operation of the MCC, there was still evidence of valuable impacts of the college to the community.

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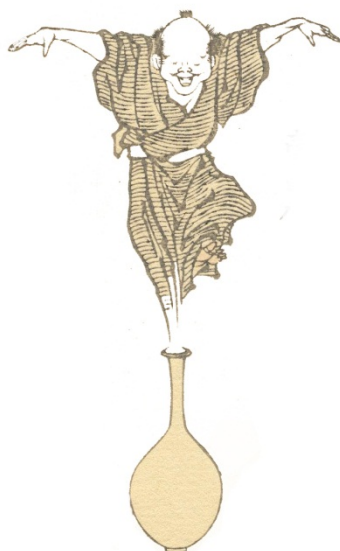
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Sense of Belonging at School: Defining Attributes, Determinants, and Sustaining Strategies

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Abstract

Building and sustaining students' sense of belonging at school has been proposed by teachers and researchers as a means of stimulating students' intent or desire to learn and of reducing student attrition. This article will present the results of an inquiry into the literature on belonging to support the perspective that is it necessary, not only to foster a strong sense of belonging, but also to place much greater emphasis on school belonging in educational programs, practices, and research. The aims of the paper are: (a) to review the theoretical literature on school belonging with an emphasis on its defining attributes and main determinants, (b) to review the measurement instruments of school belonging, and (c) to identify various strategies that may enhance school belonging. In light of the defining attributes identified, the authors propose six general recommendations for educational stakeholders wishing to build and sustain students' sense of belonging at school.

Keywords: students' sense of school belonging; defining attributes; determinants; sustaining strategies.

Introduction

Researchers in psychology consider individuals to be complex beings. Individuals have, after all, a unique spirit, their own goals and ambitions. At the same time, they feel an innate need to belong to a group; to get closer to the people who are part of their environment; to have meaningful, intimate, and satisfying social relationships (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Lavigne, Vallerand, & Crevier-Braud, 2011); to love and to be loved; to take care of others and to be taken care of (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The need to belong is in fact universal, as is the need to establish stable and loving relationships (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

In school settings, researchers have noted that school belonging significantly and positively affects several motivational measures such as expectancy of success, valuation of school work, and self-reported effort (Goodenow, 1993a). Enhancing school belonging can also have a positive effect on academic achievement and school engagement (Allen, Kern, Vella-Brodick, & Waters, 2016; Eccles & Roser, 2009; Juvonen, 2006; Neel & Fuligni, 2013; Roeser, Midgley, & Urdan, 1996; Wehlage, Rutter, Smith, Lesko, & Fernandez, 1989). Indeed, in her literature review aiming at addressing the question, *is this experience of belongingness important in an educational setting?* Osterman (2000) pointed out other positive outcomes associated with belonging, such as participation in classroom activities and prosocial behaviors. Other researchers have noted a positive and significant relationship between school belonging and investment in extracurricular activities, reduction in school absenteeism rates (Flynn, 1997), positive social relations (Hagborg, 1994), and positive mental health (Hagerty, Williams, Coyne, & Early, 1996). Osterman (2000) has also highlighted the importance of school belonging, writing: “[F]rom a review of even these limited sources it is possible to conclude that belongingness is an extremely important concept. As a psychological phenomenon, it has far reaching impact on human motivation and behavior” (p. 359). On the other hand, a lack of school belonging is a dropout risk factor that should be seriously considered (Berkold, Geis, & Kaufman, 1998). In line with this, Christenson and Thurlow (2004) indicated that a lack of belonging could be a key indicator of a process of disengagement from school.

Despite the weighty importance that sense of school belonging has been understood to bear, researchers observe that the work done thus far has shown a distinct lack of scientific clarity and thus does not allow us to understand the concept fully so as to adopt more targeted educational practices to build and sustain it (Allen & Bowles, 2012; Allen et al., 2016). Allen and Bowles (2012) note:

Research on belonging in educational settings has been unsystematic and diluted by disparities in definition and terminology [...] One explanation for this lack of interest may be the disparity in measurements, terminology, and definitions that make empirically-driven findings and interventions difficult to translate into school practices (p. 108).

In their work, Allen and Bowles (2012) demonstrate the importance of a sense of belonging and suggest new perspectives for further research. In our view, our paper complements their argument by suggesting more avenues of research and by formulating a few recommendations for educational stakeholders. The aims of this paper are: (a) to review the theoretical literature on school belonging with an emphasis on its defining attributes and determinants, (b) to review the measurement instruments of school belonging, and (c) to identify various strategies that may enhance school belonging.

Literature Review

We commenced this project by generating synonyms for *school belonging* in order to make an exhaustive literature search and to obtain relevant documents. A thesaurus was used to identify English and French synonyms which included *membership*, *belonging*, *school membership*, *school connectedness*, *youth connectedness*, *sense of school belonging*, *identification to school*, *sentiment d'appartenance*, *appartenance*, and *climat d'appartenance*. These keywords were employed in general (e.g., Google, Google Scholar) and specialized (e.g., PsycInfo, Eric, Francis) search engines. As for the year of publication of the identified documents, the authors remained flexible in order to include older publications that are fundamental to the understanding of this concept. A first reading of these documents was undertaken to target the definitions of belonging, the measurement instruments, and the theoretical models that take belonging into account. Subsequently, another literature review was conducted among the documents identified to target more relevant publications.

Toward an Understanding of School Belonging

As pointed out by many researchers, school belonging has been described in many different ways (Allen & Bowles, 2012; Allen et al., 2016). In recent years, numerous definitions of school belonging have been proposed, in both the field of education and other areas of research. Our literature review has yielded several definitions of *belonging* in research areas such as *health* (Anant, 1967; Hagerty, Lynch-Sauer, Patusky, Bouwsema, & Collier, 1992; Hagerty & Patusky, 1995), *psychology* (Kestenberg & Kestenberg, 1988; Maslow, 1962, 1970; Mucchielli, 1972, 1980; Smith & Berg, 1987), *management* (Richer & Vallerand, 1998), and *educational sciences* (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991; Goodenow, 1993a; Janosz, Georges, & Parent, 1998; Langevin, 1999; Wehlage et al., 1989; Williams & Downing, 1998). A careful examination of these definitions has helped us identify a few interesting perspectives on school belonging as well as three definitional attributes we believe are critical when defining this concept.

First, belonging is a major factor that contributes positively to an individual's psychological development. Mucchielli (1980, p. 99) suggested that membership is not just about being in or out of a group; it involves the development of a personal identification and a social identity. The impact of belonging on a person's psychological development is also reflected in the definition provided by Kestenberg and Kestenberg (1988, p. 536): "Belonging encompasses many spheres of interest. It is a component of identity and object relationships. It manifests itself of familiar space and objects to whom the space belongs." For his part, Maslow (1962, 1970) noted that membership is an essential need which must be satisfied in order to self-actualize as individuals. Maslow (1970) described self-actualization in these terms:

It may be loosely described as the full use and exploitation of talents, capacities, potentialities, and other factors. Such people seem to be fulfilling themselves and to be doing the best they are capable of doing, reminding us of Nietzsche's exhortation "become what thou art." They are people who have developed or are developing to the full stature of which they are capable (p. 150).

Second, a sense of belonging is a basic need that leads people to build social bonds and to affiliate with members of a group (Hagerty et al., 1996). As suggested by Anant (1967), the quest for group affiliation is based on the assumption that the individual will, as a result, build strong social bonds with others to the point of considering the group as an important element

of his/her life: “Belongingness was defined as personal involvement (in a social system) to the extent that the person feels himself to be an indispensable and integral part of the system” (Anant, 1967, p. 391). Langevin (1999, p. 116) stressed the importance of a reciprocal relationship between students and adults of the institution; these social relationships exist in both the formal and informal aspects of school life. According to Deci and his colleagues (1991), these positive social relationships must be safe and satisfactory. Furthermore, Williams and Downing (1998, p. 103) suggested that friendships are important components of belonging:

Students thought that being a part of the class meant that they had a place in the classroom, felt welcomed, wanted, and respected by their classmates and teachers. Being familiar with their classmates and having friends who understood them made the student feel as if he or she belonged to a group and/or to a class as a whole.

Finally, four defining attributes emerged from the definitions identified, namely positive emotions, positive social relations, involvement, and harmonization. According to Walker and Avant (2011), defining attributes are key characteristics that help to differentiate one concept from another related concept and clarify its meaning.

- **Defining attribute 1:** First, positive emotions are an important defining attribute of belonging. Indeed, authors have suggested that these include a feeling of attachment (Mucchielli, 1980), a feeling of intimacy (Kestenberg & Kestenberg, 1988), a feeling of usefulness and support (Mucchielli, 1980), and a sense of pride (Janosz et al., 1998).
- **Defining attribute 2:** Second, the student must maintain positive relations with his or her peers and teachers. These social relations must be accompanied by encouragement, acceptance, support, respect (Goodenow, 1993b), valorization (Goodenow, 1993b, Hagerty et al., 1992), and warmth (Williams & Downing, 1998).
- **Defining attribute 3:** Third, the individual must demonstrate energy and a willingness to get involved in a meaningful way within a group (Hagerty et al., 1992). This involvement can be in class or outside, such as active participation in extracurricular activities (Wehlage et al., 1989; Williams & Downing, 1998).
- **Defining attribute 4:** Fourth, harmonization is another defining attribute often mentioned in the definitions (Wehlage et al., 1989), including that of Maslow (1962). In his definition, Maslow mentioned that individuals must adapt and adjust by changing personal aspects to align with any situations or people that would warrant such an adaptation.

In sum, a close examination of the definitions found in the literature allows us to pinpoint these four defining attributes of belonging. In our view, this helps us to carry out a more thorough conceptual analysis specifically to delineate the main components of school belonging and their related concepts. Knowing the defining attributes could lead teachers to adopt more precise pedagogical strategies and, ultimately, help researchers to measure the concept more accurately.

Methodologies and Methods

Measurement Instruments

Our literature review made it possible to identify instruments, mainly of the quantitative type, that measure sense of belonging in specific groups of individuals. Such instruments have been applied to measuring belonging in given groups of individuals – e.g., a group of offenders (Negola, 1998) – as well as in educational settings, such as a school-based intervention program

(Anderson-Butcher & Conroy, 2002) and a sports team (Allen, 2006). From this search, we have chosen to focus on three quantitative research tools aimed specifically at measuring students' general sense of school belonging.

First, Carol Goodenow (1993b) developed the *Psychological Sense of School Membership* (PSSM) questionnaire at Tufts University in Boston. The PSSM has been the most frequently used instrument in recent years to measure the concept. In 2011, 40 studies had already used this tool (You, Ritchey, Furlong, Shochet, & Boman, 2011). The theoretical work of many scholars contributed to the development of the instrument (Finn, 1989; Wehlage et al., 1989). The PSSM is made up of 18 self-reported items describing various features of students' relationship with their schools, such as acceptance and inclusion (e.g., *most teachers at [name of school] are interested in me*), respect and encouragement (e.g., *people here notice when I'm good at something*), as well as peers' reactions toward a student's opinion (e.g., *other students in this school take my opinions seriously*). Some items were also developed to measure students' sense of belonging from a broader perspective that characterizes the relationship between the student and his/her school (e.g., *I feel like a real part of [name of school]*). Participants respond on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all true) to 5 (completely true). The PSSM is a research instrument that is suitable for use with both teenagers and younger students, and researchers have translated it into several languages including Mandarin (Cheung, 2004), Hebrew (Sagy & Dotan, 2001), and French (Boily, 2002).

Second, Janosz and colleagues (1998) developed the *Questionnaire sur l'environnement socioéducatif* (QES), which comprises several French-language measurement scales, at least one of which measures students' school belonging. Overall, the QES is a measurement tool used to document the quality of the school environment; it also helps to study the influence of the school environment on students' success and adaptation (Janosz et al., 2007). The items essentially measure the emotional dimension of school belonging: *je suis fier d'être un élève de cette école* (I am proud to be a student of this school); *j'aime mon école* (I like my school); *je me sens vraiment à ma place dans cette école* (I really feel a sense of my place in this school); *je préférerais être dans une autre école* (I'd rather be in another school); *cette école est importante pour moi* (this school is important to me).

Third, Midgley et al. (2000) developed the *Manual for the Patterns of Adaptive Learning Scales* (PALS) in 1998 at the University of Michigan. Overall, the scales in the PALS are used to examine the relationship between factors in the learning environment and the student's motivation, emotions, and behaviors. In the validation of their theoretical model, Roeser and colleagues (1996) used a few items from the PALS to measure school belonging. The items in this scale also measure the emotional dimensions of belonging: *I feel like I belong in this school*; *I feel like I am successful in this school*; *I feel like I matter in this school*; *I do not feel I am important in this school*. Table 1 assesses the limitations and strengths of these three quantitative instruments in regard to the items composing them and the four defining attributes raised in the current study.

Table 1: Comparative analysis of the main quantitative instruments for measuring the sense of belonging at school: strengths and limitations.

Instruments and main characteristics	Strengths	Limitations
Questionnaire sur l'environnement socioéducatif (QES)		
The <i>Questionnaire sur l'environnement socioéducatif</i> (QES) consists of many different scales used to examine the impact of the school environment on students' success and adaptation. One scale (six items) measures school belonging on a six-point Likert scale (1 = totally disagree; 6 = totally agree).	The scales were developed in French, thus facilitating the instrument's usage for French-speaking samples; presence of items measuring defining attributes 1 and 4.	There is an absence of items measuring defining attributes 2 and 3.
Patterns of Adaptive Learning Scale (PALS)		
Scales derived from the PALS are mainly used to examine the relationship between the learning environment and students' motivation, affects, and behaviors. In the validation of their theoretical model, Roeser, Midgley, and Urdan (1996) used four items from the PALS to measure school belonging. A five-point Likert scale (1 = not all true; 3 = somewhat true of me; 5 = very true of me).	The PALS has been the subject of several validation studies; presence of items measuring defining attribute 1.	There is an absence of items measuring defining attributes 2, 3, and 4.
Psychological Sense of School Membership (PSSM)		
The PSSM is used exclusively to measure school belonging. It consists of 18 items on a five-point Likert scale (1 = not all true; 5 = completely true).	The PSSM has a strong theoretical background (Finn 1989; Wehlage et al., 1989). It has been the subject of several validation studies, and items measuring defining attributes 1, 2, and 4 are present.	Attribute 3 is the least well represented within the items of the PSSM. Other themes reflecting the notion of involvement could be considered: (1) showing initiative in class; (2) participating actively in extracurricular activities (e.g., sporting activities, sociocultural events, etc.).

Delineating the defining attributes of a concept is an important step toward understanding it fully. A clear conceptualization of a concept can help to improve substantially the way in which researchers measure it. If a measurement instrument adequately reflects the various attributes of a concept, it can facilitate interpretation of the results and comparison among studies, as well

as any scientific advances in a given field of study. Therefore, the quality of the measurement instrument and its validation are of paramount importance:

Researchers should develop instruments measuring the functioning of factors that provide data about both qualitative and quantitative characteristics. To do so, not only should the construct validity of the instruments be examined but also the validity of the measurement framework, and this should be done by making use of the Classical Test Theory and/or the Item Response Theory (IRT) (Creemers, Kyriakides, & Sammons, 2010, p. 32).

Theoretical Models and Key Determinants

It should be noted that many theorists in the field of educational sciences have been interested in the study of school belonging from a theoretical viewpoint to explain phenomena such as school engagement and academic achievement (Anderman & Freeman, 2004; Beaumeister & Leary, 1995; Connell, Spencer, & Aber, 1994; Creemers & Kyriakides, 2008; Eccles & Roeser, 2009; Finn, 1989; Janosz et al., 1998; Juvonen, 2006; Newmann, Wehlage, & Lamborn, 1992; Roeser et al., 1996; Wehlage et al., 1989). In their literature review on belonging, Allan and Bowles (2012) mentioned many other relevant factors: parental involvement (Epstein, 1992), typologies of love (Lee, 1973), belonging and attachment (Bowlby, 1969, 1973; Cohen, 1982, 1985), social capital (Putnam, 2000), and self-presentation (Fiske, 2014). A thorough examination of these theoretical models is beyond the scope of this paper.

However, a close examination of the theoretical models that have been developed in the educational sciences allows us to pinpoint two important determinants of students' school belonging. First of all, it appears that positive social relations among peers contribute directly and positively to building and sustaining students' school belonging (Janosz et al., 1998; Juvonen, 2006). In a thorough literature review on that perspective, Juvonen (2006) suggested many types of social relations among peers that can be examined, such as dyadic relations, friendships, or peer acceptance. Theorists have also argued that positive social relations between teachers and students directly and positively influence students' school belonging (Janosz et al., 1998; Newman et al., 1992; Roeser et al., 1996; Wehlage et al., 1989). Juvonen (2006, p. 658) noted, "Students are presumed to comply and be motivated to learn when they feel supported and respected by their teachers." Along the same lines as Osterman (2010), Wehlage and colleagues (1989) suggested that positive social relations between students and the teacher can be considered through the lens of support and caring behaviors. These researchers suggested offering: (1) constant support for students having difficulties, (2) constant support for students in order for them to meet the standards and skills required by the school, (3) constant support so that students feel included in society, and (4) constant efforts to help students establish and maintain respectful relationships.

Educational Strategies to Build and Sustain Students' School Belonging

Allen and Bowles (2012) suggested effective strategies to guide teachers in building and maintaining students' school belonging. Some of these strategies were taken from the Wingspread declaration on school connections (2004) and are congruent with Osterman's (2010) position regarding the notion that school belonging can be enhanced through interpersonal support, encouragement of autonomy, and methods of instruction that shape positive social dynamics with peers. For example, having high expectations of each student, being fair and consistent in disciplinary management, making sure students adhere to school

and classroom rules, creating a trusting climate, and considering students' needs are multiple strategies to enhance students' school belonging (Wingspread, 2004). Other strategies reported by Allen and Bowles (2012) were originally proposed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2009). Many of these are part of theoretical models in the field of educational sciences that take school belonging into account. These strategies include adult support (Newman et al., 1992), a positive school climate and positive perceptions of the learning environment (Janosz et al., 1998), and positive peer relations (Juvonen, 2006).

In our view, teachers should also examine Osterman's (2010) work to gain insight into the most effective strategies in terms of intervening to develop students' sense of belonging at school. Osterman (2010) described a few studies aimed at identifying various teaching strategies and teachers' attitudes/behaviors that possibly have a positive influence on school belonging. Through a very long list of strategies, Osterman (2010) proposed two roles that teachers should adopt: (1) academic support (teacher as instructional leader) and (2) personal support (teacher as a person). Osterman (2010) used the expression *academic support (teacher as instructional leader)* to address the wide range of teaching strategies that positively influence students' school belonging. Among these educational strategies Osterman (2010) suggested giving examples, checking for understanding, engaging in problem solving, and giving students' choices. Osterman (2010) used another expression, *personal support (teacher as a person)*, to emphasize the fact that effective teaching strategies are not enough alone to develop students' school belonging. On a daily basis, teachers must show adequate interpersonal support because students perceive sound teaching partly through their teachers' caring behaviors. Among many personal support behaviors, Osterman (2010) suggested offering students guidance, knowing students' names, listening to students, using humor, and encouraging discussion.

Discussion

Considering the significant role of students' school belonging in their engagement and academic success, this paper makes six recommendations that can be applied by teachers, school principals, school board leaders, school psychologists, or any other behavioral intervention workers. In developing these recommendations, the four defining attributes of belonging have been considered, as well as teachers' behaviors and instructional strategies.

Recommendation 1

Given that positive emotions are a fundamental element that defines a sense of belonging, the authors recommend that school principals provide their teachers with ongoing training in active listening to decode and take greater account of their students' emotional well-being. According to Gordon and Burch (2003, p. 76):

Active listening is not a gimmick that teachers can pull out of their bag of tricks to patch up students when they have problems. It is a specific method for putting to work a set of attitudes about students, about their problems, and about the role of the teacher as a helping person.

Gordon and Burch (2003, p. 74) suggested several aspects related to active listening strategies in order for them to be effective:

- The teacher must have a deep sense of trust in students' ability ultimately to solve their own problems [...].

- The teacher must be able to genuinely accept the feelings expressed by students [...].
- The teacher must understand that feelings are often quite transitory [...].
- The teacher must want to help students with their problems and make time for it [...].
- Teachers must be “with” each student who is experiencing troubles [...].
- Teachers need to understand that students are seldom able to start out by sharing the real problem [...].
- Teachers must respect the privacy and confidential nature of whatever the student reveals about himself and his life [...].

Recommendation 2

Because positive social relations, effective pedagogy and fulfilling needs – such as competence, autonomy, and relatedness – are essential elements for learning, the authors recommend that teachers adopt two distinct roles with their students. First, as Osterman (2010) suggests, they can offer personal support to the students (teacher as a person); this refers to the many ways of supporting and of building and sustaining strong social bonds, and could include demonstrating enthusiasm for teaching and learning through words and body language, disciplining proactively rather than punitively, and understanding what is going on in the students’ lives. The second role is related to academic support (teacher as an instructional leader); this precisely refers to effective teaching strategies (Osterman, 2010) and includes developing relevant lessons, providing sufficient time for completion, emphasizing mastery in learning, and avoiding making comparisons between struggling students and other more capable students.

Recommendation 3

Because positive social relations among peers is an element that defines a sense of belonging, the authors recommend the adoption of teaching strategies that encourage positive social relationships, such as teamwork or cooperative learning tasks (Osterman, 2000). In the authors’ view, attention must be paid to make sure that each student has a chance to play a role in a team and feel accepted by their peers.

Recommendation 4

Because many theorists have suggested that positive social relations contribute to building and sustaining school belonging (Eccles & Roeser, 2009; Janosz et al., 1998; Juvonen, 2006; Newman et al., 1992; Roeser et al., 1996; Wehlage et al., 1989), the authors recommend the implementation of social competence programs quite early on in the students’ school career. In reviewing the work of other scholars, Kalvin, Bierman, and Erath (2015, p. 1) suggested:

To effectively promote positive peer relations, preschool programs need to target the social-emotional skills that are “competence correlates” – skills that are associated with peer acceptance and protect against peer rejection. During the preschool years, these skills include: 1) cooperative play skills (taking turns, sharing toys, collaborating in pretend play and responding positively to peers); 2) language and communication skills (conversing with peers, suggesting and elaborating joint play themes, asking questions and responding to requests for clarification, inviting others to play); 3) emotional understanding and regulation (identifying the feelings of self and other, regulating affect when excited or upset, inhibiting emotional outbursts and coping with everyday frustrations); and 4) aggression control and social problem-solving skills (inhibiting reactive aggression, managing conflicts

verbally, generating alternative solutions to social problems and negotiating with peers).

Recommendation 5

Because many authors define school belonging using the concept of harmonization (similarity with members of the group) (Wehlage et al., 1989), the authors recommend educational activities in which students can develop common interests with their peers within the classroom. For instance, teams consisting of three to four students could create a website based on the teams' interests early in the school year so that many projects could revolve around it (e.g., members share a team blog).

Recommendation 6

Because students' participation in extracurricular activities positively influences school belonging (Finn, 1989), the authors recommend engaging students in many extracurricular activities related to various interests, such as sports, arts, technology, culture, etc. In doing so, it will be possible to provide opportunities for students to develop common interests with students outside of their classroom.

Conclusion

Enhancing students' school belonging is of paramount importance for students' academic success and engagement, and must therefore be taken into account in educational programs, practice, and research. This paper, aligned with that of Allen and Bowles (2012) and Allen et al. (2016), allows us to present well-supported arguments in favor of more research on this pivotal concept. On a final note, researchers and teachers should be aware of the complexity of the concept. In the authors' view, more research could be carried out (1) to delineate the defining attributes of belonging, and (2) to address the conceptual overlap among related concepts associated with school belonging. Such work would facilitate the clarification of many concepts in education while refining the interpretation of results when examining school belonging and its related concepts. By clarifying school belonging and its related concepts, the authors believe it will greatly benefit practice and research.

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**Friends with Benefits: Causes and Effects of Learners' Cheating
Practices During Examination**

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Abstract

Cheating during examinations is triggered by peer influence. It makes every learner know and do what should not be done. Cheating during examinations defeats the purpose of understanding, applying and creating ideas as stipulated in the revised Bloom's taxonomy by Anderson. The study reported here was designed to delve into the reasons and aspirations of the respondents in their cheating engagement. Sixteen (16) key informants, selected using random sampling procedure among Junior and Senior High School learners of Roxas National Comprehensive High School in Palawan during the months of June to October 2016, completed open-ended questionnaires and took part in the interview. Nvivo software was used in the analysis of the themes that emerged from the data. This study discovered that friendship is manipulated, for it makes doing right things unacceptable and things to be avoided like cheating seem right and acceptable. The behavior about cheating during examination is deeply rooted in the culture of pakikisama (social acceptance/liking) and utang ng loob (debt of gratitude). If a learner does not share his or her answers, he or she will be labeled as walang pakisama (no concern). This paper then argues that honesty should not be just a policy; rather, honesty in this case, is the only policy. Condemning academic dishonesty must not merely rest in the enrollment forms, but by constant moral reminder and intervention of teachers who have a responsibility to hone learners' decorum on honesty and maturity.

Keywords: academic cheating; examination; academic performance; friends, cheating practices; social connection.

Introduction

I cheat with, from and for my friends. This is a prevalent mindset of learners whenever they are facing difficulties during examinations. Cheating on examinations in academic institutions is a worldwide issue (Berhan & Desalegn, 2014). Adolescents are at a time in their lives where peer influence and peer pressure are high (Rettinger & Kramer, 2009). Student habits and views on cheating are developed in high school (McCabe, Butterfield, & Trevino, 2012). In the advent of the twenty first century generation, one of the most disturbing and alarming problems in education is underpinned by students' ways of cheating. Cheating occurs when a student obtains or attempts to obtain some advantage or extra marks by any dishonest or deceptive means. This can include lying; copying from another's test or examination; interacting with other students during assessments and taking any unauthorised material into an examination venue (Jordan, 2001, McCabe et al., 2001, Northumbria University, 2013). Thus, cheating is considered as one of the forms of academic misconduct that has become one of the biggest concerns of educational institutions (Wilkinson, 2009). Problems concerning cheating became evident not only among undergraduate university students, but also among secondary learners in recent times. "Cheating or academic misdemeanor is not a new phenomenon" (Taradi et al., 2012, p. 14), but a long-familiar problem not only in many European countries but in the Philippines in particular. This is a kind of misconduct in such a way that it undermines students' capability to master lessons and achieve excellence in their performance and learning competencies as embedded in the curriculum guide provided by the Department of Education. Academic dishonesty can be defined as the students' use of illegal activities, techniques and forms of fraud during their examination or evaluation processes, usually for the purpose of achieving better grades (Manar & Shameem, 2014).

In the Philippine educational system, its participants, learners in particular, are required to faithfully follow the mandate of excellence, mastery and integrity of learning knowledge and skills, which are intended for the proliferation of their infinite potentials which lie dormant if untouched with the graces of academic instructions. In this sense, this purpose is nowadays almost and always frustrated by misconducts or undisciplined performances among the learners of this 21st century era. Technological advancements have made cheating easier and more prolific (McGregor & Stuebs, 2012). "The process of how students cheat has been the topic of extensive research" (Baker, et al., 2008, p. 28). This paper supplements the established findings on academic dishonesty by delineating the innovative techniques that students use to respond to perceived difficulty and frustrations encountered within the context of Junior and Senior High School learners in Roxas National Comprehensive High School, Roxas, Palawan, Philippines.

The Aim of the Study

Why do students from all age groups and levels of achievement participate in cheating? One line of speculation is that dishonesty in school is just a reflection of a much broader erosion of ethical behavior that has become commonplace in a society that tends to support self-centeredness over concern for others (Sommers & Satel, 2005). To delineate the essence of the issue, I focus my attention on the following topics:

1. The reasons why students copy other learner's answer during examinations
2. The ways by which students copy other learners' answers
3. The effects of copying other learner's answers in personal and social identity

4. The interventions that need to be maintained, formulated and implemented to respond on this issue.

Theoretical Framework

“Social learning theory focuses on the learning that occurs within a social context. It considers that people learn from one another, including such concepts such as observational learning, imitation and modelling” (Corpuz & Lucas, 2011, p. 82). Inherent with this theory are the principles such as observing the behavior of others and outcome of those behaviors, learning occurs without a change in behavior, and cognition plays a role in learning. In the midst of this compelling issue copying other learners’ answers, the Department of Education through its teachers, is making better alternatives and remediation for students failing marks. Then, copying-in-the making issue somehow reverberates in the halls of students’ unconscious behaviors with and without teacher in front of them. “Cheating is rampant in professional schools, a major shift has occurred in cheating related attitudes including peer behavior and ethical environments, and a deeply embedded honors code can play a key role in creating an ethical environment” (McCabe et al., 2012, p. 67).

Literature Review

The reasons for cheating are influenced by peer pressure.

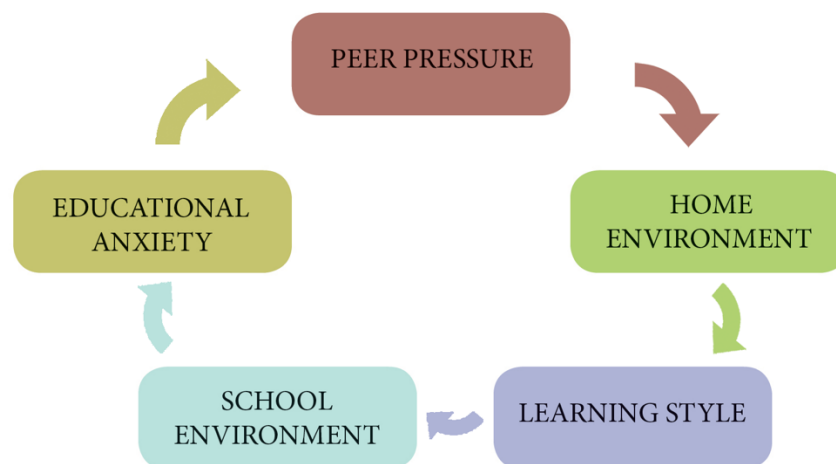


Figure 1: Factors that enhance academic cheating (Sarita, 2015).

As can be seen in the Figure 1, **peer pressure** is the prime mover of cheating. If peers in their peer group are choosing academic dishonesty, then they are more likely to do the same (McCabe, 1999 as cited by Sarita, 2015). Adolescents are influenced by what their peers do and they form their peer groups around similar interests. Peer influence is at its highest at this point in their lives. Secondly, **home environment**, which refers to the conditions where people live, is another factor in cheating. The old saying “The most important work you do takes place within the walls of your home”. It is noticeable that children learn many things at home not only in academics but also in values like honesty in particular. Academic dishonesty is more likely to occur with parental pressure to get good grades (Taylor, et al. 2002). The third factor is learners’ **learning styles**. Some students are naturalistic while others are visual and auditory. Learning styles like cognitive, affective and physiological behaviour serve as relatively stable

indicators of how learners perceive, interact with and respond to the learning environment. Fourth, there is a **school environment** where academic cheating takes place. There are many reasons why an adolescent may choose academic cheating over academic integrity. Adolescents compete against each other for class rank (Sarita, 2015).

Class rank helps them edge their way into competitive institutions and colleges. Politics in a school may also play an important factor for who get caught and disciplined accordingly when they engage in academic dishonesty (Riera & Di Prisco, 2002 as cited by Sarita, 2015). Teachers have some influence on how to set up their classrooms, as well as goals set and attained throughout the academic school year. Teachers can have mastery goal structure or performance goal structure in their classroom. Mastery goals focus on learning and improvement, whereas performance goals are based on grades and what one can do to be at the top. Sarita (2015) claimed that **Educational anxiety** is the combination of anxiety and academic anxiety. Students have many anxieties related to education as pressure by parents and schools to achieve top scores has created stress levels among students. The students know cheating is wrong but they feel like the most important thing they do is get grades. In fact, much of the research on academic cheating has been centered on elucidating possible psychological reasons why students engage in cheating behavior. This research paper by Sarita (2015) contributed to researcher's understanding of the social milieu and development of this current study about cheating, for it manifested the prime factors why learners' cheat particularly peer group which influence the flow of academic dishonesty.

In the study of Kwong *et al.* (2010), he found that students participate in academic misconduct because of their workloads and time pressures, their desire to achieve good grades, and unclear instructions from teachers about what constitutes academic misconduct. Moreover, societal and technological factors that may contribute to increased tendency towards cheating include: lack of awareness, peer culture, lack of punishment, absence of risk and pressure to achieve (Ma, *et al.* 2006). Classrooms that stresses high grades and test scores may lead the learners to cheat. Situational factors also contribute to the students' tendency to cheat. For instance, some students find their work challenging or boring, fear failure, lack training and may be pressured by insufficient time to study and heavy workloads (Razera *et al.*, 2010).

In modern times, cheating involves the possession, communication or use of information, materials, notes, study aids or other devices not authorized by the instructor in an academic exercise, or communication with another person during such an exercise. It was noted that the reason to cheat were: Not preparing for the exam, lack of time to study, carelessness and lack of punishment from instructors. The most common methods of cheating were found to be copying from other test studies and talking to neighbors during the exam, besides using certain gestures to get answers from others (Ahmadi, 2012). Many students cheat just to receive a passing grade and impress their parents and teacher. Academic cheating is caused by many reasons; parental pressure, teacher pressure and poor time management. Teacher pressure will generate the need for students to cheat academically. Academic cheating is a growing concern among adolescents in schools worldwide (Sarita, 2015).

One notable character and uniqueness of this study is that available literatures can be commonly found in research conducted on higher education but not extensive in secondary education. According to the Center for Academic Integrity (Fields, 2003), 75% of students in higher education admit to cheating behaviors. However, only over 20% of 1,369 undergraduates studied reported that they had committed an act of academic dishonesty while in college (Stearns, 2001).

Methodology and Methods

An open-ended questionnaires designed to evaluate Junior and Senior High School learners' awareness in Roxas National Comprehensive High School were administered to sixteen key informants during the months of June to October 2016. In the process of interview method, the respondents were asked to fill out the questionnaire and answer all the questions with audio-recorded files. The first part of the questionnaire is about the codename, age, section and year level intended for confidentiality of informations. In the second part of the questionnaire, respondents were asked to assess their knowledge and experiences through the qualitative interview guide.

The questions concentrated on knowledge and awareness about copying answers during examinations, causes and impacts of cheating phenomenon as well as respondents' responses. The questionnaires were randomly distributed to the all-secondary levels using convenience sampling. Furthermore, Nvivo software was used to analyze the themes, which are geared to provide solutions to the problem of cheating during examinations. This oeuvre sets its limit in the realm of secondary level particularly at Roxas National Comprehensive High School as its center of reference. Delineating the prime reasons and effects of academic dishonesty trigger the researcher to find out student's aspirations in meeting the standard of the academe among Junior and Senior High School learners in Roxas National Comprehensive High School.

Results

The first part of the questionnaire categorically focused on learners' experiences of cheating during examinations. The choices presented revolved on quizzes, mastery tests, periodical tests in Junior High School learners while chapter/unit test and quarterly Examinations for Senior High School learners. Data revealed that the majority of the informants disclosed their experiences in cheating during quizzes, mastery and periodical tests. Data also found that respondents' behavior on cheating is highly dependent on their aspiration for passing grades in order to be qualified for promotion.

More than half of the informants confessed that they have no experience of being caught in the act while cheating. Their common response came from the second part of the questionnaire that asked the question: Have you had worst experiences of being caught in the act while cheating? But then, one of the respondents disclosed that she could not forget the experience of being reprimanded by her teacher and it was reported to her parents. She suffered emotional pains of being treated as someone who is not using her mind by her father.

Table 1: Systematic results of interviews with the informants.

Codename	Age	Current Year level	Grade level when cheating is learned	Causes of cheating during exam	Ways of cheating during exam	Effects of cheating in exam	Subject/s that need cheating
BOY	13	7	2	Difficulty of Subject	Cheating from friends	Low self-esteem	English
AXL	15	9	3	Peer Influence	Friendly to classmates	Low self-esteem	Mathematics

SKO	16	11	3	Difficulty of Subject	Looking at classmates' papers	Passing grades	Science
JED	14	8	5	Not ready for exam	Sign language	Make parents proud	Mathematics
LAD	15	9	4	Peer influence	Looking at classmates' papers	Avoid failing grades	Mathematics
HAB	14	8	5	Difficulty of Subject	By making friends of classmates	Avoid failing grades	Science
TIN	17	11	3	Not ready for exam	By making friends of classmates	Avoid failing grades	English
GEN	14	7	4	Difficulty of Subject	Sign language	Get good and passing grade	Mathematics
WEM	14	8	4	Difficulty of Subject	Being friendly to classmates	Passing grades	Mathematics
MEN	15	9	5	Not ready for exam	Looking at the paper of my classmate/s.	Passing grades	Mathematics
SER	16	11	6	Peer influence	Sign language	Passing grades	Science
REX	16	10	7	Not ready for exam	Go out and look for answers	Avoid failing grades	Science
KID	13	7	6	Peer influence	Sign language	Passing grades	English
LOY	14	8	5	Peer Influence	Making friends of classmates	Avoid failing grades	Mathematics
JET	15	10	3	Peer influence	Friendly to classmates	Wish to help a friend	English
JOY	14	9	4	Peer Influence	Being friendly to classmates	Passing grades	Mathematics

As can be seen in Table 1, sixteen (16) informants who participated in the interview have their respective codenames. The age bracket of the respondents is from thirteen (13) to seventeen (17) years old, the majority being fourteen years old. Their respective year levels are randomly selected from grade seven to grade eleven. Most of the respondents are from grade eight (8) and grade nine (9). As presented in the table, most of them learned and began to cheat during their elementary years, specifically grades three, four and five. Peer influence is the dominant cause of cheating during examination among the respondents. Aside from peer influence, the

difficulty of the exam and not being able to prepare for examination are the primary causes of cheating behavior. Making friends of their classmates is the most common attitude of the respondents. More than half of the respondents admitted that the primary effect of cheating for them is to get passing grades in order to make their parents proud. However, low self-esteem is one of the effects for a minority of the informants. “Participants who cheated had lower self-esteem in comparison with those who did not cheat. As regards attitude towards disloyalty, it was found that loyalty had a low value for the participants who cheated, while non-cheaters valued it highly” (Blachnio & Weremko, 2011). Mathematics is the most difficult subject for majority of the informants in this study. Aside from Mathematics, Science and English had been mentioned.

Discussions

When the informants were asked by the question as to what made them engage in cheating during examinations, more than half of them responded that aside from primary causes presented in table 1, they did not understand the topic or lesson discussed and they did not review their lessons beforehand. Moreover, the teacher does not give punishment when he and she caught them. In addition, they are too lazy to listen to discussion because their teacher is very strict. In these particular cases, a lack of the skill in understanding wide and various array of academic notions penetrated and dominated learners’ behavior towards the discussion. It must be noted that in the context of 21st century learners, they are very inclined towards collaborative activities rather than plain traditional discussion strategies given by their teachers. Attention and focus are the main skills that are interrupted if the teaching strategies are very traditional. Hence, learners are gradually losing their appetite in substantial absorption of concepts in the classroom. Data revealed that continuous decrease of attention and focus because of traditional teaching pedagogies served as prime factors and causes of learner’s dependency on cheating with their seatmates during examinations.

Most of the informants admitted that they have highly creative ways of copying other learners’ answers during examinations. Data revealed that learners academically cheat by way of looking at and asking for their classmates answers, giving and receiving a crumpled paper containing answers on the exam, writing the answers on their hand and desk, sign language, going out while exam is ongoing and look for the answers on their pocket device. Moreover, they cheat by means of recording the answers to their cellular phones and listening on them via headset while taking examination, having picture of the answer in cellular phone during mastery test and look at these answers during periodical test. For them, most of the test questions in mastery test or unit test for senior high school are the same with periodical test of quarterly assessment questions.

Utilitarian Perspective of Friendship on Cooperative Cheating

A friend is defined as a person who helps or supports someone, a favored companion, one that is not hostile, and the one attached to another by affection or esteem (Merriam dictionary). Along in-class examination, friendship is at the momentum zone that is either to build strongly or break abruptly. The most common strategy that they are doing when copying is by making friends of their classmates who are intelligent in the subject in order to copy through looking and asking their classmates’ answers. Loy, one of the informants, highlighted this theme by saying: “I need to befriend my classmates for me to be able to copy their answers if I do not know the answer.” In line with the gender codes, respondents revealed that their peers are commonly the same gender. Male learners are building friendship not just socially but also for

academic benefits involving cheating during examinations. My data revealed that male learners are more susceptible to cheating than female. It is because most of the males are always at the back of the classroom where they have boys' talk while discussion is ongoing, thus, making them not copy or hear what the teacher is presenting or the activity being given to them.

Birds with the same feather flock together, as the saying would tell. As friends, individuals share the same interest, likings, hobbies and aspirations. Emerging themes from the data suggested three kinds of group of friends in relation to in-class examination, namely: the slow friends, the average friends and the elite friends.

1. Slow friends tend to go together in one place in the classroom. For them there is a feeling of belongingness, that is, they gain confidence through each other's way or means of help in times of uncertainty during examination. If this means does not work, they resort into tapping their friends on average levels. Their passion is not on reviewing but radically on depending on other's answers.
2. Average friends are those learners who oftentimes deal with accommodating and helping slow learners to cope with their answer if left unguarded. They make every way possible to copy answers from the elite learners.
3. Elite friends are the ones who are very competitive. Most of them, as revealed by the informants are not sharing answers. But, if they are triggered by the maintaining grade posed by their academic strand, they tend to give in to idea that one for all, all for one. They are also receiving free snacks from their friends if all of them passed. They shifted from a notion that we study because we compete with each other to the idea that we study because we need keep every classmate on track.

Causes and Effects of Cheating During Examination

Data revealed that peer pressure is one of the most triggering causes in this kind of academic dishonesty. Moreover, the findings revealed that unpreparedness causes stress and triggered with time pressure deeply affected learners to cheat during examinations. Rex shared his experience in this regard: "Peer pressure caused me to be stressed if I cannot answer the questions correctly. So, I just wait to find a way and copy if the proctor is not guarding us."

As to their aspirations, most of the informants conceded that they do not want to feel ashamed to their parents because of their failing grades. In their mindset, they copy during examination in order to get good grades, make their parents proud, avoid failing grades, and to be happy still despite knowing that they pass examination through unfair copying others' answers. When they were asked as to how certain are they that the answer which they copied is true or not, they commonly answered that they are confident that their seatmate's answer is true for she or he is their friend. For them, they have this saying that friends do not lie and leave each other. Data revealed that duration of time given is not a problem but the access to friends who know the answer. Kid stated: "Time is not a problem as long as you have a friend who knows the answer, the problem is if you both do not know the answer."

Learners' cheating habits during examination is notably rooted in their elementary years. Most of them revealed that their dishonest behavior occurred between grades two (2) and four (4). Peer influence is the common cause of this problem of copying. Because their friends are cheating, so are they. In this realm, curiosity and a need to be belong could also be noticed as

the cognitive tendencies that played a huge effect to learners developing the habit of copying other learners' answers during examinations.

Upon probing on the subjects which they found difficult and in which they are always copying, data revealed that Mathematics is the most challenging subject for senior high school learners. This finding is the opposite on the basis of Junior high school learners which revealed that Science, Math and English are the most difficult subjects. When asked what particular subjects are easy to cope with, data revealed subjects such as Filipino language and values.

Most of the informants have a conviction that this culture of copying other learners' answers during examination could be put to an end if and only if every learner avoids and controls himself to academically cheat. The majority of the respondents reported that academic cheating particularly copying during examination decreases self-confidence and understanding in their academic performance. For them the ideal was that they prefer to be failed than to cheat during exam, but in reality, they detach themselves from that ideal when they find themselves unprepared, time pressured, and that particular subject is for them difficult to bear academically.

Teachers' Practical Interventions on the Issue

Enforcing academic integrity by limiting the opportunity for academic fraud in the first place is a herculean task, but it is one that is controllable: data agree with the claim that teachers and “professors can do simple things such as making sure that desks are free of scribbled notes, that book bags are closed, that hats are removed. Further, they can look for gazes that repeatedly veer off into areas other than the test; multiple versions of exams can be administered in small classrooms rather than auditoriums; instructors can also employ additional proctors during exams, adopting wide and fixed space seating” (Jones, 2011, p. 45). In addition, many of the informants suggested monitoring techniques that are effective such as: Set A, Set B technique, random eat plans, supply type test strategies (e.g. essay, identification and modified true or false,) no gadgets, no talking and going out while exam is ongoing and alphabetical seating arrangement.

Career and Academic Implications

The study is formulated among Roxas National Comprehensive High School Junior and Senior High School learners. Thus, based on the questionnaire, awareness about copying other learners' during examination are noted in the author's conclusion about the following:

1. Informants admitted that they learned copying since their early days in elementary school. First, they act as observers and the need to be in the group triggered the manifested behavior of copying. Imitation is not wrong if put in its proper context. In business, for example, modelling is evident, for it makes an entrepreneur imitate all the strategies and skills in order for him to be effective and efficient. However, in the school, the implication is reversed. Learners should internalize the lessons discussed for them to be able to be critical thinkers upon landing in their chosen field in the future. If cheating is the culture that they imbibed, then they probably cannot pass in any board or bar exam where their need for job security is on the line. Learning in a solitary environment may motivate more learning and thus overcome the need for cheating, meaning that people may be able to learn and pass exams in other contexts.

2. They are differentiated in terms of the subject, which they treated as difficult in which they feel the need to copy during examinations. There are informants who found it hard to deal with Mathematics yet comfortable in learning English. On the other hand, there were also informants who found that English is more difficult than Mathematics that is why they need to copy others' answers. The bottom line is learners' learning abilities are complex, for everybody is unique. Then, cheating cannot be a rational means on compensating different strengths and weakness upon taking hard subjects. Honesty is tested when a learner admits to himself and desire to change his weakness into strength by seeking help from his peers and teachers for interventions. In this way, a learner will have self-confidence in bearing difficulty on the examination.
3. Most informants happened to cheat during examination in order to deal with their aspirations like passing the particular subject and consequently make their parents proud. Promotion became the main factor in cheating engagement. But, some of the informants realized that even if they think and know that they pass already, their conscience haunt them at the end of the day. Their conscience that cheating is not a moral way to get promoted. Some of them are rationalizing that maybe those subjects are no value to the jobs that they will do someday, without even considering that honesty which they defeated is the prime factor that determines their altitude or downfall.
4. Most of the informants realized that copying other learners' answers triggers lack of self-confidence and lack of passion in learning. Low self-esteem and feeling of boredom makes a person suffer when he is at his field of work or employment. On this dimension, many informants disclosed that they have to adhere to not cheating for them to earn self-confidence.
5. To extinguish this habit of academic dishonesty especially during examination, informants suggested that they could resort to intensive concentration on reviewing their lesson beforehand in order that they will not be stressed and rattled as examination continues to go along with their ways. This attitude then makes every learner attained that highest level of revised Bloom's taxonomy, that is, creativity. In life, love and business, creativity that emanates from focus makes everything successful and excellent.
6. For some adolescents, parental pressure is high at this age in regard to academics (Strom & Strom, 2007). However, data revealed that informants resorted to cheat during examination because of the lack of parental presence who are supposed to guide them in their quest for knowledge internalization by giving advises and inspirational messages. This research found that the need for parental moral support in the home is needed. Another influential factor why students cheat is that there are some parents who are very judgemental when they knew that their son or daughter got a failing grade in school. The fear of being reprimanded and treated as someone who is undeserving of support from parents makes every student engage in cheating during examination. Thus, even those learners who are living in the boarding house must have an ample time of communication between them and their parents.
7. Friendship became very practical. Learners who depend on building friends in order to copy during examinations are very utilitarian in character. They are always harmonious relationship with those learners whom they know they can benefit from, but resent those who do not share their answers. It is as if friendship is manipulated for it makes right things to do unacceptable and things to be avoided as if they are the right things to do.

As Filipinos, this behavior is deeply rooted on the culture of *pakikisama* (need to belong) and *utang na loob* (debt of gratitude). If a learner does not share his or her answers, he or she will be labeled as *walang pakisama* (no concern). To get rid to this kind of social indifference, many learners resort to share their answers even if they know it is not the right thing to do.

8. Cheating during examination became students' way of building social connection. Even if the test is very easy, still they are relying on their friends' answers for confirmation. Social connection makes every learner confident and ready to face any academic challenges. Although building social connection among learners is a part of being human, they must not forget to value the essence of honesty. The virtue of honesty makes social connection firm and stand for a long period of time. There is a Filipino maxim which states: "*Ang pagsasabi ng tapat ay pagsasama ng maluwa*" (Honesty is a way to have a long term relationship). Honesty is the opposite of utilitarian thinking among students. Cheating as a way of building social connection paves an opportunity only for short term bonds among students. It is because if they are caught by their teacher, they would be punished. This culture of cheating among students will greatly affect their career in the future and relationship with their loved ones. Social connection is a form of collaboration. Another perceived cheating as a form of collaboration, a skill that is valuable in the business world (Aaron & Roche, 2013).

Conclusion

This paper then argues that honesty should not be just a policy; rather, honesty in this case, is the only policy. Indeed, teachers nowadays cannot assume that learners know and abide by the unwritten moral codes and rules imposed by school, family and society as a whole. Henceforth, to uphold honesty and matureness is to emphasize these rules and codes. The rules and codes must not merely rest in the enrollment forms or written school policies, but it must be in action, meaning to say in constant reminder given and intervened by teachers who have full authority and responsibility to hone learners in the light of honesty and maturity as enduring values in the arena of life.

I argue in this paper that learners' illegitimate means of responding to failure and frustration during examinations are not to be counted as excuse for them to be recognized as highly innovative. Through making friends of their intelligent peers, tolerating their dishonest behavior by giving answers because of friendship, gaining confidence through social approval, for everyone does it, feeling of being intelligent because of cheating practices and manipulating gadgets to copy clear-cut answers should not be tolerated. These innovative ways are not good or bad in themselves (amoral) but if they are put in the wrong context (academics), which upholds the virtues of honesty for self-discovery of skills and self-mastery of talents, these mentioned means of cheating becomes immoral, and thus destructive for every learner who engages in this practice.

Effective Communication between Parents and Their Children

Indeed, educators cannot provide all of the guidance that students require to adopt honesty as a lifestyle. Some parents tell daughters and sons that cheating is a fact of life in the world of work and this has forced them to cheat in order to succeed. When parents act in this way, condoning dishonesty and deception as standard, it becomes challenging for educators to counter the message that power of cheating makes it an acceptable practice. "Schools could

provide workshops for parents that focus on the range of cheating issues adolescents face and offer agenda questions for discussions at home about honesty, integrity, trust and maturity. In this way, mothers and fathers would be enlisted to sustain their efforts to nurture these valuable attributes in their children. Successful academic performance rooted in honesty enables students to take pride in work that is their own and to make known when tutoring is needed to improve learning (Teixeira & Rocha, 2010).

Recommendations

This paper similarly recommends ways of abating cheating in the long run. These are the following:

1. Educators should use positive reinforcement and encouraging the students to acquire a positive outlook in life that will prevent them from cheating (McCabe et al., 2002).
2. Teachers can reduce the tendency to cheat by involving students in interesting assignments that are more engaging and relevant to the students themselves (Renard, 2000; Ma et al., 2008).
3. Teachers, as facilitators of learning, should help their students to learn how to summarize and rephrase in their own words. Being fluent at writing is possibly the best way of inhibiting cheating (Dick, Sheard, & Hasen, 2008).
4. Teachers should aim for a “zero tolerance” approach with regard to cheating and plagiarism in their academic environment (Wilson & Ippolito, 2008). In order to be consistent and to reach the so-called zero tolerance towards cheating during examinations, teachers should make clear the acceptable and unacceptable behavior of the students at the very beginning of the year, stick to it as far as possible, and frequently remind the students of it.
5. Subject teachers should also make sure their students correctly understand the terms and conditions of the subject by discussing them in class if necessary. They should let the students know that teachers are available at any time to help them with their academic problems and doubts (Badia, Cladellas, & Clariana, 2013).
6. Teachers should make it clear to students that resisting temptation to cheat during examinations boosts and builds high self-esteem and self-respect. Students with higher levels of self-confidence were less likely to engage in academic misconduct (Hulsart & McCarthy, 2009).

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Appendix

Informed Consent Form

The open-ended questions to be asked are in line with the research topic: *Friends with Benefits: Causes and Effects of Cheating Practices During Examination*, which will be conducted by Leo Andrew Diego, Senior High School teacher for this action research. The main objective of this research is to find out the factors why students copy other learner's answers on their exams in order to adapt plausible solutions to be done after knowing the problem. Your answers, real name and identity are confidential, meaning to say, it will not be shared to others. Your full cooperation in this meaningful endeavor is highly appreciated.

Codename: _____

Year Level: _____

Age: _____

Qualitative Questionnaire

Objectives	Interview Questions
To identify reasons why students copy other learner's answer during examinations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What made you engage in cheating activities during examinations? ➤ What are your aspirations in doing whatever it takes to pass the subject even if it means copying other learner's answers?
To determine the ways by which students copy other learner's answers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What are the ways in which you cheat during exam?
Analyze the effects of copying other learner's answers in personal and social identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How affected are you when you cheat during exam? ➤ What do you think are the personal effects of cheating during exam? ➤ What are the ways in which you can stop copying other learner's answers during examinations?
Identify interventions that need to be maintained, formulated and implemented, to respond on this issue.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What are the cheating policies of teachers in the classroom during examination to avoid cheating activities? ➤ What do you think are the disciplinary measures given by teachers on this issue of cheating? ➤ What are the interventions being done by teachers for those learners who are slow in learning?



**Self-Efficacy Reduces Impediments to Classroom Discussion for
International Students: Fear, Embarrassment, Social Isolation, Judgment,
and Discrimination**

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Abstract

Approximately one million international students were enrolled at U.S. universities in the academic year 2015–2016, and the number has been steadily rising since. Although these students aim to increase intercultural communication skills, international knowledge, and critical thinking skills, some international students experience difficulty participating in class discussion. Several studies have revealed a range of obstacles to full participation in in-class discussions, including language, cultural differences, academic differences, and social isolation. Among these barriers, some studies have identified emotional factors that significantly affect learning. This study was an in-depth exploration of the adverse emotional factors that impede discussion participation. Using a qualitative approach, twenty-three international students at one university were interviewed, and their responses analyzed. Students reported that fear, embarrassment, social isolation, judgment and discrimination were barriers to participation. These findings are discussed in the context of a framework for reducing negative emotional states, employing self-efficacy theory. This framework was applied to the interview results and the author's observation of international students' behavior in dormitories and university offices. These findings suggest a possible intervention approach for educators to help international students express themselves in the classroom.

Keywords: international students; classroom discussion; negative emotions; self-efficacy theory; educators' intervention.

Introduction

Approximately one million international students were enrolled in U.S. institutions of higher education in the academic year 2015–2016 (*Education USA*, 2016). International students typically aim to increase their intercultural communication skills, global knowledge, and critical thinking skills through discussion and international education (Urban & Palmer, 2014). In U.S. classrooms, international students provide a number of benefits, including: (a) increasing the diversity in educational settings, and (b) contributing new perspectives to discussions in the classrooms (Lee & Rice, 2007). Class discussion is considered one of the best ways to foster educational growth, because individuals can enhance their ideas through collaboration with others. This exposure heightens mutual understanding and motivates students to continue learning. Educators can harness pedagogical discussion techniques in diverse classrooms (Brookfield, & Preskill, 2012). In addition, from an economic viewpoint, international students contributed \$35.8 billion to the U.S. economy in the academic year 2015–2016 (Institute of International Education, 2015).

While the internationalization of American higher education institutions is mutually beneficial for international students and domestic students, some international students face a number of communication/discussion problems. Lobo and Gurney (2014) reported that while international students' expectations of course components and teaching materials were largely met within U.S. universities, many international students struggled with an expectation of in-class discussion in increasingly multicultural classrooms. Specifically, a large number of international students were reported to be unable to contribute in communication-related activities. One study reported that some international students may not be accustomed to in-class participation, and may be used to more teacher-centered classroom environments in their home countries (Karuppan & Barari, 2011). Educators are often apprehensive about these students' lower levels of class participation and the effect on their learning (Kim, 2012). Some researchers have attempted to identify the causes of international students' infrequent communication within intercultural classrooms, finding that they commonly encounter cultural adjustment, social isolation, and academic challenges including communication with professors, classmates, and staff, as well as confronting culturally different ways of thinking and doing in the US (Wu, Garza, & Guzman, 2015).

Much of the research on international students has examined cultural differences or differences in learning styles between domestic and international students (Welikala, 2015). To expand the existing literature on international students' in-class discussion, the present study focuses on negative emotional factors as impediments to participation in discussion. Negative emotions such as fear of making language mistakes can erode individuals' abilities to make decisions (Kligyte, Connelly, Thiel, & Devenport, 2013). Weisfeld (2014) reported that individuals sometimes respond uncomfortably or inappropriately when another person commits a minor linguistic mistake; consequently, embarrassment is often created and exacerbated by others' laughter or smiling. This emotional agitation is associated with negative impacts on self-esteem.

The current study used a qualitative approach, interviewing 23 international students at one university and analyzing their responses. In-depth emotional factors were predicted to function as impediments to discussion participation. If adverse emotional factors negatively impact on international students' classroom discussion, there may be a need to reduce the levels of these emotions. Employing self-efficacy theory as a theoretical lens may be useful for reducing impediments and improving expressiveness. Thus, the current study sought to discern which

adverse emotional factors are impediments for international students to participate in classroom discussion, and to find a way to reduce their impact.

Literature Review

U.S. classrooms include students from a variety of backgrounds in both culture and language. However, it has been observed that most international students exhibit a lack of participation in class discussion, with adverse impacts on their academic performance (Kim, 2012). International students in the U.S. face cultural adjustment, social isolation, and academic challenges, including communication with professors and classmates (Wu, Garza, & Guzman, 2015). International students with a lower level of English proficiency often experience difficulties in class participation. In addition, international students often struggle with cultural differences, including social expectations of interaction, educational values, and teacher-centered pedagogies (Bista, 2012). Moreover, some international students spend more than 5 hours per day studying. This tendency to perfectionism can result in creating an unbalanced environment in which to learn. If perfectionism is channeled in a healthy and positive way, the student can feel fulfillment in learning. However, maladaptive perfectionism can create problematic situations, including constant concerns about making mistakes, and self-doubt in learning and the associated perceived expectations (Hamamura & Laird, 2014).

Fear and embarrassment have been found to contribute to international students' reticence to engage in in-class discussion. Typical fears of international students include making mistakes, experiencing shame, and uncertainty. Previous research demonstrated that the fear of making language mistakes was most related to overall fears of failure for international students (Conroy, 2004). A major drawback of the fear of making mistakes is that fearful emotions erode individuals' ability to make decisions, and fear of making language mistakes can impede individuals' thoughts and actions (Klignyte et al., 2013). The fear of failure generates shame and embarrassment and involves feelings of inability (Sagar & Stoeber, 2009). Weisfeld (2014) found that some individuals responded uncomfortably or inappropriately when another person committed a minor or unusual linguistic mistake; subsequently, embarrassment was often created and exacerbated by others' laughter or smiling. This emotional perturbation included negative self-respect and was sometimes accompanied by a slumped posture, gaze avoidance, and blushing. Meanwhile, Uphill, Groom, and Jones (2014) reported that among the emotions of anger, apprehensiveness, embarrassment, and happiness, embarrassment significantly predicted increased unsuccessful involvement.

International students commonly have perceptions of social isolation and discrimination. Social isolation is derived from the perception of a person as an outsider. A segment of domestic students perceive individuals as "others" or members of an outgroup, or, alternatively, a sequence of overlapping outgroups based on features such as nationality, their status as second language speakers, cultural framework, and work orientation. The "other" is related to the label "international student" (Harrison & Peacock, 2010). Although international students provide substantial benefits to universities, a considerable number of international students experience prejudice and discrimination from American classmates (Charles-Toussaint & Crowson, 2010). Wadsworth, Hecht, and Jung (2008) described how discrimination negatively transforms international students' learning experiences in an educational environment. American students may have a bias towards international students regarding English skills, which can be interpreted as discrimination against international students. International students' discriminatory experiences symbolize a rejection by others, which may intensify their perception of being considered an outsider who is unwanted by others (Wang, Wong, & Chu-

chun, 2012). Moreover, because international students who perceive discrimination from their classmates tend to have detrimental outcomes, their educational dissatisfaction may be one of the adverse consequences (Wadsworth, Hecht, & Jung, 2008).

Self-efficacy theory may be a useful framework for developing approaches to reduce negative emotions, by elevating self-efficacy. According to self-efficacy theory, the perception of efficacy is influenced by four factors: (1) experience of mastery that has led to prior successes can raise self-efficacy, because people are more likely to believe they can succeed at new tasks, (2) vicarious experience, observing someone who is similar to themselves successfully achieving something, (3) verbal persuasion and encouragement by others to increase the confidence that they can accomplish tasks, and (4) somatic and emotional states involving stress, anxiety, and fear can adversely affect self-efficacy, and can cause failure or inability; in contrast, relaxation techniques and positive self-talk can reduce negative emotional states (Bandura, 1994).

Applying the above four factors in a classroom setting, educators can help international students express themselves by providing them with clear opportunities. This can increase the likelihood of a successful experience, which can induce subsequent success. When an educator uses verbal persuasion and praises an international student's expressiveness, they may feel more confident in classroom discussion. When an international student observes other international students' learning achievements, they may have a positive perception of their own ability to accomplish the same work. When an international student is able to overcome initial adverse emotional factors and develop a positive mindset, other international students facing negative emotional factors may be encouraged to develop similarly positive mindsets.

Based on the literature reviewed above, the present study investigated the emotional factors impeding international students' participation in the classroom. These theoretical foundations suggest that international students may be able to raise their efficacy and overcome adverse emotions, and that educators may be able to help reduce the negative impact of these factors by assisting international students using self-efficacy theory.

Methods

Participants

The target participants were international students at a U.S. university. In line with Creswell (2013), in the current study, international students of various ages, nationalities, and genders were recruited, as well as those with different length of time at the institution. There were no restrictions based on race and gender in the sampling. However, participants were required to be international students who used English as a second language. I conducted 23 individual interviews with volunteers from 15 different countries in the library of the university. The 15 countries included: Brazil and Venezuela in South America; Mexico in Central America; Haiti in the West Indian Islands; Vietnam, Korea, Sri Lanka, Japan, Nepal and Malaysia in Asia; Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan in the Middle East; and Macedonia, Spain and Germany in Europe. Four Saudi Arabian students, three Japanese students, two Venezuelan students, two German students, and two Brazilian students volunteered to take part in the study. Thus, five countries in the sample were represented by more than one participant. For the remaining 10 countries, one student from each country took part (See Appendix).

The recruiting processes followed four phases in a 3-month period from October to December 2014. The four phases included: (a) random samples via email in which every member of international students has an equal opportunity to be interviewed for participation in the study (Baxter & Babbie, 2004); (b) flyers delivered to locations in which international students gathered, such as the university dormitory and a university office; (c) personal contact with potential participants within courses, and assistance from the university faculty to identify potential participants, and (d) the offer of a participation incentive by providing a cup of coffee for interviewees.

In qualitative methods, researchers collect data until saturation has been attained. According to Baxter and Babbie (2004, p. 319), “Saturation means that you have reached the point where your data are repetitive. Saturation occurs when additional data do not add additional insights”. In many types of quantitative research, theoretical saturation is considered to occur with around 20–25 interviewees (Creswell, 2013). In the present study, 23 individual interviews were conducted, producing 421 double-spaced pages of transcripts.

Data Collection

International students volunteered via email to participate in this project. Each participant was sent an Excel table in which the date and time inputs were set up so that they could insert check marks in the boxes to indicate the times at which they were available to be interviewed. At the bottom of the Excel table, participants were instructed to report their gender, nationality, the length of time learning at the university, and major. The interviews were scheduled, and confirmation of the scheduled date, time, and place was emailed to each participant. The interviews began on October 5 and ended on December 23, 2014.

Before the interviews, informed consent was obtained, and participants were instructed that they could withdraw at any time and that their confidentiality would be secured, based on the Institutional Review Board guidelines. Audio was recorded during the interviews, and the recordings ranged from 30 to 73 minutes in duration. Each interview was transcribed verbatim.

International students’ behavior and conversations were observed at the “Cultural Day Parties” held at the university dormitory (three times), at the President’s Open House (once), and at a party for international students held at a university office (once). Notes about students’ behaviors and conversations were recorded in a notebook.

Qualitative Method

In the interviews, it was important to establish relationships with international students, to enable understanding of implicit and explicit meanings in each participant’s responses and behaviors. A qualitative approach enables researchers to comprehend the meanings and actions of each participant by focusing attention on their communicative acts (Creswell, 2013). Interpretive and inductive approaches allow researchers to study the intentions, meanings, and actions of the participants directly from the data, rather than from predetermined hypotheses (Charmaz, 2005). For these reasons, a qualitative approach was selected as the preferred methodology in the current study, and semi-structured interviews were employed. Following the method described by Baxter and Babbie (2004), the semi-structured interview consisted of a list of open-ended questions. The use of open-ended questions encouraged interviewees to use their own words, and provided freedom to the interviewer in terms of order and the use of alternative language. Semi-structured interviews have two major benefits. First, researchers

can focus on gaps in information. Second, researchers can compare participants' responses and discern common themes in their conversations by summarizing the frequencies of their responses. In the current study, semi-structured interviews provided a way of comparing interviewees' responses and commonalities, enabling emerging themes to be identified.

Coding and Data Analysis

To analyze the transcribed interviews, I conducted analysis of the qualitative data, according to Chamaz's (2005) coding method: (1) in vivo coding, (2) sub-focus coding, and (3) focus coding. In the in vivo coding, I checked and circled the words line by line that I interpreted as obstacles to expression, referring to the in vivo codes. After choosing the in vivo codes of the 23 interview transcripts, all of the codes were input into the Excel table, which totaled 85 in vivo codes.

In vivo coding involves naming each data in line, enabling researchers to consider the data from a range of perspectives that may differ from participants' interpretations. In sub-focus coding, I organized similar in vivo codes together, classified them in the Excel worksheet, and named subthemes, such as social isolation, shallow expression, or discrimination. The subthemes amounted to 39 items. Subsequently, I analyzed the 39 subthemes, focus-coded them into an over-arching theme, "Emotional Factors." Following this procedure, I reduced 39 subthemes into three. The components of the themes were fear, embarrassment, social isolation/judgmental discrimination, which represented in-depth emotional factors. Figure 1 illustrates the layers of the codes. Data analysis in qualitative research typically utilizes three analysis strategies: preparing and organizing data, reducing the data into themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes, and finally representing the data in figures, tables, or a discussion (Creswell, 2013). The present study used these three recommended qualitative data analysis strategies.

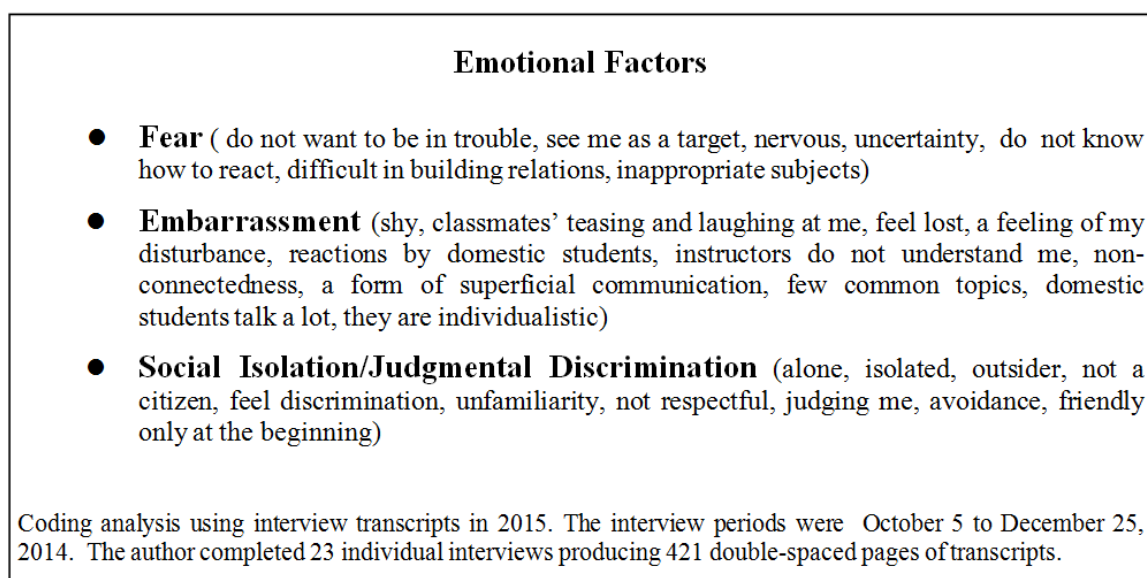


Figure 1: Codes representing emotional factors of less expressiveness.

Fear

Participants reported that they were often embarrassed and fearful of making language mistakes or giving responses that are beside the point. They reported being embarrassed when they made mistakes, as other students often reacted by laughing, even if the laughter was not mean-spirited. This mix of embarrassment and fear resulted in students keeping to themselves, reducing expressiveness, and evading social interaction with their classmates. All participants except one expressed emotions of fear and embarrassment.

James mentioned the fear of making mistakes in front of his classmates, such as giving a wrong answer, and a mixture of feelings about being an outsider. Because he did not want to give an incorrect answer resulting in his classmates laughing at his linguistic mistakes, he kept quiet. Moreover, he felt that his classmates should understand that he came from a different country and may face language challenges.

Making language mistakes is the biggest problem. I am scared of saying something in the classroom. I want to say the right thing. I don't want them to laugh at my language mistakes... I am the only international student, an outsider, and the others are all local students, so I want to tell the right thing so that they can understand me. I don't want to be a wrong person or a wrongly answered person... They should understand that I am coming from a different culture from a different part of the world where accent is obviously different and the writing is going to be different as well. (James)

James made this statement with a disappointing facial expression and a low tone of voice. However, when James was talking about his classmates' laughter at his language mistakes, he raised his voice. When he stated that he wanted his classmates to understand that he is from another country, I sensed his strong desire for his classmates to empathize with his circumstances within the classroom.

Kate also described a sense of frightfulness during group discussion, because her classmates corrected her language mistakes, although she felt her English was not bad. Over time, Kate entered contexts in which she was frightened that she would not understand what her classmates were discussing. Kate's fear was increased when her classmates corrected her mistakes. In the interview, Kate initially spoke English quickly, then began speaking even faster about this fearful situation, with more gesturing. This behavior revealed Kate's strong emotional experience of fear, reduced confidence, and sadness. Another participant, Ariel, felt a strong sense of fear/embarrassment of being laughed at after giving a wrong answer, which made her lose confidence in herself. In the first semester, Ariel was highly motivated, but gradually became disappointed and remained silent within the classroom. Ariel looked exasperated then discouraged when she was describing her classmates laughing at her language mistakes.

Embarrassment

Jordan mentioned that he was laughed at for his accent or incorrect answers, and began to avoid participating in class discussion.

I never ever raised my hand and said anything in class because I got embarrassed of my accent so saying something wrong. In my first semester at the university, I

was doing presentation and then I said a word different and my classmates laughed. It was so embarrassing. So after that, I was like, not raising my hand and didn't say anything at all in discussion because if I say something, everyone laughs again. But with time it gets better. At the time, I was really embarrassed because I didn't really understand why they were laughing. (Jordan)

Although he reported that the situation was improving, Jordan shrugged his shoulders and looked down. This behavior appeared to suggest that Jordan was not able to find any solutions that he was satisfied with. In the interview, Jordan was passionately speaking in a high pitch, emphasizing his emotional appeal regarding his classmates laughing at his accent or incorrect answer. His use of the term "everyone" in the phrase "...if I say something, everyone laughs again" was indicative of his experience of social isolation.

Roy reported losing confidence speaking English in class discussion, because every time he spoke English he made language mistakes. Roy did not want to be embarrassed within the classroom. Professors did not ask for Roy's opinions, so Roy said that he did not have any experience in the classroom. The professors realized that Roy did not want to be embarrassed in the classroom, which led the professors to be hesitant to ask him to express his opinions. Roy described this context with a negative facial expression, and expressed that he was alone in the classroom. Meanwhile, Meryl reported that her classmates proceeded with the discussion at a very fast pace, so she asked them to explain the content of the conversation. Her classmates, however, explained very quickly, in a way that was still difficult for her to understand. Meryl was very embarrassed, and felt lost. Finally, Meryl said that her classmates were not able to understand the extent to which she was not able to understand them, implying that she desired for her classmates to understand her circumstances.

Perceptions of Social Isolation/Judgmental Discrimination

Participants expressed that they were eager to share opinions through fruitful discussion. Some students, however, perceived judgment and discrimination by domestic classmates, especially toward their English skills. Such perception of judgment and discrimination led to international students' dissatisfaction with their learning.

Tom felt that his classmates were judgmental when he asked questions within the classroom, and he recognized their judgmental facial expressions. Subsequently, Tom avoided speaking up within the classroom.

Some students can be very judgmental to my talking, my accent. They think why I am asking to them. I see some students can be very judgmental when I ask questions, like American students really do. They look at me like, I'm damn, I don't know. So, I don't ask in the classroom. His or her facial expressions can tell obviously, and it's not that hard to tell if somebody's judgmental. (Tom)

In the interview, Tom seemed to let off his emotions, articulately describing his classmates' judgment, and blaming them in a sharp tone. Tom's behavior implied the current state of his reduced expression and sense of social isolation within the classroom. The last sentence "You can tell obviously, it's not that hard to tell if somebody's judgmental." emphasized his feelings of social isolation derived from his classmates' inappropriate responses.

Demi reported that her classmates judged her because she made mistakes when expressing herself in English. Consequently, Demi had a strong fear of her classmates' judgment when she expressed her opinions. Demi said she was nervous, unable to open her mouth, and felt completely paralyzed. Demi reported she did not speak English because her classmates would judge her English skills. She continued to explain that English was not her first language and it was natural to make language mistakes. Given that Demi is generally a student with a cheerful spirit, and that she did not have any difficulty expressing herself in her country, her reticence indicated how strongly she perceived judgment from her classmates. In the meantime, Ariel felt a strong perception that she was a foreigner after she gave an off-topic response and was laughed at by her classmates. Ariel did not want to be in this situation, and kept silent in the classroom. Ariel said she was the only international student and non-citizen in her class, and described her negative perception that her classmates viewed her as a target in the classroom. In the interview, Ariel articulately spoke in a loud voice, sometimes in a dispirited tone of voice, and her perception of being the only international student was accompanied by sighing. Her behavior and negative facial expressions indicated that she felt she could not do anything other than remain silent in the classroom.

In summary, some international students felt social isolation and avoided communication. These obstacles have serious negative impacts on communication for international students. The themes underlying these perceptions influenced their expression within the classroom. Moreover, the results indicated that international students experienced fear, embarrassment, perception of social isolation and discrimination in classroom discussions at a tertiary education institute, even though they enrolled because of a desire to learn critical thinking and international communication skills through classroom discussions.

Experience of Mastery and Verbal Encouragement from Professors and Classmates

Some international students continued to hold adverse emotions and became increasingly reticent within the classroom, even though some had attended the university for 3 or 4 years. On the other hand, a small percentage of the participants came to embrace positive states of mind over time. This change directed them toward holding more efficacious mindsets, providing confidence in expressing themselves and generating perceptions of fulfillment and enjoyment about participating in discussions. Some students reported a range of successful experiences, as described below.

Susan was initially silent in the classroom, and completely avoided speaking. She had strong opinions and wanted to express herself but felt that she did not have an adequate vocabulary and was afraid to speak up. However, when she had an opportunity to give a presentation about her country's traditions, food, how people spend their vacations, and how people greet each other, her classmates became interested in her culture. Susan discussed her culture with her classmates, and they provided feedback and discussion. She was able to see on her classmates' faces that they were enjoying her presentation. Even if Susan was unable to find the correct word during the discussion, she would attempt to find another similar word. This change in her emotional state increased her confidence.

When Donald answered a question in the classroom, he saw that most of his classmates did not understand what he was trying to say, which at first made him greatly embarrassed. He felt further embarrassment when attempting to answer subsequent questions. However, he learned that his professor enjoyed having international students in the class when the professor told the class that international students were able to provide new perspectives and different ideas to

those of American students. Subsequently, Donald began to feel that his contributions could improve classroom discussion. One day, Donald's professor asked the class about a project that would plan to make more parking lots. Most of the American classmates said that they would create more parking lots in various locations. In contrast, Donald said that people could better utilize public transportation instead of using cars, thus using parking lots less often, which could lead to more free parking spaces. Donald's opinion was highly appraised by his professor and classmates.

Ashton took a drawing class, in which each student presented their drawing. The other students asked each presenter questions about their drawing, such as the intention behind the drawing, and what was implied by each color. After the question and answer session, the class had a critique hour, regarding design, color, lines, images, and implications. Ashton was extremely nervous thinking about how his teacher and the other students would evaluate his work. Moreover, Ashton was afraid of speaking English, because he wondered whether he would be able to answer their questions and convey what he wanted to express. These feelings often occurred during class discussion. In one class, Ashton had already written notes about his critique at his apartment beforehand. Ashton presented the critique, based on his writing. He described the relationships between color and emotion in his work, noticing that some classmates nodded their heads and seemed to deeply understand his critique. Ashton felt that he was able to express what he intended to convey about the meaning of his drawing, and it was easy for others to understand him when he wrote about the meaning of his work beforehand.

Encouragement by Other International Students' Vicarious Experiences

The International Program Office at the university provides opportunities for international students to gather, such as in the President's House, university dormitories, and a university office. This encourages international students to exchange information about academic learning and adjustment to life in the U.S. The author visited these locations, to observe international students' behaviors, and listen to conversations among them. International students were highly talkative and responsive, regardless of differences in nationality. At an event called the "Cultural Day Party" held for domestic and international students at the dormitory, students were even more open-minded and socially interactive, educating each other about their cultures, education, sightseeing spots, and food through a presentation by a representative of each country. Recognizing others' fulfillment could lead to having vicarious experiences that refers to learning by observing someone similar to oneself doing successfully. The following conversations were among those at the dormitory.

Carlos was asked about his government providing money to learn for students to study in the U.S. Carlos explained that an international student who obtained a grade-point average (GPA) above 3.5 was eligible to receive financial support. Fortunately, Carlos achieved a GPA of 3.7 each semester, so his government provided \$3,000 at the end of each semester. The other international students in the conversation were very interested in the amount of money and Carlos' achievements, telling him that he obtained superb grades and was from an immensely affluent country.

Two international students praised Emily's presentation about her culture. Presentations were held twice a month as an event at the "Cultural Day Party." Emily told two international students about her experience of building confidence giving presentations. At university in her home country, Emily had given at least 21 presentations per semester. The international students were excited about her experience, commenting that this was an impressive number

of presentations, and asking what she had learned as a result. Emily told them that she learned to always face the audience, and avoided looking at the Power Point slides.

Donald and several international students sitting around him mutually asked and answered questions about how they were engaging in their learning. Donald said that he had more assignments than at university in his home country, but he continued trying his best, and was achieving good grades. The other students said they managed to complete their assignments, but it was sometimes difficult to finish every assignment, even with their best efforts. Donald explained that he scheduled his time for assignments and exams each week. The other students were very interested in Donald's methods of learning.

The international students sitting around Carlos, Emily, and Donald were excited and inspired by their successful learning experiences, expressing admiration and bright facial expressions. Valuable information about learning situations was exchanged through interactions that were enlivened by informal and responsive communication.

Although the author did not hear conversation about classroom discussions at these locations, it was obvious from listeners' bright facial expressions that the international students with successful experiences heightened the other students' motivation to learn at the university.

Emotional States

The emotional states of some international students regarding self expression changed from negative to positive mindsets over time. These students stopped worrying about their accents, grammatical mistakes, incorrect responses, and cultural differences. Some expressed the belief that making language mistakes was natural for international students, and it was important to make themselves understood. Students expressed that speaking up in the classroom made an individual confident even if they made language mistakes, and noted that individuals can learn different perspectives from classroom discussion.

Jordan was initially embarrassed about other students laughing at his accent and incorrect responses. Over time, Jordan believed that his English would improve, and that this would happen to everyone. Jordan considered that the most important thing was whether he understood his professor and his classmates, and whether they understood what he expressed, not whether his sentences were grammatically incorrect, or whether his classmates talked about his accent or inappropriate responses. Although Jordan still had language barriers regarding pronunciation, grammar, and structure, he did not pay undue attention to them. Jordan assumed that there would be continuous improvement. Moreover, Jordan felt that it was beneficial to participate in discussions and get different perspectives in the classroom.

When Robert expressed himself, he noticed his classmates talking about his accent, but it did not matter to him. Rather, Robert considered that speaking up about his opinions in classroom discussions made him confident because he was able to engage in the course, understand it better, and learn from discussions. With regard to cultural differences, Robert thought that it was natural for cultures to be different, and he was able to understand the differences.

Julia sometimes misunderstood what her professor asked the class and gave incorrect answers, which led her to become less expressive in the classroom. Julia, however, considered that she came to the U.S. to study, and she did not want to lose the opportunity to learn. Unless Julia participated in discussions and ask questions, she would not be able to learn from the class.

Thus, Julia asked her professor to write the important points on the blackboard so that she could participate in discussions. Although Julia once considered that cultural differences in discussions might affect her ability to express herself in the classroom, she believed that, if she ascribed her self-expression to her culture, she would be less able to achieve as an international student. Unless Julia stepped beyond her culture, her only option would be to go back to her country, she said.

Gil did not understand technical terms and had to ask about the meaning of words that were relatively simple for domestic students, such as “agenda”. In addition, Gil was unable to understand what her professor said if they spoke too quickly. Thus, when she first got to the university, Gil was very uncomfortable with her English. She was, however, aware that this experience was natural. When Gil misunderstood something, her professor and classmates corrected her mistakes. However, she thought this happened to everyone. Gil had heard some of her friends commenting that they were sometimes uncomfortable in classrooms because they did not want to make mistakes in English or be made fun of for their accents. Gil felt that students had those thoughts were because they were afraid to participate in classroom discussions, and believed they should be able to be more involved in the class and learn from participation. Gil stressed that everyone makes mistakes, even in their own language.

Jordan, Robert, Julia, and Gil enthusiastically described their changed beliefs. Obviously, their positive emotional states emerged from their strong desire to absorb different viewpoints and international knowledge and from a shared idea that making mistakes is natural. Moreover, they felt strongly that international students came to the U.S. from their countries to learn, and this should not be disrupted. These changes in their thoughts contributed to their ability to embrace positive emotional states and mindsets.

Discussion

The results revealed several in-depth emotional factors that were impediments to participation in class discussion for international students, which are supported by the literature (Conroy, 2004; Kligyte et al., 2013; Saga & Stober, 2009; Weisfield, 2014; Uphill et al., 2014; Harrison & Peacock, 2010; Wadsworth et al., 2008; Wang et al., 2012): (1) fear of making language mistakes, (2) embarrassment when an international student was laughed at for their language mistakes or incorrect responses, and (3) perceptions of social isolation, judgment or discrimination within the classroom resulting from English language ability, or being the only international student or non-citizen in a classroom. The literature has provided evidence that such adverse emotional states can contribute to an inability to make decisions, as well as increasing unsuccessful involvement and educational dissatisfaction (Conroy, 2004; Kligyte et al., 2013; Weisfield, 2014; Uphill et al., 2014; Harrison & Peacock, 2010; Wadsworth et al., 2008; Wang et al., 2012; Charles-Toussaint & Crowson, 2010). The following section discusses the findings in the context of developing methods for reducing the negative emotional factors identified above, utilizing self-efficacy theory.

Self-efficacy theory is based on four sources of self-efficacy: (1) mastery experience, (2) vicarious experience, (3) verbal persuasion, and (4) somatic/emotional states. In the current study, some respondents reported experiences of mastery (e.g., successfully presenting ideas and opinions about increasing parking lots, educating other about their cultures, and presenting an analysis of the meanings of colors and lines in a drawing). In these cases, professors provided or allotted time for international students to present their ideas and opinions. Simultaneously, their expressiveness was evaluated positively by their professors and

classmates, and, in several cases, the value of international students providing unique perspectives was expressed. These types of evaluation and commenting constitute verbal persuasion.

The observation of international students' behavior at social events revealed that some international students conveyed successful experiences about their learning, such as learning about delivering good presentations and obtaining good grades, and managing time well in preparation for exams and assignments. Although vicarious experience typically requires observation rather than simply hearing about success, learning that someone who is similar to one's self has successfully achieved a task, may provide international students with opportunities to observe other international students' successful performance. At the university examined in the current study, a great number of international students attend the "Cultural Day Party" and exchange information about their learning environments, providing many opportunities for mutual support and learning.

Research on emotional states has revealed that positive self-talk can reduce adverse emotional states (Brown, Malouff, & Schutte, 2013). The adverse emotional states of some international students developed into positive mindsets over time. In some cases, strong beliefs led to a change in thought patterns, derived from the aspiration to absorb different perspectives and international knowledge. In addition, a number of students expressed the idea that making mistakes is normal, and emphasized that the aim of international students was to study critical thinking and understanding different perspectives.

Self-efficacy theory provides a framework for reducing negative emotional factors, by heightening self-efficacy, which involves strengthening mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and somatic/emotional states, by emphasizing international students' successful experiences and robust beliefs. Thus, students can generate prior successes and observe others' successful performance by exchanging information about learning settings. This enables students to develop confidence in their expression, spurred by others' applause and positive emotional responses.

Conclusions

An increasing number of international students coming to the U.S. struggle to participate in classroom discussion, even though their intention is to learn critical thinking and obtain valuable knowledge through discussion. The current study explored the adverse emotional factors impeding discussion participation among international students. The results revealed that international students commonly experienced fear, embarrassment, social isolation, judgment and discrimination. In addition, the study developed a potentially useful approach for reducing negative emotional states by employing self-efficacy theory and emphasizing mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and somatic/emotional states, following international students' successful experiences and robust beliefs.

The proposed approach involves an educational intervention, in which educators can help international students enhance their self-efficacy and reduce adverse emotions. Within the classroom, educators can provide opportunities for international students to speak up within the classroom and praise their expressiveness. They can highlight the strong points of international students who have different viewpoints and encourage them to focus on positive emotional states. A previous study by Brown, Malouff, and Schutte (2013) supports the proposed methodology. In that study, participants were asked to focus on or imagine one or

more thoughts of a great athlete that were related to the sources of self-efficacy. As a result, participants experienced more positive affect than control group participants (Brown, Malouff & Schutte, 2013).

The current study involved several limitations that should be considered. First, the degree to which a participant's personality is extroverted or introverted is related to their expressiveness, and this trait was not examined in the current study. Second, the degree to which participants were able to describe their feelings in detail in the interview may have been limited by their use of English as a second language. Finally, the extent to which participants were able to express their true feelings was unclear. These limitations could potentially be addressed by asking participants to answer a simple post-interview questionnaire about their personality traits, and whether they felt they were able to express each detail they desired to convey in the interview.

The study leaves a number of questions open for future research. Future studies could compare the effectiveness of each of the four components of self-efficacy theory. In addition, data could be collected from a large number of international students from a range of institutions, rather than from a specific group at one university. Comparisons could be conducted by personality, gender, country, and length of learning at a university.

In conclusion, the current study explored in-depth emotional factors as impediments to participation in classroom discussion for international students at a U.S. university. The results revealed that international students experienced fear, embarrassment, and perceptions of social isolation, judgment and discrimination, which led to less expressiveness and reluctance to participate. The findings indicated that the four components of self-efficacy theory may be useful for increasing students' efficacy and reducing negative emotional states. These results suggest that educators may be able to assist students in reducing negative emotional factors via educational intervention.

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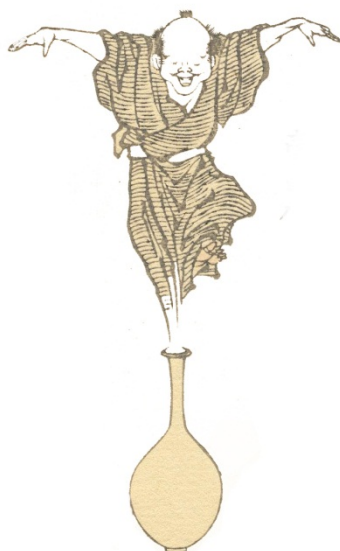
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Appendix

Demographic summary of international students

	Pseudonym	Nationality	Duration (min.)	Female 1, male 2	Under-grad 1, grad 2, PhD 3	Year status	Degree seeker 1, not 2	First Language
1	Ariel	Saudi Arabia	73	1	2	3	1	Arabic
2	Julia	Japan	62	1	3	3	2	Japanese
3	Robert	Haiti	54	2	1	2	1	Creole
4	Nicole	Nepal	30	1	1	1m	2	Nepalese
5	Evan	Vietnam	50	1	1	1m	2	Vietnam
6	Susan	Saudi	58	1	2	2	1	Arabic
7	Emily	Mexico	45	1	1	3m	1	Spanish
8	Jordan	Venezuela	47	2	1	3	1	Spanish
9	Roy	Korea	65	2	1	3	1	Korean
10	Donald	Brazil	47	2	1	1.2	2	Portuguese
11	James	Sri Lanka	54	2	1	2	1	Tamil
12	Shelly	Malaysia	52	1	1	3m	1	Mali
13	Joe	Saudi Arabia	53	2	1	2	1	Arabic
14	Gil	Venezuela	42	1	1	3	1	Spanish
15	Lily	Germany	55	1	1	4m	1	German
16	Kate	Germany	62	1	1	4m	1	German
17	Brad	Macedonia	62	2	2	1.5	1	Macedonian
18	Carlos	Saudi Arabia	73	2	1	3	1	Arabic
19	Hanna	Spain	45	1	1	3m	2	Spanish
20	Ashton	Japan	71	2	1	3.5	2	Japanese
21	Meryl	Japan	60	1	2	4m	1	Japanese
22	Tom	Afghanistan	62	2	1		1	Pashtu
23	Demi	Brazil	69	1	1	1	2	Portuguese



**Politician-Turned-Doctoral Student's Narrative Identity at an
Australian University: A Case Study**

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the narrative identity of a politician-turned-doctoral student at an Australian university with a particular focus on his academic and social encounters based on his English resources and experiences of learning and living in Australia. This case study is unique in the way that very few Thai politicians would end their political career and join in an academic community because of different philosophies underpinning these political and educational agendas. Drawing upon a narrative inquiry, the 60-year-old former Thai politician who decided to undertake a PhD in Engineering (Water Resources Management) found his academic experience positively challenging as he had to familiarize himself with Australian academic discourse such as conducting research, writing his thesis, and taking part in class discussion. Being a competent user of English, he enjoyed living in a multicultural and multilingual society in Australia. This study offers an optimistic outlook at career change through a lens of a politician who became a doctoral student and serves as an example for adults who are transiting their midlife career path and considering stepping out of their comfort zones to venture into something new and exciting. This study hopes to shed new light and hopes on adult education in an era of aging society.

Keywords: narrative identity; politician; doctoral student; Australian university; adult education.

Introduction

Narratives about a person's experiences are socially and historically constructed in meanings that influence his/her choices and decisions to tell his/her stories (Hunter, 2010). Narrative studies regarding career paths and changes have been much researched for many decades (Bujold, 2004; Cochran, 1990; Cohen et al., 2004; LaPointe, 2010). LaPointe (2010), for instance, conceptualizes career identity as a practice of identity construction and negotiation in an individual's career experiences situated within specific historical, cultural and interactional contexts through his/her narratives. Adults' narratives of life transitions in careers can potentially reflect their personal growth and satisfaction (Bauer & McAdams, 2004). Ibarra (2002) states that socioeconomic and political challenges and uncertainties cause many people to rethink and possibly decide to change their current careers to meet their personal goals and economic needs. In this case study, the career transition undertaken by a Thai participant, a former politician who decided to undertake a PhD degree at an Australian university, is unique and rather under-explored. There are few studies regarding how pursuing a higher degree in formal education can provide a transitional platform for adult learners to take up, invest, and grow within the 'new' identities that arise to replace their previous political professions.

Huang (2009) defines a politician as:

Someone who practices politics as his or her professional career. Politicians may be legislators, party leaders, senior government officials, or members of an elite cadre in some countries (p. 163).

Key politicians' personality traits include openness, emotional stability conscientiousness, agreeableness, and extraversion (Gerber et al., 2011; Weinschenk & Panagopoulos, 2014). Although political leaders have uniquely different personal characteristics underpinned by individual leadership, ideology, decision making skills, and intelligence, they are normally challenged and contested by their political counterparts (Simonton, 2014). As public figures, politicians therefore have to take their professional risks to overcome their political rivalries depending on their popularity, dominant parties, and supportive powerful political groups.

According to Kanchoochat and Hewison (2016), Thailand's political contexts are influenced by:

Multiple military interventions, political mudslinging, spates of violence, a 'tradition' of street protests, and repeated civilian uprisings, usually followed by efforts to lay the foundations of electoral democracy. The political landscape, strewn with discarded constitutions, often seems the preserve of elites doing political deals in back rooms. In this context, the political institutions that have greatest longevity are also the sources of conflict. In these bouts of intense political contestation, the key elements of Thailand's political struggle have been the military, monarchy, bureaucracy, a powerful capitalist class, a politically active middle class and repressed subaltern classes. As relatively stable elements in the political landscape, these groups have constantly tussled over conceptions of law, representation and political space, often in a context of wide-ranging debates about democracy, constitutions, elections and redistribution (p. 371).

Thailand's politics has experienced a number of difficult times and hardship throughout its history. Being a politician in Thailand can be daunting and a career in politics is uncertain and

unsecure. As an adult learner, the participant in this study decided to take a new path by entering into an academic field in order to reconstruct his ‘new’ identity. Osborne et al. (2004) use the term ‘personal growers’ for mature learners who pursue higher education for their own satisfaction and desires (p. 291). Ibarra (2002) suggests possible strategies for reinventing one’s career through acting, reflecting, living the contradictions, experimenting with new roles, finding people who are what you want to be, stepping back occasionally, and keeping a window of opportunity open. Addressing an issue of aging population, Yankelovich (2005) notes that higher education should respond to an increasing number of people from ages 55 to 75 as they seek to build bridges to new life in order to fulfill personal aspirations and opportunities to give something back to society while they are still physically and mentally healthy. Education can thus potentially empower adult learners’ life-long learning and human resource development that can reshape their ways of lives and career paths (Knowles et al., 2015).

This study explores the narratives of a Thai adult doctoral student who decided to shift from his political career to the academic field by pursuing a PhD through constructing and negotiating his identities underpinned by his English resources and prior experiences in various academic and sociocultural contexts throughout the course of his personal, academic and professional trajectories.

Literature Review

The conceptual framework of this study is based on narrative identity. Narrative identity has long been studied in the field of social sciences and humanities in order to unfold individual’s life stories (Ricoeur, 1991). According to McAdams (2011), narrative identity is a person’s internalized and evolving life story that integrates the (re)construction of past, present and imagined future of the self to provide life with a certain degree of unity and purpose. Hunter (2010) claims that there is a potential transformation of the participant’s experiences through the process of telling one’s narrative as she states that:

This (narrative inquiry) approach placed the focus on ways in which participants constructed their own narratives about their experiences in relation to others involved at the time, and in relation to available social and cultural narratives. Inevitably they had absorbed the socially constructed meanings placed on their experiences by others, which influenced the narratives that they chose to tell me (p. 45).

Based on a social constructionist perspective, identity narratives can be viewed as an effective tool to lessen the tensions and bridge between someone’s past, present, and future beings and belongings, which offer a way to view identities not only located within particular discourses and ideologies, but also within narratives (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004). A social constructionist approach of second language identity is dialectical between ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ aspects of the self, involving our own sense of who we are, the ways in which we represent ourselves, and how we are represented and positioned by others; and that illustrates a complex, multidimensional construct and that what we see of a person’s identities varies according to the context (Benson et al., 2013, p. 2).

Identity is significant for this study as the Thai doctoral student constructs and negotiates his identities in linguistically and culturally diverse academic and social contexts where linguistic ideologies and unequal power relations are embedded within institutional, local, and socio-political contexts. Identities in this study are the results of the Thai doctoral student’s dynamic

reconstruction of self through time and contexts. Since the participant in this study has shifted his political identity in Thailand to that of an academic identity as a doctoral student in an Australian university, his identities can be shifted, decentered, fragmented, and imagined by new socio-historical tensions on his sense of self.

Identity is viewed as a ‘person’s understanding of who they are’ (reflexive identity), how they represent their understanding to other people (projected identity), other people’s interpretations of their representations (recognized identity), who they think they may become in the future (imagined identity), or how these different facets of identity are shaped by culturally embedded categories and resources (Benson et al., 2013, p. 23). In this study, the Thai doctoral student not only experiences new academic and social contexts in Australian higher education, but also interacts with other people, which are influenced by various variables, i.e. age, gender, education, occupation, linguistic resources, culture, ethnicity, and social status; and thus effective communication in multilingual and multicultural Australia requires an awareness and recognition of the student’s interlocutors, topics of communication, and communicative settings.

Benson et al. (2013) state that international students will aim to project and achieve recognition for identities that correspond to their reflexive sense of self, but at the same time we recognize that they may also want to take the opportunity to be seen as a different person when they use their second language. For this reason, the term ‘reflexive/imagined identity’ often refers to the ‘inner’ aspect of identity that underlies and is potentially modified by the ‘outer’ aspect of identity negotiation in second language interaction (Benson et al., 2013). Imagined identity is, in this study, closely linked to the reflexive identity of the Thai doctoral student who aspired to become an academic instead of returning to be a politician. It can be understood as a conception of who he might become that is overlaid across the conception of who he is now.

Based on Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004, p. 17), imagination plays a crucial role in the process of imaginative production of identity. According to Kanno and Norton (2003):

In imagining ourselves bonded with our fellow compatriots across space and time, we can feel a sense of community with people we have not yet met, but perhaps hope to meet one day (p. 241).

In study abroad in particular, imagined identities are linked to goals and expectations, which can be understood as representations of who the student expects or would like to become in the study abroad setting. The idea of imagined identities, therefore, adds a layer to our understanding of what he brings to the experience of study abroad.

According to Hoyer and Steyaert (2015), an affective conceptualization of identity dynamics during times of career change integrates the notion of unconscious desires of workers in transition who may try to balance coherence and ambiguity when constructing a sense of self through narrative. Pennycook and Otsuji (2015) state that how people get along with their multiple linguistic resources in their daily lives, perceive, and talk about their language use not only describes the ways in which people of different and mixed backgrounds use, play with and negotiate identities through language, but also captures the relations between language use, objects, and accompanying activities in their interactive spaces.

Drawing upon the theoretical framework of learning and identity within Lave and Wenger’s (1991) communities of practice, learning is social participation where individuals construct

their shared membership identity through engaging in and contributing to the practices of their target communities. Williams (2010), for instance, suggests career change students need to reconstruct their new professional identity in the context of teacher education by learning and acquiring relevant knowledge and teaching skills to become qualified teachers. According to culture of learning, Cortazzi and Jin (2013), on the other hand, view learning as cultural because members of different communities have different preferences, expectations, interpretations, values, and beliefs with regard to teaching and learning, particularly in international and multicultural educational contexts. Bacha and Bahous (2013), for example, suggest that Lebanese students entering ‘Western’ higher educational cultures in Lebanon encountered challenges and difficulties in terms of their use of English, critical thinking, classroom interaction, and student centeredness, which are different from the Lebanese educational culture that focuses on memorization, teacher-centeredness, and lecture methods. The concepts of community of practice and culture of learning are interrelated in this study because the Thai doctoral student who was a former politician had to develop, acquire necessary academic and English skills, and adjust himself to the culture of Australian academia for his PhD study in order to gain legitimate membership in the academic and social communities.

Professional identity refers to an individual’s professional self-attributes beliefs, values, motives, and experiences, which can be underpinned by their sociocultural identity (Slay & Smith, 2010). Professional identity, in higher education in particular, is socially constructed via the relationship between identity, professional socialization, and the role played by networks and their impact on identity formation regarding midlife career academics, the emergence of mixed identities, and the development of new professional boundaries within higher education (Clarke et al., 2013). Abou-El-Kheir (2017), for example, explores the interconnections between identity, language use and education based on a series of interviews with a Qatari female professor of English who negotiates her beings and belongings in various sociocultural factors including religion, family, career, education background, and language choice between Arabic and English; and thus, the professor has to be aware and balance between her personal and professional identities that play significant roles in her different practices.

According to Holstein and Gubrium (2010), narrative identity unfolds the stories of self with regard to one’s everyday practices and experiences leading to the construction of personal and social identities. In this study, the Thai doctoral student’s narrative identity regarding his affiliation with academic and social communities has affected his learning trajectories. Such communities include future relationships that exist in his imagination as well as affiliations such as nationhood or even transnational communities in which he has daily engagement, and might even have a stronger impact on his current practices and investment. The transition process between Thai and Australian academic communities, as well as the mediational role of significant others including supervisors, lecturers, and colleagues in both multilingual and multicultural settings, has had a significant impact on this particular Thai doctoral student. He has had to manage linguistically and culturally diverse academic practices in their transitions; and thus, the ways he experiences his learning could potentially affect his practices and identity construction.

Research Methodology

This paper is based on a larger study on Thai students’ identity in Australian higher education. The study was approved by the Australian University and Thai University Ethics Committees on Human Research prior to data collection. Awarded an Australian Postdoctoral Fellowship

Award to conduct the study, the researcher met the participant at an Australian university. The participant was the main case study of this research due to his unique and interesting experiences that shifted from the political to academic field when he decided to pursue his PhD in Engineering with a particular focus on Water Resources Management. Case study is an empirical enquiry exploring a contemporary situation within someone's real-life context (Cohen et al., 2000; Yin, 2003). It draws upon a qualitative and interpretive paradigm that provides personal and subjective accounts illustrating complex and interconnected individual experiences (Denscombe, 2003; Holliday, 2002).

To keep his identity highly confidential, this study refers to him as the participant who is a 60-year-old male. He obtained Bachelor and Master of Science degrees from America. He had over 30 years of experiences in Thailand politics from being a member of parliament, minister of various departments including education, justice, agriculture and cooperatives, natural resources and environment, communication and information technology, to deputy prime minister. He is currently a PhD student at an Australian university. The researcher became interested to learn more about the participant's viewpoints regarding his academic experience because he is an example of a life-long learner and career changer, and thereby serves as a model for others.

Semi-structured interview was the primary research tool for data collection in this study. According to Edwards and Holland (2013), semi-structured interview includes a set of the primary questions that can explore the interviewee's emerging views. An interviewer, however, needs to deviate from the interview schedule and probe more deeply with further questions to follow-up particular responses to gain deeper insights. In this particular paper, the main interview questions concern the participant's personal background including education, careers, and current degree, as well as his reasons for studying at an Australian university, expectations, perceived academic and conversational English proficiency, attitudes toward his use of English with 'native' and 'non-native' speakers of English, views on supervisors and supervision, linguistic and academic support by university, perceptions toward teachers and colleagues, and academic challenges. The interview was conducted in Thai and lasted for one hour. It was audio-recorded, transcribed, and translated by the researcher. The transcripts were then provided to the participant for validation.

Drawing upon Pavlenko's (2004) data analytic approach, analyzing personal narratives is not only based on the content of the stories, but also the sociohistorical contexts in which the narratives were created and the ideological underpinnings which frame certain story telling. The participant's narratives in this study could be regarded as shifting over time, and influenced by individual and societal views, which allowed me to explore the ways in which he constructed a sense of self through the interview. Based on the interpretive and qualitative research paradigm, the participants' construction of meanings in their complex sociocultural contexts is understood via interpretation rather than generalization, prediction and control (Usher, 1996). This Thai doctoral student's construction and negotiation of his identities while living and studying in Australia were subsequently revealed and then qualitatively interpreted without generalizing the findings to other cases.

Findings and Discussion

The findings of this study focus on academic context, social context, and use of English for communication emerging from the participant's narratives revealing his construction and negotiation of his identities.

Academic Context

The participant's construction of his academic identity as a doctoral student may not be as smooth as he expects as he needs to adjust himself to the Australian academia, which is different from his professional identity as a politician.

Extract 1

My first challenge was that I had not studied for almost 40 years. Secondly, conducting research allows me to learn new things more. My supervisor told me to attend a number of classes such as research methodology. I can observe new perspectives. I can look back to understand other people's thoughts, analysis, evaluation, and research results compared with my personal experiences. I can see similarities and differences.

The participant encountered research challenges since he had not been involved in academic study for quite some time. He had to rely mostly on his previous experience in politics to discuss issues regarding his project on water policy. Educated in the American academic system, attending classes enabled him to acculturate himself to learning in an Australian higher education environment.

Extract 2

Contributing our ideas in seminars or workshops is good for the learning process and knowledge sharing. The best perspective is holistic by listening to people who have had different experiences in order to better understand the topic of discussion. Communication is the best learning tool; otherwise, we will become narrow-minded without knowing what's going on in the world. It will be beneficial for our future work.

His imagined identity was also realized for future collaborations. He enjoyed class discussion as an important part of widening his views and learning process. His openness and extraversion in class reflect desirable qualities in a good politician (Gerber et al., 2011; Weinschenk & Panagopoulos, 2014). He perceived himself on behalf of Thai doctoral students as a good, collaborative, and friendly student.

Extract 3

They (lecturers and classmates) think that Thai students are good, collaborative, and very friendly.

He also recognized that to become a legitimate doctoral student in the Australian academic culture, he had to develop his research and academic writing skills. He thus sought English support provided by the university in order to acquire and meet the linguistic requirements for his PhD study.

Extract 4

Writing research reports can be problematic. My academic writing needs to be improved. I need to learn how to write academically. Literature review helps me to

understand academic writing styles. However, it's difficult to produce a perfect piece of writing. It's quite common to have someone to review and edit my papers. No matter how good my English is, academic English seems to have a different style.

Extract 5

In terms of English support, I think the university offers full support already. Although international students are required to have a certain level of English proficiency to be admitted, they can attend extra English courses and workshops provided by the university to improve their English.

The participant's academic identity construction required the engagement of lecturers, peers, and support staff, which played significant roles in developing research and academic English skills valued in higher learning. His academic engagement is underpinned by Lave and Wenger's (1991) communities of practice that involve relevant stakeholders to scaffold his academic self. In addition, his determination was to succeed in his study as he imagined that his academic contribution could potentially alleviate Thailand's crises.

Extract 6

After I graduate, I will do academic research to solve our country's problems.

According to Bacha and Bahous (2013), 'Western' higher education values students' active engagement and critical thinking. This mature-age Thai student was required to adjust and accommodate to a 'Western' culture of learning. Investment in education can be considered as a way to promote empowerment for mature-age learners whose increased intellectual capital can promote personal values and realize self-actualization. Academic aspiration was not, however, the only variable in the construction of his academic identity; the social context in which he undertook his study in Australia was also significant.

Social Context

Well-known for his political background in Thailand and Australia, the participant was not only involved in Thai cultural events, but also recognized by a number of Australian organizations. His previous 'professional identity' (Clarke et al., 2013) as a politician offered him special exposure to international contexts, which promoted his well-being while learning and living in Australia.

Extract 7

I joined a Thai people club and attended religious activities. I'm also an honorable member of Taronga Zoo. I was a member of Thai-Australian Parliamentary Friendship under Inter-parliamentary Union.

Extract 8

I'm happy and living a simple lifestyle. I don't need to adjust myself much because I have lived in an international environment for quite some time. I have travelled all around the world.

Extract 9

I don't need to adjust myself because I used to live abroad. It's just that I have a student lifestyle which is best because I don't have a lot of responsibilities. No one forces me. Success depends on me. I have freedom.

As a mature-age learner, he enjoyed having freedom to do things without many responsibilities. When comparing his previous experience as a politician who was under frequent pressure, he had become satisfied with his academic identity as he developed himself as a 'personal grower' (Osborne et al., 2004). Being a doctoral student in Australia, he learned to be independent and determined to pursue academic success. He nevertheless retained the character traits of a politician as suggested by Gerber et al. (2011) and Weinschenk and Panagopoulos (2014) regarding conscientiousness, openness, agreeableness, emotional stability and extraversion, which underpinned his appeal to the locals.

Extract 10

I love to interact with local people because I can learn about their way of life, perspectives toward socio-economic and political changes, and experiences. Interaction with the locals is essential.

Extract 11

It's normal because Sydney is an international city. It's a melting pot like in the USA. There are Aborigines, refugees and immigrants. Linguistic and cultural diversity is good because it allows local people to become aware of differences. It also helps us to understand the locals.

Living in a multicultural city, he was optimistic and open to cultural differences. There were, however, some local people who might generalize about Thai people and stereotype them as Asian. Effective intercultural communication was bolstered by his cultural and linguistic awareness and recognition of communicative contexts.

Extract 12

I think they (Australians) find Thai people good. However, there are some ignorant people who don't care about foreigners because they never go anywhere – even the city. When they see us, they may feel a bit strange.

Extract 13

First of all, I have learned about people's lives including the locals, foreigners, and Thais. Secondly, I have gained more academic knowledge and learned new ways of thinking.

Extract 14

Thai students need to adapt to living here. They need to learn to be independent.

The participant felt that his experiences as a student in Australia had provided him with an opportunity to embark on an academic journey consistent with Ibarra (2002), who suggests that a career changer needs to be open to new possibilities. It is, however, important for him to develop a sense of independence in order to acculturate into Australian society, which is characterized by linguistic ideologies and unequal power relations at local and socio-political contexts. His identities could therefore fluctuate and change depending on his personal, sociocultural and historical factors.

Use of English for Communication

For the participant, English is a communicative tool bridging academic and social contexts. Because he used to live and study in America when he was young, his communicative English was highly competent. He had always used English while being a politician dealing with international organizations. In addition, he noted that English should be frequently used in order to become fluent.

Extract 15

Because I lived in America for 5–6 years, I am very competent in using English. Even though I have not studied for some time, I used English when I worked with international organizations. I was Chair and a committee member at international conferences. I have used English consistently. Actually, if I don't use English for a while, it can get rusty.

He not only recognized the importance of academic English, but he also felt that his communicative English should be improved while living and learning in Australia.

Extract 16

If Thai students have a good English foundation, that will be a great advantage. However, if their English is not good, their learning may be a bit slow. They may get bored and lose motivation. At the very least, they should have good communication skills for daily living. However, they should be prepared before going to class because participation in class discussions is important. If their English is not good, it will be okay because there is a big Thai community here. But, their English will not improve. They need to practice their English communication while studying here.

His previous international exposure allowed him to recognize varieties of English and speakers' accents. Academic English and English for daily communication were necessary for any Thai student in order to engage in academic and social interactions.

Extract 17

I always use English for daily communication. I don't translate Thai to English and vice versa. I understand that when we first learn a new language, we often translate. Listening to various accents also causes some problems. However, I have attended international conferences for the past 30 years. I'm used to listening and recognizing a variety of English accents.

Extract 18

I distinguish between the two (native and non-native speakers) by recognizing their accents, speech patterns, and language use. I can identify right away who comes from rural or urban areas and approximately where in the world one is from because I have extensive experience working with international people.

Extract 19

My university is international. Some people are not native English speakers. They are from different countries. So far, there are more non-native English speakers than native ones. There are a lot of non-native English-speaking professors. Native speakers are Australians. I can identify whether someone is native or non-native by where he/she comes from. However, native accents also vary from one place to another. In Sydney CBD, the accent is blended – similar to that in the USA. There are local accents.

At university, he encountered more non-native speakers including his lecturers and classmates whose accents varied. Distinguishing native from non-native speakers of English by where they came from, he considered himself a speaker of English as a second language. English was his communicative tool for constructing and negotiating his second language identity representing his personal and social selves according to the communicative context.

Extract 20

I can communicate in English like a second language. I don't need to adjust my accent. However, if we can learn and use the local English accent, we can blend in easier. There are various local accents. If we know them, our listening comprehension will be better. If we can sound like them, they will feel more comfortable talking with us. It's like we are one of them. Learning a local accent is useful for our daily living.

Based upon Pennycook and Otsuji's (2015) language practices in the city, the participant's English resource allowed him access to the different and mixed backgrounds of various speakers, to construct and negotiate identities through his language, and recognize the relationship between language use, objects, and accompanying activities in his academic and communicative settings in Australia. To sum up, it is evident that the Thai doctoral student's narratives revealed that the complex inter-relationships between his experience, profession, educational background, social encounters, and English use was based on his sense of self influenced by different sociocultural, educational and professional factors. As a mature-age and career-changing student, he therefore had to be aware and balance between his personal, academic and professional identities that would impact on his different discursive practices including academic and sociocultural adaptations while living and studying in Australia.

Conclusion

This case study explores a Thai doctoral student's narrative identity at an Australian university. The participant was a former well-known politician in Thailand, who decided to enter an academic discipline as a career change. His transition from politics to academics requires his action, reflection, and experimentation through venturing himself into his new role, adapting

himself to the academic and research community, and negotiating his previous professional political experiences with his imagined academician. The participant's academic and social contexts in living and studying in Australia is connected by using academic and communicative English. As a mature-age learner, he reconstructs his academic self into the Australian higher education and employs his former political experiences and connections as a strong foundation to gain his imagined expectations. His narratives of life and career transitions through investing in higher education have illustrated that his personal growth and satisfaction have been enhanced. It is, however, important to note that this case study may not be generalized to other cases; yet, it serves as a platform to undertake further research regarding a career change of a politician who aims to become an academic as his personal aspirations and contributions that potentially benefit the aging society at national and international levels.

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**Hearts Grow: Contemplative Learning for Inner Stability Development in
Female Prison Inmates**

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Abstract

Regarding the research questions of how the contemplative learning process is appropriate for Thai female prison inmates and how it can transform the learners, the objectives of the project were to study the learning process facilitation appropriate for the inner stability development of female prison inmates, and to explicate their inner experiences found during and after the completion of the program. The methodologies used were action research and phenomenological research. The obtained data were then qualitatively analyzed. The phenomenological result showed significant inner changes in the participants. These included the more inclusive perspectives one possessed, i.e. the ability to make more sense regarding the interconnectedness between oneself and surrounding people. Meanwhile, each participant could view herself more self-authoring and more responsible for her own actions. Besides, Meditation had become a useful tool allowing them to mindfully take care of themselves from within. All these phenomena corresponded with the results found during the eight rounds of the learning process. As for the learning process facilitation appropriate for such inner development, it consisted of 14 key components within sufficient length of time, while the process itself showed three distinctive phases.

Keywords: female prison inmates; contemplative education; inner stability; action research.

Introduction

According to the 2010 report of the Department of Corrections, Ministry of Justice, most female prison inmates in Thailand, while imprisoned for trivialities due to economic stress, suffered depression, anxiety, and fear. They were also at great risk of suicide. Many projects have been introduced to make a change in the quality of life in prisons, such as “*Narratives from the gallows project*”, “*To become the editors of Jit-seri newspaper project*”, etc. (Contemplative Education Center, 2015). The results showed that the participants in such projects had improvement in self-esteem, daily time use, relationships, attitudes, and worldviews. In other words, projects for inmates which are significant in the long-term development of the life quality, with the decrease in recidivism rate, are those associated with the inner dimension. These may include self-reflection, cultivation of inner stability, self-acceptance and self-esteem, and right attitudes towards life, surrounding people, and the world.

Inner stability is considered as one of the important qualities signifying spiritual wellbeing. It gives rise to values, happiness, and strengths that one, as a human being, could embody and hence becomes a critical factor for determining the positive outcome and success of such works. In this sense, contemplative learning-based training programs may appropriately serve this purpose, providing the learners direct experiences so that they can develop the inner qualities at their own pace. Likewise, the process for transformation rooted in the inner dimension can also impact learners to their core and is irreversible (Asdornnithee & Phukrongnak, 2012; Thongtavee, et al., 2008). Such success results from the expansion of the person’s frame of reference to accommodate more reality, allowing the consciousness to be more inclusive and discernable, thus be able to make more sense of the world. The outcomes are also those recognizable in behaviors in everyday life as they seem to be more authentic, right, and desirable (Mezirow, 2003; Kitchenham, 2008). Apparently, to apply contemplative learning processes with female prison inmates in Thailand is an innovative and also a promising training project where a sustainable inner transformation in learners like stability and spiritual wellbeing can be expected. Moreover, this learning project, when its outcomes have been shown and publicized, could further influence related communities and society so that the social policies regarding punishment and imprisonment would be revised in a more understanding way.

Literature Review

Contemplative education in Thailand arose a decade ago from the attempt to solve crises in education which has been clinging tightly to the positivist paradigm and materialism (Asdornnithee, 2011). In brief, it is to get over the limitations resulting from such thought patterns by coming back to pay heed to the importance of the inner entities where the true operation of learning is taking place. Palmer (1998, 2004), an American educator gives the similar concept of education by indicating that the true learning originates from the inner practices as one sets foot on one’s own spiritual journey towards becoming more authentic. Contemplative education in Thailand was framed within three main principles: religious studies, humanism, and holism. To fruitfully carry it out, the preparation of one’s own mind, especially the power of mindfulness and the appropriateness of attitudes, is also necessary. In addition, supporting a way of life that allows the learner to commit herself in her path of spiritual practice is important, too. And there are two significant outcomes: transformation, and emancipation (Asdornnithee, 2011).

Due to the broad epistemic sense of contemplative education, variety of the nature of knowledge and multiple ways of knowing are well accepted. In other words, the epistemology of contemplative education opens up a wider space for acquiring knowledge in the following aspects: subjectivity, multiplicity, and indefiniteness (Asdornnithee, 2011). To simplify this, we may say that contemplative education employs tools like meditation, as well as heartfelt contemplation, with the inner conditions of relaxation, intimacy, expansive love, openness, and self-awareness, to allow the learner to gain back her own wholeness and insight of being able to see the authentic state of all things.

Different from other typical ways of learning, contemplative education aims to work upon the innermost nature of the learner's self, resulting in the transformation of one's meaning-making process or frame of reference. Therefore, with this sense, contemplative education is transformational by dismantling old meaning perspectives with the uses of critical discourse and critical self-reflection. Then this leads to the self-generation in a new and higher order of consciousness which allows the learner to create new reality according to its new meaning perspective (Thongtavee et al., 2008; Kitchenham, 2008). Mezirow, who is widely recognized as the founder of the concept of transformative learning, defines it as learning that transforms frames of reference, or the seemingly fixed belief system, which used to be problematic and limiting, into a more open and inclusive ones. Such new frames of reference are better because they are more likely to generate meanings that are more true and justified (Mezirow, 2003).

As critical self-reflection is considered as one of the indispensable learning capabilities that contribute to transformation, Kegan (1982) identifies this as the capability of mind to view things objectively. What actually happens is that after one's mind can see itself embedding in a big assumption, or a belief system, it will be aware of new possibilities getting itself out of that old assumption. This results in being able to take new and better actions. Kegan says that this process is the transformation of consciousness, which in all consists of five orders. Through one life time, people develop their own consciousness from that of less complexity to more complexity, designated as impulsive mind, imperial mind, socialized mind, self-authoring mind, and self-transforming mind, respectively (Kegan, 1982).

One way to make a transformation happen is to experience and participate in a process of learning which contains a number of appropriate contributing factors. Framed within the humanistic values and holistic paradigm, a successful contemplative facilitation must have the following learning components: contemplation, compassion, connectedness, confronting reality, continuity, commitment, and community, or in short, the 7 C's principle (Nilchaikovit & Jantarasuk, 2009). All these components are carefully considered when designing and facilitating a learning process to make sure that none of them is missing but appropriately intertwined to build up a process suitable for each group of the learners. Thus, the person who knowingly designs and carries out such learning process, i.e. a facilitator, has to embody the corresponding qualities and fulfill the duties, such as creating a safe learning space, asking self-inquiry questions, listening deeply, reading the group's energy, being aware of group domination, communicating properly, and inviting people to face their edge to thrive (Kuenkaew, 2012).

Methodology

Regarding the research questions of how the contemplative learning process is appropriate for Thai female prison inmates and how it can transform the learners, this research aimed to work upon the female inmates' quality of life in two prisons, Chiangmai Woman Correctional

Institution and Khonkaen Central Prison, where the cultivation of inner stability would be mainly emphasized. The two prisons were purposively selected and the criteria were about those of their own interests and availability. The research, run in parallel in the two prisons, has two objectives: 1) to study the learning process facilitation appropriate for the inner stability development in female inmates, and 2) to explicate the female inmates' inner experiences found during and after the completion of the program. For the maximal effectiveness, the number of participants from each prison was limited to 30.

The study employed action research and phenomenological research as its main methodologies, where semi-structured interview, in-depth interview, focus group interview, and non-participatory observation were the tools used. All the data qualitatively collected from facilitators, inmates, as well as documents, were analyzed and interpreted to elucidate the reflection and action regarding the learning process and facilitations that could successfully lead to the development of inner stability. They were also analyzed to reveal the phenomena and dynamic of inner experiences of female prison inmates who have fully participated in this program.

Learning Process Design

There are four pillars that make up the entire learning process: **Self-awareness, Meditation, Social structure, and Transformative learning**, all of which are rooted in the Contemplative Education developed in Thailand's educational institutes in the past 10 years (Asdornnithee & Phukrongnak, 2012). Self-awareness and Meditation are the major elements of contemplative education in which the learners must cultivate the strength of mindfulness and use it to explore and see deeply within themselves their own pattern (of thoughts, feelings and actions), prejudice, and worldview. Meditation also plays an important role in creating time and space for serenity and peace, so allowing ones to be able to come back to look after themselves from within and build up their own inner stability even when their life is in much turmoil. Social structure contributes a major component to the content of knowledge that the program would provide the learners in order to raise up their awareness regarding relationships and social systems. Ranks, classes, power, consumerism, gender, and spiritual feminism, all of these are the topics to be contemplated and worked out together in the group so that their life's difficulties would be unfolded and rightly understood. Lastly, Transformative learning works with the inner-most nature of a person, the frame of reference, in the way that the consciousness is developed to a higher stage where such person gains new capacity to perceive, understand, and be able to cope with the surrounding world with more complexity (Kitchenham, 2008).

Once the DNA of the entire learning process has been established as mentioned above, then come the four areas of content where all are interconnected. These are Individuality, Relationships, Social systems, and Spirituality. All are weaved into the whole process whereas Contemplation remains the center of all (Suthontanyakorn, 2014).

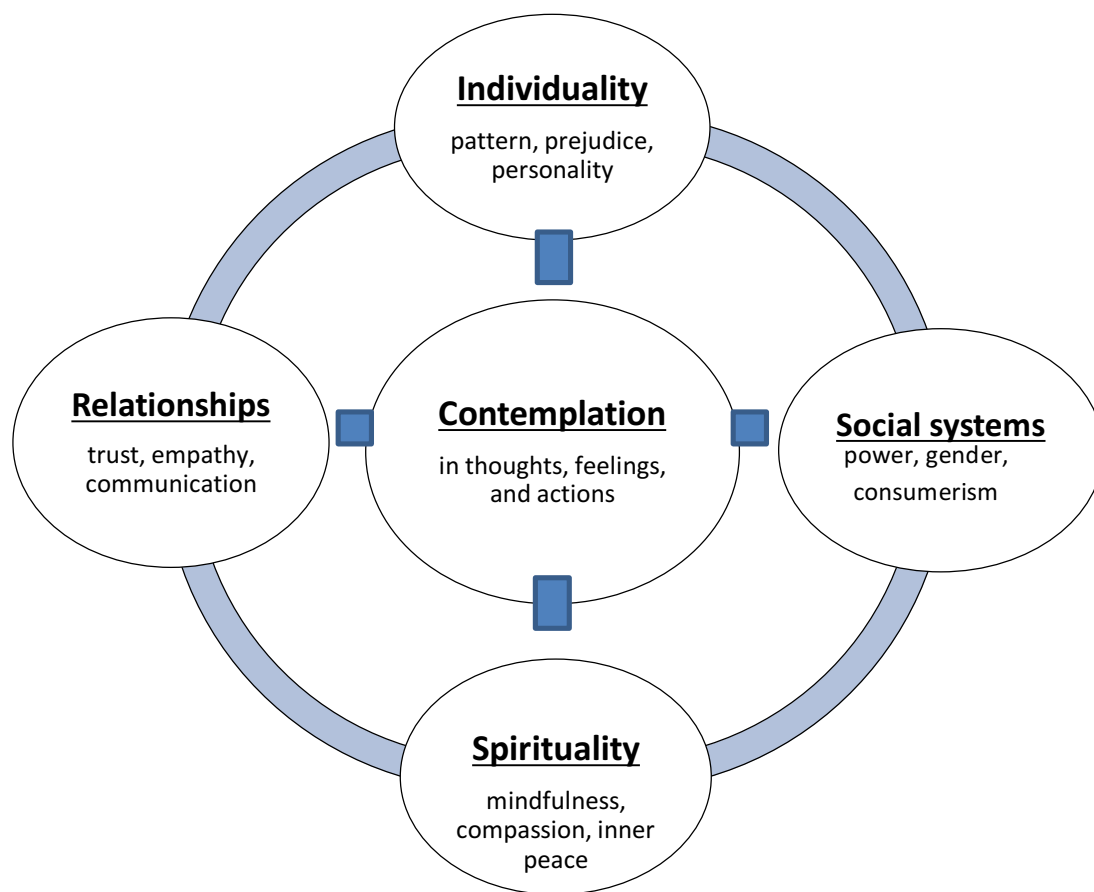


Figure 1: Four areas of content of the contemplative learning process.

In the learning program, there were altogether eight rounds within a 10-month span. Each round lasted for four consecutive days. The contents, activities, and tools used in all eight rounds of the program are summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Summary of contents, activities, and tools used in the program.

Round	Contents	Activities	Tools / Materials
1 st	Empowerment, attunement, and coexistence	Icebreaker, Dialogue, Deep listening/perception, Different forms of Self-awareness, Self-reflection, Self-acceptance and Empowerment, Cultivation of Love, Compassion, Integrity, and other desirable qualities, etc.	Group process, Group sharing, Drawing/Painting, Journaling, Comprehension/Questioning, Critical Thinking, Film-watching, Meditation, etc.
2 nd	Self-esteem and relationship		
3 rd	Self-understanding and in-depth personality		
4 th	Creative & mindful communication		
5 th	Self-contemplation through gender and culture		
6 th	Embracing oneself by writing and drama		
7 th	Self-contemplation through consumerism, and contemplative arts		
8 th	Conclusion and life design		

Results

Opening Rounds

Although all participants were selected on a voluntary basis, many of them, initially, did not feel very clear about what the learning program was for, or wondered what the program and facilitators did want from them. On the other side, due to the strictness of prison life, most joined in the activities as a good girl, trying to say just nice things, complying with all rules, and not revealing what really was in their mind. Building up trust seemed to be the first task for everybody.

During the first self-introduction, many participants looked somewhat nervous and tense. But after they did some movement, all seemed to be more relaxed and joyful. Many participants said that they had fun and felt very happy. They liked to run around and shouting out loud because they were normally not allowed doing so in the prison area.

When asked to do self-introduction with a picture they drew to describe about themselves for the very first time, many just briefly said their name but were too shy to talk more. However, facilitators' welcoming words and spending time with the artworks helped soothe the atmosphere. When the group came up with the common agreements, there was one who said, "*Just do whatsoever that somebody has told you to!*" The facilitators then suggested to the group some more friendly examples, like non-judgmental open space, respect, voicing inner experiences, and confidentiality.

In the following days, different games were introduced to challenge the group. Many of them were not played just for fun, but to induce cooperation and the coherent power of the team. As life in prison taught people to always perform strictly according to the instructions, participants, once instructed, would absolutely get the task done by whatsoever way. When problems arose, they tended to do some things, like projection or even cheating the game to avoid being caught as a faulty person. Some of the essential data from non-participatory observation are presented below.

Many tried to participate in the game, while some looked unconcerned and did whatsoever as somebody spoke up. The unsuccessful techniques were repeated over and over and argument broke up. No one really listened to one another but the dispute was still not severe. . . . Hours had passed, everyone seemed to be exhausted, tense, and bored. Many blamed others while some started to ask for extra helps or sought for new solutions like open a serious discussion. When participants settled down in smaller groups and began to share things mindfully, they learned that as they focused on the goal only, they have missed many untold voices and overlooked so many things along the way. They did not really see their friends in the team. The team went back to game with more receptivity and peaceful attitude with noticeably less blaming. More sacrifice and less projection finally led the group to success.

Trust among each other and the feeling of safety began to build up slowly as participants got to know one another closely, with the assistance of activities like movement, icebreakers, group sharing, deep listening, role-play, and journal writing. One thing which was very much against the custom here was to voice and talk things out without any judgment. Another significant helper was the Meditation, as facilitators found that to introduce participants to some easy

practices like breathing meditation that they could make use of in daily life really made things different.

Being bold and strong is very much like a core value here. So sharing deep down and touching the vulnerable things inside was almost impossible at first, not to mention about crying. When Dialogue was seriously practiced in a small group, it was a good opportunity for anyone to be like a receptive container. When one person started to let her heart break open, another followed and the whole group was filled with calmness and ready to listen deeply. The group could then welcome more and more things including tears. Suffering seemed to reduce when authentically shared. Some dared to talk about her own mistakes in the past, some were fully active in role-play, and some began to ask more questions to learn about others' perspectives. Many could experience, though a short one, a serene moment and felt relieved after the sharing and breathe work.

Life in prison is an extraordinary one in the sense that suffering and difficulties, both physical and mental, seem to be everywhere and, for many times, they look sort of overloaded. Things like this inevitably affected the learning process, too. Therefore, what the facilitators needed to do more to help the process to run smoothly was to work with the context and the involved people. Some of our facilitators approached warders and prison officers in a gentle and cooperative manner to gain trust and mutual understanding. Once during the process, an activity was spontaneously carried out to catch up with the upcoming national traditional festival of *Loi Krathong* (a Thai festival celebrated annually in a full moon evening of the 12th month in the Thai lunar calendar). In the festival, people float a banana-leaf cup decorated with flowers, incense sticks, and a candle, in a river to pay respect to the water spirits, let go of all one's defilements and bad luck, and give thanks to the Goddess of Water), allowing participants to enjoy giving and receiving presents, as well as performing meritorious deeds and removing one's bad fortune.

Another activity that played such an important role to yield understanding and acceptance deeply within oneself and others was the *Celtic Wheel*. By simply categorizing personalities into four different types (Fire, Water, Earth, and Air), participants could see clearly how each type's inner world functioned and eventually came up with the heartfelt appreciation in human diversity.

Outside, I see myself as a Fire because I am short-tempered. When I am in here, I can no longer be like that but have to control and be more patient. It's not worthwhile to fight so I see no reason to remain short-tempered. I now see myself more like an Earth here. ...

I feel so curious. I was born with all types, I guess. I like this activity because it makes me know more about myself.

I've got my own mirror. I have all types in me, though a little each. It's also situational.

I can see more about myself. And to make any changes, it has to start first with my own way of thinking, which may take the whole life to do so.

I analyze and understand my surrounding friends more and will improve my own habits.

Thanks to all types, we are all the same, having pros and cons. It's more important than how we make use of them.

Approaching Half Way

After the first three rounds of the program, participants could now feel more of the intimacy and trust, as well as being accustomed to listening and sharing about inner experiences. The learning then shifted a little towards some content regarding outer issues, like gender, to raise awareness of social belief systems, especially those imposed on women. Necessary information and facts were presented to show how the society framed and affected the wellbeing of both men and women, and then brain-storming was welcome. Meanwhile, self-reflection, including Dialogue, art works, and drama works, were carried out at times to ensure that each participant did not lose connection with oneself.

Most participants were eager to speak and share their own stories, partly because it was so familiar and directly affected their life. And when the gender box was clearly illustrated, some could realize the inequality and see its impacts. They came up with words saying how they truly felt when they themselves or their people of either gender had fallen victim to this. Some stories were cruelly hurt, and some were helpless but unavoidable. ...

Out there, if you are a woman you have to be pretty. That's what I believe. I even took drugs to keep my figure good, to make my body slim.

Ever since I could remember, I saw my dad hit my mom. He had many wives, hurt my mom bringing those women into our house. I felt very angry and thought that if I ever had husbands like my dad, I could kill them all. One day, I had a very good husband, however I could never fully trust in him. I couldn't stay with him long and felt guilty that it's me who was his curse.

Seeing the oppression on one side, many participants began to understand the problems and difficulties encountered by her party on the other side, too. Moreover, they realized more clearly both positive and negative impacts of the gender box, and admitted that they wanted to become a new person, going freely out of the box.

Empathy and mutual understanding slowly emerged during today's talk. There was no criticism, outcry, or projection. The process itself was very much like healing one another, although there was one girl who was intensely shaken due to her own defense mechanism against the hatred for her father. She wept and felt disappointed that she was not able to forgive. She was approached attentively by facilitators and the healing for her seemed to take some more time. ...

The program also invited some (female) guest speakers to join the sessions uncovering totally everything about their own past experiences. Some were abused because of the cultural belief that favored men over women. Some shared about their pressure of being homosexual. As the true stories had been sincerely told, this became such an inspiring and powerful example, showing how women could liberate themselves from the old belief systems, be more open, and empower themselves to face up their problems with more faith and awareness.

Social issues like gender and sexuality allowed each participant to come back to deeply see her own wound which had then determined her life ever since. Many had gained understanding, relief, and forgiveness, while others were still being trapped but able to recognize that state of mind and became more accepting. Time could help but the attitude of non-judgment, no-advice, and no-conclusion yet would also contribute to the true liberation afterwards. Again, Meditation helped essentially keeping balance between the outer and the inner world.

At the end of the sixth round, one could apparently notice the light, relieved, and relaxed feelings in many participants. Many had known the way to be aware of and release whatever emotion stuck in a truthful and desirable way, and at the same time, be able to spiritually take care of themselves. Mindfulness, formerly installed, now became such a spiritual device that one could make use of it whenever needed. After a session of Meditation, one participant said:

When I think of the light, I smile. The light makes me feel valuable for everybody. I feel calmer, more discernable, and more acceptable. I try not to think too much. I have switched my bedroom. I adjusted myself once again. It's easier this time. ... Tired but fun. Yesterday, I lost my fan. I was angry with myself for not being mindful enough, still angry at the moment! I miss my friends. ... I do sitting meditation everyday sending them all my best wishes.”
Great! I could spend time with trees.

Closing Rounds

The last two rounds were devoted to the cultivation of long-term stability. This was achieved mainly by mindfulness, seeing one's own meaning in life, and self-contentment. A participant reflected after contemplating what is precious in life:

Before, I never thought of loving myself. I hurt myself when angry. I felt satisfied when it hurt. Now, I learn to love myself more.
... I told my mother that I love her. I have never said this to her before.
The activity regarding consumerism allowed participants to realize that money or benefits could, many times, break the relationships apart, cause avarice, and make people compete.
A life of running after every wanting is an exhausting one. Now I know what sufficiency is like. After I go out, I will change my way of life.

A great example showing what participants finally learned was when one said, “The real problem is in here, my mind. If my mind becomes weak, or loses willpower, then things get worse. What really shakes me is from inside. Sometimes it's overwhelming, though. The most important thing is in here, if I have inner stability, then nothing can make me shaken.” Indeed, the problems could be resolved just when we look back deeply inside and not outside.

To emphasize such importance, the inner stability could be created in many more ways, as facilitators introduced other forms of Meditation such as hand movement, walking, singing, or just bringing awareness back home, the breathing, whenever needed. Moreover, group counseling was also practiced to help open more space for sharing and supporting each other. Now they knew how to embrace one another's feelings and help them getting through with truthful and non-judgmental manner. By the way, “Being Mindful” or “Embracing” naturally became a catchword of the group.

By the completion of the learning program, changes in participants apparently noticed by facilitators (based on the data presented above) are summarized below:

1. Becoming more aware of oneself, feeling more calmness and serenity from within, and having better skill in Meditation and being able to make use of mindfulness in daily life to sustain inner stability and reduce stress.
2. Having more of relaxed, trustful, welcoming, and caring atmosphere in relationships, including being able to deeply listen, as well as to sincerely voice.
3. Transcending one's old frame of reference into a broader and more relevant one with more capacity of making sense of the world, including being less judgmental.
4. Unfolding one's own problem to see more of ways out, self-emancipating, and gaining back self-esteem and vital force.

The inmates' personal inner experiences inquired from interviews and journal writing also show similarity with those observed during the learning process. The phenomena found can be described in four aspects as follows.

The Mind Becomes More Stable

This started when participants could be aware and see more clearly their own inner world, no matter how good or bad it was. They can now delicately touch all those feelings with less resistance, at the same time, they feel more of happiness arising from self-acceptance, serenity, caring and supports from family and friends, as well as self-confidence and the commitment to make change in themselves.

The program has changed my heart into a caring and tender one. ... It's warm. Besides, there are many other warm hearts, too, my friends'. When I realize this, I know that I am no longer alone. There is no point to be inferior any more. Yes, my life is happy, it is indeed. Before, I didn't see this just because of my own negative attitudes.

There are a lot in here I can't describe. I only know that right now I am happy, and know how to make the rest of my life happy.

I was bored to death when first attending this training. I didn't know how to be with myself. It's completely impossible for me. But when I learned more, I started to like it. Seeing myself being more calm, and more mindful, I now can come back to look at myself, pay more attention to myself, and most importantly, I now love myself much more than I used to do.

Many voices say not only that they are happy during the learning program, but also with much confidence that they, in the future, won't go back to be in trouble like before. This implies stability of mind and that the lessons in the past become like their immunity.

There Are Signs of Spiritual Growth

One important ability is self-awareness that leads to the acceptance in one another. Difference and diversity are appreciated, interconnectedness is seen, and responsibility in all actions of one's own is recognized. Such growth then makes lives more authentic and meaningful, allowing one to be able to make more contributions needed for others' wellbeing, and also to inspire others to grow.

I see a little girl in me who needs cares and warmth. She now has a stronger heart which is ready to share warmth for others, too.

I am proud that my story can help a girl to stand up again. The power that energizes her seems to energize me, too. Now my heart, once halved, is full.

When I start to get angry, I come back and say to myself, “You are now angry, aren’t you. Your heart is beating harder. Anger is coming, anger is coming. Only then, I can feel lightness. ...

As seen in many quotes, spiritual experiences help one to become freer, less attached, and easier to let go things. Also, some have faith in something higher than their own selves, meanwhile, many can now seek happiness from within.

The View of Life Becomes Expansive

The content of social systems introduced in the program resulted in broadening participants’ views, and also, showed the healing effect. They become more objective, moreover, they realized that one’s own life can never be cut off from others and society. They are all connected, including whatever suffering they have at the moment. This new understanding leads to opening to other people’s perspectives and to liberating oneself out of the trap. Moreover, non-judgmental attitude, forgiveness, and inspiration for a better life are now possible.

We certainly don’t live alone. Everyone influences one another. ... Friends can always show me ways. ...

I feel more relieved. From now on, I’ll be careful not to judge anyone again, especially those things about gender. Now, I can be myself fully. I am proud of what I am without blaming anyone.

I want to understand the man I love, my husband, more. I want to listen to what he says, and accept more about what he is.

The lessons learned, if not healing them completely, can help participants to realize their own feelings more clearly and see deeply to the origin of the problems, which make them in better balance.

Meditation Has Naturally Been Integrated into Life

Being still and serene has more become very much like a familiar state of mind in many participants. Many have applied different ways of Meditation they have learned from the program to cope with various difficult situations in reality. Therefore, this is the essential way of how to take care of oneself in the long-run and to be able to remain calm and stable from within even when life is facing difficulties.

Recently, I am quite emotional, can’t really sit (sitting Meditation), however, I try to sit every day. I believe that my mind will be restored to calmness soon.

What I get most from the program is the mindfulness. I see my surrounding friends with mindfulness. When they are sad, I mindfully listen and pay attention to them. If I can suggest them something, then I’ll do, if not, I just cheer them up, and share whatsoever good.

I really like when I can be aware of my mind. I am practicing it at the moment. Before, my mind was really like a monkey. But now, if I see that I will bring it back to myself.

After the 10-month long learning, participants feel grateful for what they have experienced, realizing by themselves their own inner changes, the feelings of joy and happiness, and the expansion of their heart and perspectives.

Behind the Scene

There are many components both within the inmates themselves and in the learning program facilitation, including qualities and competency of facilitators, which affect the outcome of this program. Very grievous and traumatic backgrounds in many female inmates, the pressurizing and oppressive atmosphere of the prisons, as well as the characteristics and nature of mind of participants certainly affect the facilitation in many ways.

In brief, action and reflection throughout all the eight rounds of learning in both areas are analyzed and interpreted to obtain 14 key components which contribute to the success of this program facilitation. Those key components are as follows:

1. **Mindfulness:** All activities are based on mindfulness approach, which is done through different ways of Meditation.
2. **Inner Teacher:** The direction of learning is to bring people back to their inner selves. The final “A-ha” must come from within.
3. **Contemplation:** The learning allows learners in their own sufficient space and time to inquire deeply.
4. **Experience-based Validation:** The authentic learning must come from direct experiences people have encountered.
5. **Trust:** The learning is made possible in the atmosphere of relaxation, safety, and non-judgmental and non-marginalized manner.
6. **Delicate Participation:** The learning is made possible by the attitude of compassion, empathy, intimacy, and gently attentive manner.
7. **Holistic Approach:** The learning process is done through all channels, including sensation, feeling, thinking, and intuition.
8. **Interconnectedness:** The learning must be connected with all aspects of the learners’ lives across all time.
9. **Commitment:** The learning makes learners hold on to long term and regular practices.
10. **Continuity:** The learning must take place over a sufficiently extensive length of time.
11. **Fluidity:** For the sake of learners’ benefits, the learning can compromise the fixed goals.
12. **Contextual Work:** The learning process has to also work out with the learners’ life context.
13. **Community:** Not for individual, but the learning needs help and support from the group to bring about the collective growth.
14. **Aim of Transformation:** The learning process works with the learners’ frame of reference in order to let them go beyond their edge and open up their new perspectives and worldviews.

All the comprehensive 14 components described above become a good mirror to reflect all the important facets of a process when one facilitates. Likewise, the qualities of such facilitators must also be relevant. Easygoing, gently attentive, respectable, sensible, aware, decisive, pointed, profound, receptive, etc.; all these attributes are certainly required for a successful facilitator. Nevertheless, what lies beneath such successful appearances is the fundamental belief that says, “All humans are equal in dignity. Everybody has compassion and a seed to

grow all the same. And all can always change.” One last, but not least, finding regarding the contemplation-based facilitator is from a quote in the final focus group interview, saying that:

The spiritual growth of learners is inevitably related to the spiritual growth of facilitator him / herself, too. To bring down oneself, in an egoless manner, to learn, to listen, and not to attach to what one has learned before, together with to cooperate with teamwork, is the real key to success.

Conclusion

The objectives of the project were to study the learning process facilitation appropriate for the inner stability development in female prison inmates, and to explicate their inner experiences found during and after the completion of the program. After all eight rounds of the learning process, the results showed significant inner changes in the participants. These included the integration of mindfulness practices and Meditation into their daily life, having more healthy relationship skills and the recognition of interconnectedness, the broader frame of reference which became more inclusive and self-authoring, and having more inner stability allowing them to be able to gain back their values and vital forces.

As for the learning process facilitation appropriate for such inner development, it consisted of 14 key components within the sufficient length of time as described above, while the process itself showed three distinctive phases where one would respectively lead to another. It began with *the preparatory phase* when participants started to build up relationship, gained trust, learned how to create an open, safe space without judgment, and familiarized themselves with mindfulness practices. *The middle phase* was the work upon perspectives and worldviews as participants learned to free themselves from the old frame and be aware of social impacts. The last one, *the long-term stabilizing phase*, happened when participants came back to practice their inner work earnestly and see how to sustain the inner peace for the rest of their life. As a result, the female prison inmates’ inner transformation apparently happened and its stepwise dynamic could be elucidated as:

Trust gaining → Mind opening → Accepting and understanding → Unfolding →
Setting free → Having faith in one’s own life

The outcome of this study was presented to public in the two-day event of a prison visit which followed shortly afterwards, and the achievement implied that the implementation of this innovative learning in wider contexts was positive.

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**White Teachers' Reactions to the Racial Treatment
of Middle-School Black Boys**

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Abstract

This qualitative exploratory study, informed by grounded theory, used questionnaires and unstructured interviews based on fictionalized vignettes to examine urban, public, middle-school White teachers' attitudes about middle-school Black boys, questioning whether and how such attitudes might influence classroom interactions. Twenty-four participants responded to three vignettes that were fictionalized from the author's professional experiences and described White-teachers' interactions with middle-school Black boys. In these vignettes, the teachers used race either to chastise or give unfair privileges and inequitable opportunities to the Black students. The findings revealed that participants exhibited negative attitudes toward the teachers in the vignettes, indicating that the multicultural training courses participants had received may have sensitized them to classroom-based racial inequities.

Keywords: Black boys; White teachers; middle-school; urban education; multiculturalism.

Introduction

I remember that as a young Black⁶ male adolescent I was stereotyped and racially profiled primarily by White teachers as not being academically worthy of their attention. During my eight elementary school years, I did not experience racial discourse from my White teachers. Perhaps this was because I attended a Catholic school. However, when I was interviewed for the public high school I wanted to attend and during my secondary school years, I began to experience apparently racially influenced discourse from White teachers. Sadly, the experiences and challenges of my racial identification in school seem to be especially common among Black males, past and present, many of whom have been racially profiled and who struggle with being negatively labeled by some White teachers. White teachers are in a unique position of either becoming the allies of Black boys or – perhaps unwittingly – their tormentors.

It is important to consider whether and how White teachers' attitudes influence their classroom relationships with Black boys. Studying White teachers' attitudes may reveal whether it is possible for White teachers to place themselves more in the shoes of Black boys rather than to remain in the shoes of their White colleagues. Allport, as cited in Griffith and London (1980), found fractionalization among White teachers and Black students, particularly males. The authors suggested that people's attitudes and beliefs function as a mechanism for limiting the behavioral options they have at their disposal. Attitudes certainly may affect how students perceive themselves and how they perform in classrooms where teacher-student racial differences are present. It seems likely that, as pre-adolescents, middle-school Black boys are sensitive to and not oblivious of the negative attitudes of their teachers and that they may be particularly sensitive regarding their White teachers, especially if the boys sense that racial guilt is a factor in their teacher-student relationships. Considering their generally socially stigmatized racial identity of being a Black youth, the added racial tension may especially complicate their development.

Tatum (2003) wrote: "As children enter adolescence, they begin to explore the question of identity, asking 'Who am I? Who can I be?' in a way they have not done before. For Black youth, asking 'Who am I?' includes thinking about 'Who am I ethnically and/or racially? What does it mean to be Black?'" (p. 53). Tatum's words are a reminder that middle-school Black boys may be navigating unknown territory as racially identifiable people who cope with and negotiate ways to avoid being stereotyped or judged by others, especially by White people. Relationships with their White classroom teachers may be particularly fraught with difficulty as these young Black boys experience racial challenges. To this end, it is important for all teachers, White teachers particularly, to be aware of potentially projecting racial stereotyping or unthinking requirements onto students of color.

Detailed in this article is an exploratory study designed to examine White teachers' interracial attitudes regarding middle-school Black boys and to determine whether and how such attitudes might influence classroom interactions. To meet this aim, I first describe how scholarly literature addresses such key issues as racial stereotyping of Black males, White teacher-Black student interracial relationships, and White privilege and Black under-privilege. I then describe how I used the qualitative methods informed by grounded theory; these methods consisted of fictionalized vignettes, a questionnaire, and unstructured interviews to collect data addressing participants' reactions to fictionalized teachers racial treatment of middle-school Black boys. I

¹ I purposely use the terms "Black middle-school boys" and "White teachers" as taken from the American context of social construct and multicultural education; these terms are used regularly in scholarly literature when discussing race (Amos, 2010; McGrady & Reynolds, 2013; Noguera, 2003; Sleeter, 2004; Tatum, 2003).

thematically analyzed the data, looking for themes relevant to the participants' expressed attitudes toward the fictionalized teachers' behavior and actions, along with their thoughts about the middle-school Black boys' real-life experiences presented in each of the fictionalized vignettes. Finally, I present these results and discuss their implications.

Literature Review

Racial Stereotyping of Black Males

Halley, Eshleman, and Vijaya (2011) contend that stereotypes become discrimination as they are expressed within key social institutions. Historically, Black males have been misinterpreted and misunderstood in school, and they frequently are victims of stereotyping and outright discrimination (Milner, 2013; Noguera, 2008). Young Black males, who may be more likely than any other group to be subjected to negative stereotyping, receive clear messages about their strengths, capacity, and "place." Throughout their schooling, Black boys learn that they may achieve success in sports, but that academic and scholarly success are neither expected of them nor deeply valued (Noguera, 2003, p. 445). In particular, Pauker, Ambady, and Apfelbaum (2010) believed that these attitudinal evaluations can have a deep emotional effect. The experience of marginalization is not abstract but is lived, experienced, and felt. This internalization of stereotypes is what is meant by the term *oppression*, and it has strong implications for understanding oppression and, ultimately, its resolution within social institutions, especially schools. According to Kumashiro (2000):

The way that oppression may be addressed responds to the harmful dispositions of the teachers, and involving teaching to all students. Researchers have argued that educators need not only to acknowledge the diversity among their students, but also to embrace these differences and to treat their students as raced, gendered, sexualized, and classed individuals (p. 28).

Kumashiro (2000) further indicates that teachers must begin to understand not only the experience of marginalized youth, but of their own Whiteness if schools are to be less oppressive places.

Racial stereotyping by teachers leads to actual declines in student performance (Okeke, Howard, & Kurtz-Costes, 2009; Steele, 1997). The impact of stereotyping and oppression provides a powerful explanation about why Black and Hispanic/Latino(a) students have higher dropout rates at various educational stages than do White or Asian students (Woodcock, Hernandez, Estrad, & Schultz, 2012). McGrady and Reynolds (2013) also found strong evidence of a clear link between teacher bias and the performance of ethnic minority children. They noted that biases toward Black students were particularly strong. Such researchers as Copping, Kurtz-Costes, Rowley, and Wood (2013) and Okeke et al. (2009) contend that middle school-aged Black students absorb racialized beliefs and internalize racial and associated stereotypes due to the increased academic skill requirements in middle school and teacher perceptions about their ability to meet these new challenges.

White Teacher-Black Student Interracial Relationships

For decades, social scientists and educators have discussed and debated the nature of classroom relationships between White teachers and, in particular, Black male students. The phenomenon of racial differences between the two groups has been articulated by the above-mentioned

scholars as to how the differences of interracial interactions are played out in the classroom. Amos (2010) noted that the majority of teachers in public schools are likely to remain White, just as schools are becoming more diverse. Given the prevalence of White teachers who are teaching diverse students, it is essential to understand their lived experiences of diversity in the classroom. However, Milner (2011) found that “when attempting to engage in discussions about race and racism, White teachers often shut down” (p. 80). According to Nile and Straton (2003), this shutting-down behavior and withdrawal into an attitude of helplessness can be considered a common reaction stemming from historical racial wrongs that White teachers may feel badly about, potentially leading to a sense of racial guilt. Interestingly, McIntyre (1997) observed that “White teachers have a belief that as teachers, they, as individuals, will be able to control racism in their classrooms, thereby, affording them a sense of manageability over a very difficult and complex issue” (p. 119). Furthermore, Milner (2011) indicates that there could be a dismissive nature and avoidance in contact from White teachers with Black students or any student in their classroom who is racially different from themselves.

Various factors, such as the compressed time between classes and the growing number of students per class, are making it difficult for all teachers to establish close and supportive relationships with their students (Ryan, Shim, & Makara, 2013). This is lamentable, as close relationships with teachers are important in helping students feel good about their performance and themselves. Teachers represent powerful relationships in the lives of children and have a substantial impact on children’s identities. While building relationships with students is already challenging, the complex dynamics of racial stereotyping and oppression can powerfully affect the ability of Black children to connect with teachers and may impact their school and social functioning (Irvine, 1991). Amos (2010) connected these difficulties to the need for expanded multicultural training in teacher training programs.

White Privilege and Black Under-privilege

Over time, the labeling and referencing of such racial identifications as Negro, Colored, Black, and African American have suggested under-privilege. In the twentieth century, students of color were taught about the history of the United States early in elementary school, but much of that history reflected the domination of White Americans. Toward the end of the twentieth century into the twenty-first century, the nearly exclusive learning about White Americans and their involvement in U.S. history shifted for students of color. A general trend has developed toward acknowledging a multicultural presence by providing students with multicultural curricula where images of race are present and the history associated with these images are taught. This multicultural focus also is being provided to teachers through professional development training, thereby lessening the potential for racial guilt that Nile and Straton (2003) suggested some White teachers experience. The pedagogy of instruction is becoming more inclusive. However, additional efforts are needed to enhance educators’ respectful attention to racial differences. Sleeter (2008) made a key observation, which is essential to understanding an important aspect of this present study of “White privilege.” Sleeter expressed that “White and people of color experience racial identity development due to occupying very different positions in the racial order and, consequently, having very different experiences with racism” (p. 83). These differences are connected inherently to what is being called “White privilege.” Kendall (2013) noted that White privilege consists of an institutionally constructed set of benefits given to those whose race and identities are represented by those in positions of institutional power.

In general, the challenge with privilege, White or otherwise, is that it is not universal. McIntosh (1989) examined the privileges that White Americans have taken for granted. She looked at White privilege using various situational vignettes to illustrate how White Americans have been advantaged with unchallenged autonomy in the United States. Unfortunately, underprivileged individuals who are mostly members of marginalized groups often do not have the luxury of an open door to opportunities, sometimes because of their skin color, and they therefore experience racism throughout their lives from the dominant race.

The notions of privilege and under-privilege are important in understanding teacher-student relationships. Croll (2013) expressed that the “attitudes about racial inequality in the United States often are viewed through the lenses of discrimination and disadvantage” (p. 47). Thus, people may be inclined to disassociate themselves from such discrimination and disadvantage by classifying themselves as “color blind,” which theoretically absolves them of any racially connected behavior. Kendall (2013) observed the functional aspects of color blindness, which serve to conceal the institutional inequities and racial stratifications of society. The notion of color blindness has powerful implications for education. When teachers believe they do not see color, even discussion of difference can be dismissed in the classroom. By failing to recognize racial differences, some White teachers attempt to distance themselves from the history of racial discrimination in the classroom and their possible subsequent feelings of racial guilt (Sleeter, 2004).

Color blindness prevents teachers – and institutions – from taking responsibility for their part in the perpetuation of racial inequalities and oppression. Nile and Straton (2003) assert that as people allow themselves to take responsibility for their own behavior, they can let go of their historically situated and contracted guilt. Such “colorblind” behavior by teachers can be insulting to a student of color’s racial heritage and cultural self-identification. Indeed, Yu (2012) suggests that: “Race talk in the age of Obama is certainly more unpopular than ever before. The norm of Whiteness [that] his campaigns and elections helped to uphold gains strength every day and the efforts of minorities and their White allies to challenge White privilege are increasingly difficult” (p. 49). With the transition of power between President Obama and president-elect Trump, White privilege is likely to continue having a powerful presence given the return of a White president to the office in a divisive time of oppressive rhetoric about social difference.

It is especially important that students of color feel safe in classrooms when White teachers are an authority presence. As a corollary to the issue of teachers’ supposed color blindness, it is possible that “when students trust that a White teacher authentically sees them as important, valuable, and intelligent people, they begin to respect and learn from that teacher, regardless of his or her color” (Price, 2011, p. 273). It would be beneficial to both parties for teachers to have a sense of self-awareness regarding what they believe and what they transmit to their students of color in their interactions with them. To this end, it is crucial to explore questions of: How self-aware are teachers regarding race and their front-line influence with students of color? How can they become more self-aware throughout their careers?

Research Method

Methodological Framework

This research used a “grounded-theory informed” methodology (Anells, 2006). Grounded-theory informed methodologies do not conform completely to the original tenets of grounded

theory as presented by Glaser and Strauss (1967), but instead are based upon key philosophical and methodological assumptions of the approach (Burk, Danquah, & Berry, 2015; Padgett, 1998; Perez, Mubanga, Aznar, & Bagnol, 2015). This method recognizes the centrality of data as the main source of theory construction or, in the case of much grounded-theory informed research, themes (Furman, Langer, Sanchez, & Negi, 2007). While grounded-theory informed research does not negate the importance of theory and literature in the development of questions and hypotheses, it encourages researchers to use an open, inquisitive approach not driven by previously selected themes and codes. Grounded-theory informed research studies use data collection and analytical strategies based-upon their utility, in an inductive, theory- or theme-building approach. While Strauss (1990) indicated that grounded theory is not always inductive, in that theory testing can indeed be a part of the grounded theory processes, the focus is on findings from one's data (Berg, 2004). As such, I searched for identifiable themes from the data that could lead to a new understanding of White teachers' self-awareness regarding how they interact and should interact with middle school Black boys in the classroom setting (Aronson, 1995).

Location of the Study

Howard and Milner, as cited in Milner and Lomotey (2014) conceptualized three types of urban communities – the *urban intensive*, *urban emergent* and *urban characteristic* – each with identifiable qualities and thematic challenges. Although in this article I use the word *urban* to describe the community where the study was conducted, Howard and Milner would describe this school district as an *urban emergent* community in that it is located in a large city that is smaller than “major cities” (Milner, 2012, p. 560). Nonetheless, Howard and Milner (cited in Milner & Lomotey, 2014) stated, “these cities are fraught with many of the same challenges as urban intensive schools, but not on the same scale” (p. 201). Given its location, I considered the school to be a microcosm of the urban schools.

Sample

The study was approved by my college's institutional review board, and it used a purposive sample from an urban middle school where my previously established professional relationship with the principal enabled access to the teachers. The principal and I met a few years prior to this research study, and remained connected professionally. There existed between us a level of professional trust that allowed me access into his school as a research site.

The school district had four elementary schools (K–5), two middle schools (6–8), a vocational high school (9–12), a traditional high school (9–12), and two alternative schools for students with special educational needs such as social/emotional and behavioral/academic disabilities. At the time of the study, the middle school had sixty-five teaching faculty. The teachers' racial breakdown was 95.4% White and 4.6% Black. No other racial categories were identified. The student population was comprised of six hundred 6th, 7th, and 8th graders with a racial breakdown of 80.1% White; 9.3% Black; 6.5% Latino; and 4.1% Asian; no students were identified as Native American.

Twenty-four White teachers (N=24) voluntarily participated; 8 were males and 16 were females. Their ages ranged from 20–29 (4), 30–39 (5), 40–49 (7), and 50–59+ (8). They were born in the following decades: 1940s (10), 1950s (4), 1960s (3), and 1970s (7). The number of multicultural training courses taken were 0 (1), 1–3 (9), 3–5 (9), 5–7 (4) and 7–9 (1). At the time of this study, participants lived in urban (7) and suburban communities (16), with one

participant providing no response (1) to this question. These demographics include the 10 interviewed participants who later engaged in one-to-one interviews.

Data Collection

The two instruments used for collecting data in this study were a questionnaire and unstructured individual interviews. The rationale for using the two instruments was to intimately personalize the attitudes of the participants and their reaction to their fictionalized colleagues' racial treatment of middle-school Black boys in the provided vignettes. I delivered sixty-five manila envelopes containing an informed consent form and questionnaire to the middle-school principal, who disseminated them to the teaching faculty's mailboxes. Participants were given 72 hours to complete and return the questionnaire.

The first part of the questionnaire asked for demographic information; the second part offered three vignettes regarding White teachers' classroom relationships with middle-school Black boys, each developed both from fictional aspects and my own professional experience. The fictionalized vignettes were presented hypothetically to participants rather than as factual events. One intention of the fictionalized vignettes was to encourage the participants to imagine they were colleagues of the fictionalized teachers, thereby providing at least a tenuous connection among them. The same three written, open-ended questions followed each fictionalized vignettes, setting expectations that participants might respond in writing differently from one case study to another. Two additional open-ended questions completed the questionnaire and helped to contextualize the participants' personal experiences with middle-school Black boys.

Because the vignettes were informed by my feelings about how White teachers may influence young Black boys per my actual high school and professional social work experiences (Battle, 2016), there was the potential for my own bias to arise in how the fictional scenarios were presented and in how I analyzed, interpreted, and integrated them into this report, as well as into my own belief system (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Starks & Trinidad, 2007). To mitigate such deleterious effects, I used a form of bracketing to separate my feelings from the data. According to Tufford and Newman (2010), "given the sometimes close relationship between the researcher and the research topic that may both precede and develop during the process of qualitative research, bracketing is also a method to protect the researcher from the cumulative effects of examining what may be emotionally challenging material" (p. 81). In essence, I carefully reviewed the fictionalized vignettes for my bias, revising them as needed to present the scenarios as objectively as possible. Additionally, as I analyzed and synthesized the data, I talked with a mentor who helped me separate my feelings from what the participants said and did during the study, better enabling me to examine and attempt to understand participants' expressed attitudes. These actions have helped me to be more objective about the study, leading to potentially more useful implications for practice.

Questions Regarding the Fictionalized Vignettes

As mentioned, participants responded to the same three questions for each fictionalized vignette and two additional final questions; the questions were intended to prompt participants to articulate their attitudes toward the fictionalized White teachers' relationships with middle-school Black boys in the classroom. Because the questions were asked in the second person, I anticipated that participants would use the first person in their responses.

1. How would you react to the situation in the fictionalized vignette?
2. What do you think might be the underlying issue(s) with the teacher and the student in their interaction with each other in the fictionalized vignette?
3. When you read the fictionalized vignette, did it bring up any feelings for you (negative or positive)?

In addition, participants addressed two other questions that focused on their personal and professional relationships and experiences with middle-school Black boys.

1. Have you ever had any personal interaction with middle-school Black boys?
2. What has been your professional experience as a teacher working with middle-school Black boys? If none, please write “none.”

The Fictionalized Vignettes

Although the fictionalized vignettes were presented to the participants as hypothetical, they were not entirely fictitious and had genuine roots in my experience. Derived primarily from both my experiences as a school social worker and educator with the Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunities (METCO) Program Coordinator, the fictionalized vignettes considered young, Black males in school settings. As such, there were inevitable connections to my own past experiences as a Black male student. Of particular interest, the METCO program is a voluntary desegregation program that was instituted by the Massachusetts Department of Education in 1966. Today, it is called the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The purpose and perception of the program is based on the quality of education and curriculum standards in predominately White suburban school districts where students of color who reside in urban neighborhoods voluntarily attend school. The program has assisted some suburban school districts with their racial imbalances by creating a more diversified educational community.

Fictionalized Vignette One

A White, male, 8th grade Social Studies teacher at a suburban public middle school gave one of the Black boys in his class an “Incomplete” grade for the second quarter. There were a total of three young Black boys in the class. The school social worker observed an interaction between the student with the Incomplete and his teacher. He heard the teacher ask the student to stay after school to make up work from the second quarter so that the teacher could remove the Incomplete from the student’s report card. The student agreed to remain after school. The social worker later learned from the teacher that the student did not come. The teacher reported that this was not the first time the student had not “shown up.”

The teacher requested a meeting with the guidance counselor, the student, and the social worker to discuss the situation. At the meeting, the teacher acknowledged his disappointment. He felt that he had been supportive, yet the student acted unconcerned. In the meeting, the teacher spoke to the student with an irritated, raised voice:

I have tried really hard with you. I have tried harder with you than any of the other students in my class. I have broken all of my rules to get you motivated to change the Incomplete. I know being here as a METCO student in an all-White community can be very hard. There are not many Black people (student or faculty) out here. But attending school here is better than attending school in Boston. You might not

get the same attention if you went to school in Boston. You might get lost through the cracks. You have the potential to succeed much more here than in Boston. WHY DON'T YOU DO WHAT I AM ASKING?

Fictionalized Vignette Two

There were two Black boys in a 7th grade Math class. One of the boys was ten minutes late for class. The teacher, a White female in a suburban public middle school, had started the class when the student arrived late. After the teacher finished providing instruction, she asked the students to take out their homework from the previous night. She went around the classroom with her grade book and marked whether the students did or did not do their homework. The majority of the students had their homework; she refused to listen to the excuses of those students who had not completed their homework, and she marked them accordingly in her grade book. When the teacher approached the Black boy who had arrived late, she learned that he did not have his homework. The teacher did not interrupt the student as he explained why he did not have his homework. Without question, she accepted his excuse. After class, she whispered to the student, “I did not give the other students this opportunity, but I will give you the chance to bring in your homework first thing tomorrow morning before school begins.”

Fictionalized Vignette Three

A White, female, 6th grade English teacher in an urban, public, middle school was collecting homework from her class. The teacher reviewed the homework and accused the only Black boy student in her class of copying it from a student in another English class that she taught. There were three young Black girls and two young Latino boys in the classroom as well.

The teacher publicly challenged the student in front of his classmates. The student did admit that he had gotten help from his older sister (who was a 7th grader at the same school), but he said he did the work on his own. The teacher dismissed his explanation and asked him questions to test his understanding about the homework assignment. The student was embarrassed and became upset. He began to cry in front of his classmates and put his head down on the desk and remained in that position for the rest of the period.

Interviews

The second instrument used for the study consisted of unstructured, one and one-half hour long, individual interviews based on the same case studies and questions, as well as additional responsive questions. Only ten teachers from the original 24 participants were chosen for the interview, and the principal himself made the selections. He expressed that his main criterion was his sense of the teachers' investment in their students' lives. We discussed the importance of his not selecting respondents that would represent a biased response to the questions, whether the response was a positive or negative predisposition to the subject matter. Although there was a risk of selection bias, he wanted an active role in both disseminating the questionnaires and selecting teachers for the interviews. Based upon conversations with the principal, I believed his desire was to ensure the study's success and not to push the findings in a certain direction. The principal was the de facto gatekeeper of the school, which influenced the political feasibility of conducting the study in his building; Buchanan and Bryman (2008) astutely noted that research always has political actions involved. They suggested that access to the field often mandates adapting research protocols to the needs of “the field.” Had I not

acquiesced to his request to be the gatekeeper, the principal might not have agreed to participate in the study despite our professional relationship.

Data Analysis

Thematic data analyses were used to organize the findings by creating patterns and finding themes consistent with the body of scholarly literature. According to Aronson (1995), “Themes that emerge from the informants’ stories are pieced together to form a comprehensive picture of their collective experience” (pp. 1-2). In the first stage, the responses were typed in bold print and italicized for legibility purposes. In the second stage, a process of color-coding was implemented to narrow and to define patterns and themes of responses. The emergence of these patterns and themes connected participants’ responses. Thematic categories, which to a degree mirror the extant literature, included racial stereotyping of Black males, White teacher-Black student interracial relationships, White privilege, and Black under-privilege. Finally, during the third stage, an index and matrix were created to cross-reference the patterns and themes relevant to the studied literature.

Results and Discussion

Fictionalized Vignettes One and Two asked participants to consider what they thought about the White teachers’ attitudes and relationships with middle-school Black boys. Fictionalized Vignette Three asked the same questions as One and Two, but the case it described appeared to provoke more challenging responses. One might assume that participant-teachers responding to a scenario involving another teacher might defend the teachers’ attitudes and actions, particularly given the encouragement to see these fictionalized teachers as colleagues. Instead, analyzed data from both instruments revealed that participants openly criticized the teachers’ relationships, behaviors, and attitudes with the middle-school Black boys. They not only gave their interpretations of what had transpired between the two, but also expressed alternatives for how to handle those incidents as if they were the White teacher in the case studies.

The following excerpts illustrate that there were no clear differences in participants’ written responses to the case studies, in that all participants indicated they were disenchanted with how the fictional teachers had acted toward the students. However, in the face-to-face interview format, which allowed people to respond more personally and passionately than they could in the written questionnaire format, the ten participants talked specifically about how they would have acted as teachers, and their responses showed some differences among them. These responses are categorized by the three major themes that emerged from the analysis and that formed the basis for this article’s literature review.

Racial Stereotyping of Black Boys

The participants generally responded in both written and oral forms as White allies to the Black boys, and they did not perpetuate or align with stereotypes in their responses despite the fictionalized White teachers’ stereotypical comments in the case studies. Participants’ written and oral responses addressing stereotyping in Fictionalized Vignettes One and Two articulated negative opinions of the fictional White teachers, suggesting that those teachers were insensitive in their treatment of the middle-school Black boys even though the teachers may have had good intentions.

In his written response, one male participant wrote about Fictionalized Vignette One, “The White teacher was probably honestly trying to help the student, but may have been masking feelings that made the student feel that he was not up to par because of his racial identity.” Also regarding Fictionalized Vignette One, another male participant wrote that his family and friends provided him with seemingly false, stereotyped impressions of people from marginalized groups. When the participant entered college, he independently developed a more sensitive attitude toward people of different races. This participant suggested that the vignettes’ White teachers’ stereotypical attitudes may have stemmed from a distinct period of time or generational beliefs; he further suggested that the White teachers’ ages, birth years, and geographic places of residence might have contributed to such attitudes.

In interviews regarding Fictionalized Vignette Two’s White teacher’s behaviors and feelings toward the Black male student, participants used such phrases as “not good enough” and “not capable.” A female participant expressed in the interview, “I’m sure that the White teacher has given off messages that the middle-school Black boy was not as good enough as a White student and therefore gave him preferential treatment [over] the other students in the classroom.” A second female participant stated in her interview, “I would have supported the White teacher prior to meeting the student, but what the teacher said simply backed the middle-Black boy into a corner and possibly validated his feelings of not belonging and not being good enough.”

These teachers seemed to realize that even good intentions toward students can backfire when the actions are wrong. As Milner (2012) stated regarding his research:

Teachers generally had good intentions, and although all of them seemed to struggle to understand how to meet the needs of all their students most effectively, their hearts seemed to be in the right place. Unfortunately, good intentions gone wrong can dangerously affect students’ academic, intellectual, and social success, in both the short and long term (pp. 162–163).

This study suggests that the participant teachers outside of this Boston school district would agree.

White Teacher-Black Student Interracial Relationship

Thirteen of the 24 research participants expressed written concern for how the White teacher in Fictionalized Vignette One used inappropriate statements with the middle-school Black boy to make him feel inferior, “I have tried harder with you than any of the other students in my class;” “I have broken all of my rules to get you motivated to change the Incomplete;” “... attending school here is better than attending school in Boston;” and “You have the potential to succeed much more here than in Boston. WHY DON’T YOU DO WHAT I AM ASKING?” Participants indicated they wanted to be supportive of the White teacher because they recognized his frustration; however, 20 participants tended to resist supporting him and referred to his comments as “uncalled for” or words to that effect. “I am angry” was a common response. One person wrote: “Um, what’s going on here?” One male participant wrote:

The Black male student cannot be characterized with only example. Some students are engaged and interested in learning. Others would prefer to be elsewhere. Generally speaking, middle-school Black males have a clear sense of your sense of

justice and whether or not you, as a teacher, are racist. When given trust and time, students will open up and share their experiences about themselves.

Similarly, a female participant wrote about Fictionalized Vignette One:

It seems to me that there is a lack of connection. Both student and teacher are at odds for whatever reason. Is the teacher not making himself accessible to the student? Did the student have a negative interaction with this teacher or others in the past? Why is there a lack of comfort? What is the source of the student's ambivalence toward the teacher?

These responses do not suggest that participants are making excuses for the Black student or that they totally blame the White teacher; rather, they indicate thoughtful concern about the relationship in a broader context than one failed interaction.

Participants expressed especially strong reactions to Fictionalized Vignette Three. All ten participants interviewed articulated feelings of being “disturbed” and “appalled” by their colleague's behavior. One female participant said, “I am angered that the teacher humiliated the student in front of the class. I would have seen him privately. I am also angered that she assumed the student copied from someone else's work. That is racist. Maybe someone else copied the student's work.” Another female participant said:

Yikes! This woman should not be teaching! To address a student's cheating in front of a class, no matter what message you want to get across is not fair, not kind, not right. If she has some question about it, she should have asked separately. She challenged the only Black male in the class. What does that mean?

Participants generally reacted with shock and anger at the insensitivity and cruel behavior of the White teacher who perpetrated this encounter in front of the student's peers. They expressed that the student should have been allowed to remove himself from the situation to regain composure. It seems possible that such responses may be attributed to the cultural training courses that twenty-three out of the twenty-four respondents stated they had taken.

In this study, participants suggested that poorly executed disciplinary actions might be racially motivated by a belief that the student was incapable of doing the work. One participant articulated in the interview how it felt when teachers are confronted with racial differences and lack cultural understanding; in such cases, he suggested, teachers might personalize the situation to maintain control. Such ill-gained control can be costly to the student's sense of self as well as to the teacher's own integrity.

White Privilege and Black Under-privilege

Notions of White privilege and Black under-privilege appear to have shaped the research participants' responses to White teachers' attitudes in Fictionalized Vignette One primarily. In their written and oral-interview responses, fifteen participants stated that the White teacher's interaction with the middle-school Black boy seemed hurtful and disrespectful and that notions of privilege should be considered. One participant wrote:

[Fictionalized Vignette] One reminds me of an incident that seems to speak to the sense of being privileged. When I was in Tulsa, Oklahoma, we had our first African

American kid come into school. There wasn't busing then – certainly not in Oklahoma! – so the kid moved into the area with his family. The student was mainly alone in the school and I remember another kid going up to him and trying to befriend him in a really awkward way and the African American kid just kind of smiled and said “Thanks, but no thanks” and walked off. The White kid was screaming at him in the hallway. “You know, I am just trying to be your friend and help you here and you're snubbing me.” And then, of course, the “N” word came out and everything started flying.

One wonders why the Black boy in this participant's past was reluctant to accept the White boy's attempt to befriend him; did he know that lurking beneath the surface of the would-be friend's outreach was the possibility of angry, racist name-calling? Was he simply afraid based on past experience or wary based on being racially unique in the school?

According to Obidah and Teel (2001), “the distrust of White people is nurtured in every African-American child as part of his or her ethos of existence in America” (p. 70). Obidah stated, “As an African-American person, you ask yourself, ‘How can I trust someone who thinks, consciously or subconsciously, that something is wrong with me to the extent that this something (tangible only in terms of physical difference) makes me an inferior human being?’” (p. 70). This study's data and results confirm Obidah's belief that a felt-sense – if not a proven reality – of White privilege and Black underprivilege may affect a person of color who on some level is challenged by race daily. Indeed, a female participant orally stated regarding Fictionalized Vignette One:

I can understand how [the] teacher felt trying to make it so a child succeeds and to have a kid not take that opportunity is sometimes flabbergasting. I'm concerned that the White teacher has such a sense of privilege as indicated by his saying, “You're going to get a better education here (meaning suburbs) and you'd get lost in the cracks if you were somewhere else.” He could get lost through the cracks in the suburbs, too, and maybe that's why the teacher is so frustrated because he's trying to make sure that he doesn't get lost through the cracks.

Desire for student success and even good intentions can fail when White teachers, like the one in Fictionalized Vignette One, fail to realize the sense of privilege that may leak through their attempts to help students of color, particularly young Black boys who already may have learned not to trust their teachers' words.

Implications for Practice

Implications for this study are framed by Singleton's (2015) assertion that since Whites are the primary beneficiary of racial privilege, they bear the primary responsibility for the perpetuation of racism within key social contexts and institutions. This observation suggests that the phrase “I don't notice color” serves as a mechanism for a White teacher to suppress feelings regarding the racial complexion and differences among their students in the classroom.

However, twenty-three of the twenty-four participants in this study indicated they had received cultural and/or multicultural training. That many of the White teacher participants aligned themselves with the Black students and not their White colleagues suggests the power of multicultural training. This study, then, supports such training as a corrective for school districts where the leadership wants to achieve positive, supportive relationships with students

of color in the classroom. To this end, committing funding and time for in-service and outside resources is vital.

Another option for providing and promoting anti-racism awareness is to employ consultants as outside resources; such consultants should have extensive experience working in school districts and especially with White teachers regarding race and racism, especially regarding teachers' relationships with Black males and how to incorporate teaching and learning of race and racism into their classroom. Michael (2015) provided solid guidance for how such work can occur:

Invite antiracist colleagues into your classroom to help you see your own culture and your own biases. Ask them to give critical feedback, and thank them when they do. Make time to work in small groups (pairs even) with people you trust. Use these opportunities to ask the “untouchable” questions, the questions you are afraid to verbalize because of what they might say about you and begin to explore them (p. 41).

In short, teachers need opportunities to embrace the consultants' feedback with open minds. This approach in empowerment and vulnerability can better prepare and equip classroom teacher for working effectively with students of color, particularly young Black boys.

At the beginning of this article, I asked how White teachers can become allies of middle-school Black boys and whether they are able to see themselves as walking in these children's shoes, so to speak. Certainly, some White teachers allow their personal and professional backgrounds to cause them to stigmatize groups of students from marginalized backgrounds. However, in this study, the participants appeared to align themselves thoughtfully with the middle-school Black boys rather than the White teachers of the case studies. Having an opportunity to step back and examine their self-awareness regarding how they interact and engage with students' racial differences can assist White teachers in being present and understanding of their students' differences in the classroom. Such self-reflection, which often is engendered in cultural competence training, can be connected to awareness of the social and emotional needs of the students (Battle & Hill, 2016). Both initial and ongoing multicultural awareness and practical training can provide useful ways of understanding and practical strategies for working with students of color at any age – and particularly at this liminal preadolescent age that is especially crucial for Black males. The potential benefits are powerful in assisting White teachers and middle-school Black boys in improving their teacher-student relationship to establish positive communication and expectations for both in the classroom.

Conclusions

Through the use of White teachers' responses to case studies about White teachers and middle-school Black boys, this research offered a snapshot into the participants' attitudes and their reactions toward their fictionalized colleagues. The racial differences between the case studies' White teachers and middle-school Black boys engendered views that were generally supportive of the Black boys and critical of the White teachers regardless of the participants' own racial identities as White teachers. Participants' responses varied but strongly indicated that they would try to establish an agenda of academic success by maintaining a positive relationship with middle-school Black boys and by not showing misplaced anger or favoritism. Participants expressed wanting to stay true to themselves as the classroom teacher by initiating equity for all students. The participants' criticism of the unequal treatment of student behavior by the

White teachers in the fictionalized vignette indicates they believed that the fictional White teachers' were perpetuating the stereotypical relationship with the described middle-school Black boys.

The findings suggest that the participants were fairly astute in their education and knowledge of the racial complexities of their students. Indeed, although I had hypothesized that participants would align with the White teachers in each fictionalized vignette because of potentially limited racial awareness and sensitivity to middle-school Black boys, the data strongly indicated that participants were more allies to the children than not. Interestingly, some participants articulated that the White teachers may have feared being labeled “racist,” indicating racial identification as a possible reason for granting inequitable opportunities to the middle-school Black boys. Nonetheless, the participants appeared to recognize that this intention alone can be seen as racist because of subsequent preferential treatment.

Certainly, it would be beneficial for all teachers, especially White teachers who may have limited experiences with cultural competence, to receive training for anti-racism/cultural competence that would enable them to engage students who are racially and ethnically different from themselves in the classroom. Exploring and proposing policy changes for U.S. school districts regarding establishing mandatory anti-racism/cultural competence training would be essential and necessary for professional development of teachers. Advancing such proposed policy could help to mitigate the racial and cultural disparity between White teachers and both boy and girl students of color and it may help to improve their teacher-student classroom interactions and relationships.

Limitations

The participants in the written questionnaire interpreted the three fictionalized vignettes in one of two ways: as third-party observers and as first-person actors. The questions that followed the vignettes were written in the second person (i.e., “What do you think?”) with the expectation of eliciting first person responses. Some participants responded in the third person without including much of their own experiences. However, other participants who answered the questionnaire described their assessment of the teacher-student relationship by offering their own experiences that were somewhat similar to the fictionalized vignettes, especially with the oral interview responses. Overall, the intention of eliciting first-person responses within the questionnaires was not achieved in the majority of the participants' responses, which suggests that the wording of the questions may have limited the study's results. However, this intention was achieved within the interview phase, likely because of the intimacy of a face-to-face meeting and the possibility of personal accounts of similar stories shared by the participants.

The selection of the ten participants for the interview phase of the study may have been done from the principal's own bias and/or agenda. The participants may have recognized the principal's investment in the study by his asking them personally to participate in a one-to-one interview exchange with the researcher beyond responding to the questionnaire portion of the study. The participants may have felt comfortable filling out the questionnaire but not with the interview. However, given the principal's decision to choose interview participants, the authoritarian school structure may have left participants feeling obligated to take part and it may have influenced their responses.

As a qualitative study with a small sample size, it is not generalizable to a broader population. Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, and Fontenot (2013) examined the justifications of eighty-three

qualitative research studies; they recommended that “grounded theory qualitative studies should generally include between 20 to 30 interviews” and that more than “the maximum [30] [is] where additional interviews fail to produce substantial new insight” (p. 20). In the case of this study, had all sixty-five eligible teachers consented to participate in the questionnaire portion, the study could have been challenged by repetitive information from participants that offered no new valid information based on the authors examination. With twenty-four total participants, the study provided sufficiency in data, but had there been a few more interview participants, the study might have provided greater insight into the problem.

Implications for Future Research

This study offers data and interpretation for developing a deeper appreciation of on-going, challenging, and complex cross-racial teacher-student relationships. Additional research is needed to determine more about how interracial differences impact the racial complexities between White teachers and middle-school Black boys. For example, this exploratory study was conducted in the northeastern U.S. It would be beneficial to discover whether the outcomes would differ for participants of other school districts, as well as from other geographical areas of the country. Additionally, an understanding of student views versus teacher views needs attention. Thus, a qualitative study of how middle-school Black boys experience their racial interactions with White teachers would be useful for obtaining and presenting findings from both sides of the aisle for the two populations. A research method combining both interviews and focus groups could be helpful. Such studies might consider whether the relationships between White teachers and middle-school Black boys are more homogenous in the classroom than suggested in some literature.

Additionally, this study addressed the teacher-student interracial relationship of White teachers with middle-school Black boys in the classroom. A qualitative study using other methods or replicating this research design should be conducted regarding other racial groups (e.g., Black teachers and middle-school Black boys, Black teachers and middle-school White boys, White teachers and middle-school Hispanic boys, Hispanic teachers and middle-school Hispanic boys). Any configuration of the racial construct between such groups might yield data helpful in improving teacher-student interracial relationships in the classroom; such data could help shape multicultural curricula training for pre-service White teachers within their educational programs and for existing White teachers within their ongoing professional development training.

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