The purpose of the Annual South Florida Education Research Conference is to enhance the existing culture of research in colleges and universities in South Florida. The conference provides a meaningful vehicle for the preparation, mentorship, and presentation of scholarly work by students, faculty, and alumni.
SFERC 2015

Proceedings of
The 14th Annual South Florida Education Research Conference

June 6, 2015
Florida International University
Miami, Florida USA
Proceedings of
The 14th Annual South Florida Education
Research Conference

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The 14th South Florida Education Research Conference 2015 Program
Acknowledgements

The South Florida Education Research Conference Steering Committee (SFERC) would like to thank the member universities and their faculty and students for supporting the fourteenth annual SFERC. The members of the steering committee include Florida International University, DeVry University, Miami Dade College, Florida Memorial University, Johnson & Wales University, Keiser University, Barry University, Florida Atlantic University, St. Thomas University, University of Miami, and Nova Southeastern University.

Special thanks must go to the College of Education at Florida International University particularly Dean Delia Garcia, the Office of the Dean, and the Office of Graduate Studies. We also wish to thank Creating Latino Access to a Valuable Education (CLAVE) for its support of the conference. Caprila Almeida, Pierre Schoepp, Marilyn Vinson, Fabiola Hernandez-Cook, and Maria Tester deserve special thanks for their assistance with registration, volunteers, logistics, recordkeeping and numerous other details that go into a successful conference. Their professionalism and attention to detail are much appreciated and valued.

Special thanks must also go to Barry University, particularly Gerene Starratt, Betsy Thomas, Amy Deutch and their team, who have so carefully executed all of the details involved with hosting this event. Hosting a conference is a large endeavor, and their hospitality and logistical expertise are greatly appreciated.

Thank you to Keiser University for their new sponsorship of the Keiser University Graduate School Poster Presentation Award. Thank you to Michael Record (Keiser) for his organization and handling of all aspects of this award. Thank you also to Thomas Reio (FIU) and the Lorraine R. Gay Award for Excellence in Research/Scholarship Committee for their work.

Sarah M. Nielsen (DeVry) has served as editor of the proceedings for years, and now serves as editor in chief. Her attention to detail, editing skills, and patience have made the proceedings a quality publication. Teresa Lucas (FIU), Jacqueline Pena (MDC), Lori Ann Gionti (FIU), and Sarah Nielsen (DeVry) all co-chair the Paper Review and Selection Committee and facilitated the review process. This includes locating faculty to review, prompting reviewers to return reviews, being third reviewers when the student and faculty reviews are opposed, and doing additional reviews when reviewers fail to return their reviews. Lori Ann Gionti (FIU) also headed the poster review and selection committee.

Without the continuing support of so many, this conference would not exist, so thank you again for making our fourteenth annual conference so successful!

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**POSTER REVIEWERS**

| Lori Ann Gionti (FIU) |
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CLAVE Project: Creating Latino Access to a Valuable Education at FIU College of Education.
Keynote

Joan Wynne, Ph.D.
FIU College of Education

Living with the Dark and the Dazzling: Children Leading us Back From the Edge

Joan Wynne, Ph.D. directs the Urban Education Master's Degree Program in the College of Education at FIU. The influence of her students and educators like Lisa Delpit, Asa G. Hilliard III, and Bob Moses has driven her research and writing about transformational leadership, quality education as a constitutional right, and building partnerships among youth, parents, schools and communities. Her newest book, Confessions of a white educator: Stories in search of justice and diversity, explores what works and doesn’t work in public schools. In the fall of 2015, her text, Who speaks for justice? will be published.

Wynne was a tenured professor for over 10 years at Morehouse College, where she designed and directed The Benjamin E. Mays Teacher Scholars Program, funded by the Lilly Foundation. At Georgia State University, she was the Associate Director of the Crim Center for Urban Educational Excellence, co-designed, directed and taught in the Urban Teacher Leadership Master’s Program and also served and chaired doctoral committees. Also at GSU, she co-designed two research grants, a 7 million dollar award from the Annenberg Foundation, another from the Spencer Foundation. While in Atlanta, for twelve years, she facilitated a multitude of high school and college faculty workshops as well as corporate forums concerning team and leadership skill building and “un-learning racism.”

At FIU, she has continued her research in education for liberation, supported by grants from the Urban Education Corps, the National Science Foundation, and the Children’s Trust. She has also served on and chaired many doctoral committees at FIU. While at all three institutions, she has written and been awarded a multitude of federal, state, and foundation grants.

Her last twelve years have been dedicated to two lines of inquiry. One concerns researching the visionary curriculum and pedagogy of the Algebra Project and the Young People's Project, organizations that are deeply rooted in American history and grassroots communities. The second is the exploration of what it means to be a citizen of the world. For several years, Wynne facilitated university faculty workshops to explore the content of global learning and the kind of pedagogy needed in college classrooms, in all disciplines, to engage students in looking at the world through multiple lenses. She is committed to the vision of the global learning initiative to develop college students as collective problem-solvers, not just as individual vessels of knowledge for self-promotion.

She has published in diverse journals and books, nationally and internationally, co-edited a number of texts, and has made hundreds of presentations at international, national, and local conferences. In 2001, she received “The MLK Torch of Peace Award for the Promotion of Racial Harmony.”
Lunch Panel Discussion

Breaking the School to Prison Pipeline

Panelists:

Amalio Nieves
Diversity, Prevention & Intervention Department, Broward County Public Schools

Debra Pane
Eradicating the School-to-Prison Pipeline Foundation, Inc. (E-SToPP)

Major Gregory Salters
Ft. Lauderdale Police Department

Amalio Nieves provides the day-to-day leadership, vision and focus as Director for the Diversity, Prevention, & Intervention Department for Broward County Public Schools, the sixth largest school district in the nation. Mr. Nieves has extensive experience in the field of prevention and intervention education and services. He has collaborated with school and community leaders to ensure prevention plays an integral role in establishing a safe and secure learning environment for developing the whole child. Most recently, Mr. Nieves has been instrumental in the development of the District’s PROMISE program, an intervention program for students, designed at addressing and reducing the school to prison pipeline.

Dr. Debra Pane is Founding President of Eradicating the School-to-Prison Pipeline Foundation, Inc. (E-SToPP), a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization dedicated to building a grass-roots network of transformative schools and educational opportunities for youth, especially those who are placed at risk of or already involved in suspension, expulsion, incarceration, and/or the process of reentering to family, school, and community. Ultimately, E-SToPP seeks to transform systems, policies, and mindsets that disproportionately funnel Black and other youth of color out of school and into prison. E-SToPP’s transformative mission and vision was born from Dr. Pane’s staunch belief that “systemic and philosophical changes must occur before we as a society will develop truly effective and humane schools and educational opportunities that all of our children deserve.” Since its inception in 2011, E-SToPP has initiated the Positive Peer Leadership Mentoring Program in the Miami-Dade Regional Juvenile Detention Center (JDC) and in the Turner Guilford Knight (TGK) Correctional Center. E-SToPP’s Freedom School 2015 Summer Program will take place at Miami Northwestern Senior High School. For over 20 years, Dr. Pane has been a teacher, teacher educator, curriculum developer, and researcher in Miami-Dade County from elementary through university graduate levels. She was Lead Reading Teacher for 9 years at TROY Community Academy, a Miami-Dade County Public Educational Alternative Outreach Program for youth in the juvenile justice system. She is the 1998 Teacher-of-the-Year for M-DCPS Educational Alternative Outreach Program. Her research agenda focuses on transformative literacy and teacher education, critical communities of practice, classroom power relationships, empowering praxis, and critical social qualitative research.

**Dr. Gregory A. Salters** currently serves as the Investigations Bureau Major with the Fort Lauderdale Police Department; where he has worked for over 20 years. Dr. Salters facilitates courses for the Florida Department of Law Enforcement’s (FDLE) Florida Leadership Academy, serves as an adjunct professor at the Broward County Institute for Public Safety, facilitates forums such as FDLE’s Minority Recruitment and Retention Forum. The courses he facilitates includes, but are not limited to Ethics, Performance Management, Leadership and Supervision, and the Persuasive Leader.

He graduated from Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU) with a degree in Business Administration. After graduation he had a career in Finance that included banking, insurance and financial planning, and individual tax preparation. After his experiences in Finance he joined the Fort Lauderdale Police Department.

Dr. Salters has had a rewarding career with the Fort Lauderdale Police Department. He has worked in the following units as an officer: Patrol, Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E), and the Bicycle Patrol. As a Sergeant Dr. Salters worked in patrol, and served in the Office of Internal Affairs.

Upon being promoted to the rank of Captain, Dr. Salters commanded a patrol district and shift prior to being assigned to the Administrative Services Division (ASD). In ASD he was responsible for the following areas of the police department: Training, Budget/Finance, Payroll, Background Investigations, and the Alarm Unit. His last assignment as a Captain was as an Executive officer to a Major in patrol. As a Major he served as a Patrol District Commander prior to his current assignment as the Investigations Bureau Major.

Dr. Salters has completed the following training courses: The Center for Advanced Criminal Justice Studies, Executive Leadership Program; the Police Executive Research Forum’s - The Senior Management Institute for Police, Session 34; and the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s - National Academy, session 240;

He earned his Master’s degree in Public Administration from Florida Atlantic University and his Doctorate degree in Adult Education/Human Resource Development from Florida International University.


His life motto is “If I can help somebody as I pass along the way...my living will not be in vain.” Dr. MLK, Jr.
The Lorraine R. Gay Award for Excellence in Research and Scholarship

The purpose of the award is to acknowledge, in the name of L. R. Gay, outstanding research scholarship on the part of students and their supporting faculty presented at the Annual South Florida Education Research Conference.

L. R. (Lorrie) Gay, the founding professor of educational research for the FIU College of Education, was dedicated to students, to the rigorous pursuit of educational excellence and to research scholarship. She chaired the first doctoral dissertation awarded in the College of Education. She published textbooks in educational research, tests and measurement, and educational psychology. Her pen name was L.R. rather than Lorrie because the publisher felt a female author would not be as accepted as a male, so initials were used. The educational research text became the best-selling book of its kind and her publisher estimates that 1 out of every 2 students in the field has used this text.

The recipients of this award walk in the shadow of someone who cared for every student, and fought to make this course in educational research the best of its kind because she knew this was the way to best serve students. If you have taken the course you know what it requires and as you realize the skills you have attained through her efforts, you appreciate her efforts to this day, years after her passing.

It is anticipated that one award will be presented annually to the student whose research best exemplifies Lorrie’s high standards. In the case of multiple authors for the same paper, multiple awards will be bestowed.

The awards are determined based upon papers submitted for presentation at the South Florida Education Research Conference. Award decisions are determined by the judgment of the faculty members serving as the L. R. Gay Award Sub-Committee.

L. R. Gay Award Recipients

2014  Althoff, J.  Non-verbal Aptitude and Academic Achievement at a Diverse Parochial Secondary School-A Correlational Study
2013  Barsony, I.  Perceptions of French and Creole Among First-Generation Adult Haitian English Language Learners
2012  Annika L. R. Labadie, Ilisa J. Lieberman, Kurt Vargo, and Olga Flamion, The Use of Literature to Combat Bullying
2011  Maria S. Plakhotnik, A Geocentric Organizational Culture of a Global Corporation: A Phenomenological Exploration of Employees’ Experiences
2010  Martin J. Wasserberg, “I’m Trying To Bring the Scores of My School Up, Man!” Standardized Testing, Stereotypes, and High-Performing African American Elementary School Students
2009  Debra Mayes Pane, Reducing the Discipline Gap Among African American Students: Learning in Classroom Communities of Practice
2008  Antonio Delgado, Speaking Up: A Phenomenological Study of Student Perceptions of Being Silenced in their Higher Education Classrooms
2008  Tekla Nicholas and LéTania Severe, School Segregation, Educational Disparities, and Impacts on Haitian Youth in South Florida
2005  Victoria A. Giordano, A Professional Development Model to Promote Internet Integration into P-12 Teaching Practices
2004  Kandell Malocsay, *The Effects of Cultural Distance on Student Socialization and Departure Decisions*
2003  Sarah M. Nielsen, *High Stakes and No Takers: The Impact of Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) Writing on Students' and Teachers' Perceptions of Writing*
2002  Loraine Wasserman, *The Effects of a Family-based Educational Intervention on the Prevention of Lead Poisoning in Children*
Barnes & Noble Best Faculty-Student Paper Award

The purpose of the award is to acknowledge, in the name of Barnes and Noble, outstanding scholarship on a paper written by a faculty-student(s) team and presented at the Annual South Florida Education Research Conference.

It is anticipated that one award will be presented annually to a faculty-student team. In the case of multiple authors for the same paper, multiple awards will be bestowed.

The awards are determined based upon papers submitted for presentation at the South Florida Education Research Conference. Award decisions are determined by a panel of faculty and students serving as the Barnes & Noble Award Sub-Committee.

Barnes & Noble Award Recipients

2014  Guise, A. & Valle-Riestra, D., Supporting Students with Intellectual Disabilities in Higher Education through Mentoring

2013  Chen, Z. and Bleiker, C. Effects of Number-Way Curriculum on Pre-Schoolers’ Mathematical Learning for Low Socioeconomic Status Children

2012  Esther Fineus and Maria Lorelei Fernandez, An Investigation of Participants’ Perspectives About a Learning Assistant Program and Their Thinking about Becoming a Mathematics Teacher

2010  Maria I. Bendixen and Martha Pelaez, Effects of Contingent Maternal Imitation vs. Contingent Motherese Speech on Infant Canonical Babbling
The Keiser University Graduate School Poster Presentation Award

The purpose of this award is to acknowledge, in the name of Keiser University, outstanding scholarship on a poster created by a student and presented at the Annual South Florida Education Research Conference.

It is anticipated that one award will be presented annually to a student presenter who, based upon the quality of his or her poster and presentation as a whole, meets all specified award criteria as determined by the South Florida Education Research Conference award committee.

Criteria for this award include, but are not limited to, organization, visual appeal, definition and clarity of the problem, clarity of research methods, interpretation and discussion of the results, and overall verbal presentation of the poster.

2014  Walters, P. The Effects of Intensive Interactive Writing Instruction and Self-Monitoring Skills on Students’ Ability to Write Complete Sentences Independently

2013  Spencer, T. Developing Science Inquiry Skills in Developmentally Delayed Pre-Kindergarten Students Through Cooperative Learning
Moderators and Volunteers

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South Florida Education Research Conference Peer-Reviewed Papers
A Historical Overview of the Challenges for African Americans K12 through College Education in America

Arthur C. Evans III
Keiser University, USA

Abstract: The early American education system developed around the segregation of White and African American students. These differences in learning environment have led to inferior education for African Americans and can be linked to challenges still facing minorities in the current American education system.

In America’s early education system, African American students had many difficulties in integrating, assimilating, and successfully matriculating in the classroom. There has been a long progression in the way that African Americans have been viewed, first as private property, then as “less than” citizens, and later as citizens with a subset of inferior rights in segregated environments (Dred Scott v. Sandford, 1856). Segregation was an immediate, major obstacle that African Americans students faced when they entered the early schoolhouses. The purpose of separating African American and White students was justified by some because it provided safety for African American students and also offered an easier learning environment (Coats, 2010). However, having the two learning environments actually fueled the creation of a superior and inferior education platform where White students received educational resources and teaching that was much better than that provided to the African American students.

Though segregation was eventually done away with, schools had to face the inequalities in the curricula concerning the teaching and learning formats for the African American and White students. With the focus of early curricula primarily centered on one perspective of history, educators were tasked with incorporating more diversity into the curricula and education pedagogy in the classroom. As many ethnic groups and multicultural demographics in urban areas increased, the above-mentioned challenges needed closer attention.

In this paper, an investigation into some of the historical challenges faced by African American students in the American education system will be discussed. Other peer reviewed papers will be sourced to examine some of the measures used to integrate African American students into the American education system. There will also be a look into how African American students have been admitted into the higher education system. The topic of affirmative action will be investigated in relationship to equality for admission of African American students. Finally, some modern day challenges will be highlighted with regards to diversity and the current need for a multicultural approach to education.

Early Education for African American Children

African American students did not receive an organized and formal means of public education until after the Civil War (Coats, 2010). One of the earliest main sources made available for African Americans to receive training and education is the Freedman’s Bureau, which provided basic training for ex-slaves during the Reconstruction period. However, the
training received was mostly catered toward adults in getting employment and the establishment of a Black and White work structure (Carson, Lapsansky, Werner, & Nash, 2010). Though it served an important purpose, this organization did not provide for the education needs of the African American children. As other social and education programs were created, African Americans began taking advantage of the free public schooling that was made available. But in the South where more than 90% of African Americans lived, most of the schools created were initially segregated (Coats, 2010). There were some, both Black and White, who believed that this arrangement was effective and that it would allow the curricula to support the education needs of each group directly (Lewis, 2009; Washington, 1995). For example, one of the biggest debates of the time was between W. E. B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington, which centered on the issue of segregation and its place in the Black and White society that had begun to exist (Lewis, 2009; Washington, 1995). However, segregation would eventually be dismantled, and the next challenge of integration would be confronted by America’s education system.

Another one of the major problems faced early on by the segregated education system was the imbalances in resources and funding for each environment. There was underlying disagreement with the support of formal education for African American children, and whether there should be equal support for the education of Black children as White children. Another perspective of the strong sentiment against equality in education was that as more and more rights and privileges were extended to African Americans, this could erode the current social fabric, especially in the South (Diorio, 2008). With this attitude, funding and support were held back for educating Black students in an effort to prevent advanced development of the race beyond a certain social level and make sure that African Americans would remain behind in skills needed for them to advance far beyond their White counterparts (Diorio, 2008). Efforts are still ongoing to create equal and fair education systems for African American students despite the obstacles that existed (Lewis, 2009; Virginia Historical Society, 2004).

Integration of African American Students into Schools

When the effectiveness and necessity of segregation began to be questioned, legal proceedings began to arise that challenged its support and its legitimacy within the society. The verdict from Brown vs. the Board of Education U.S. Supreme Court case offered no federal support for maintaining segregated education environments (Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, 1954; History of Brown v. Board of Education, n.d.). At this point, civil rights organizations such as the NAACP looked for methods to challenge the segregated school systems in the South. One of the first such attempts was through the legal case of Ruby Bridges-Hall, which would help lay precedence for support of desegregation in African American communities (Bridges-Hall, 2000). Ruby Bridges-Hall was the first African American student to integrate into an elementary school in the South. Her experience would later open future opportunities for African American students and she later reflected in her experience as follows:

Though I did not know it then, nor would I come to realize it for many years, what transpired in the fall of 1960 in New Orleans would forever change my life and help shape a nation. When I think back on that time and all that has occurred since. I realize a lot has changed. I also know there is much more to be done. That fateful walk to school began a journey, and we all must work together to continue moving forward. (Bridges, 2013, para. 1)
Ruby Bridges’ struggle helped inspire others to challenge the “separate but equal” attitude that had proliferated in the South (History of Brown v. Board of Education, n.d.; Plessy v. Ferguson, 1896). Another remarkable integration that happened in the South took place in Little Rock, AR, where in 1957, nine African American students were the first to enter the all White high school. Federal support was shown for the integration, with the President sending National Guard troops to the school to provide the safe entry of the students into the school despite the disapproval of the state and local government leaders. The other integration that set precedence for de-segregation was the entrance of Vivian Malone and James Hood into the University of Alabama, despite the strong objection and resistance from state leadership (Dunn, 2008; Smith, 2000). However, these de-segregation actions helped back that legal ruling made in the court decision for Brown v. Board of Education from the primary school level all the way to the post-secondary education level. They also helped to unite the efforts to disassemble segregation.

Encouraging African American families to challenge the segregated school environments around them was a dangerous undertaking and proved harmful to those who advocated for this type of change in the South. Nevertheless, after the school environments were desegregated, the challenge of learning and successful matriculation of African American students moved to the forefront. African American students entering these environments found out that there were many challenges in thriving in the new classroom environments, where they were the minority. Cultural values and multicultural teaching experience should have been considered along with integration of African American students into the existing White education environment (Kelly, 2010). The entrance of African American students into this education environment not only presented challenges for African American students, but also presented challenges for their White teachers, who had very little or no experience with non-White students at the time. Such experiences in teaching students from diverse backgrounds can directly affect the pedagogical approaches that teachers take in their delivery of curriculum (Coats, 2010; Grant, 1991). This challenge of multicultural education to support the diversity needs of the classroom environment of the time presented past and current obstacles.

Other Challenges for African American Students and America’s Early Education System

African American students had many challenges that were not easily discoverable early on in their entrance into predominately-White schools. Many challenges existed in and out of the classroom and support for education in the homes of many African American children was a struggle. Many of the early African American beliefs about the value of education were influenced by the current plight of the majority of African American families. Most African Americans in the South supported themselves with work skills that they had learned before Emancipation. In addition, many years after slavery had ended, the importance of a formal education was not realized as offering much opportunity beyond what was seen as socially acceptable for African Americans to do at the time. The new educational opportunity for some was not seen as any advantage to helping the situation of African Americans. The legally backed Jim Crow system of the Southern states had legal and policy components that helped create setbacks for African Americans and presented challenges in convincing African Americans of the need for education (Kelly, 2010).
Equal Opportunity in Higher Education for African Americans

After the successful attempts to open admission of African Americans into public higher education institutions, African Americans began to enter these institutions at increased rates, but more work was needed to support equality in the enrollment practices of higher education institutions. The establishment of the Committee on Equal Opportunity Employment by President John F. Kennedy made it illegal to discriminate based on race (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 1961). Executive Order 10925 provided the foundation for the balancing of admission practices of post-secondary institutions and helped to create what has become known as affirmative action.

Current Challenges for Diversity and the Need for Affirmative Action

There have been challenges of affirmation action and whether it still has a place in education (American Civil Liberties Union, 2010). One of the most recent challenges to the need for affirmative action was in the case of Grutter v. Bollinger, which challenged the use of race for admission into the University of Michigan’s School of Law (Grutter v. Bollinger 2003). The U.S. Supreme Court upheld the use of affirmative action in this case to help insure diversity. However, future challenges to this ruling, for example in Fisher v. University of Texas at Austin, has called into question whether certain scenarios exist where a school’s affirmative action policies are detrimental to the balance in the admission practices of a school (Fisher v. University of Texas at Austin, 2013). Despite challenges to its necessity, there is still a strong belief that such policies like affirmative action are essential to make sure balances remain in place and that these policies can support improvements in the lower minority enrollment rates at higher education institutions.

Conclusion

The laws and policies that have been created to address discrimination and equal rights in society have provided a level playing field for African Americans in education. However, more work is needed to help support the multicultural education needs of America’s education system, not just for African Americans any longer, but for other cultures and ethnic groups that have become large in number. Many of the policies that have been created have opened opportunities for African American students to be able to have access to better education and have made school more accessible. One misconception about policies such as affirmative action is that these policies only help African Americans and other minorities. These policies actually help make sure diversity and multicultural perspectives are integrated into our social structure as a country. The impact of such policies may not be seen for some time, but in the long term, it will help intertwine the multicultural point of view into future populations and help support future growth. The struggles to include multicultural principles in America’s education system still exist, but there are many challenges also with the inclusion of many other ethnic groups into the curricula and pedagogical focus of America’s schools.
References


On the Possible Pedagogy to Teach English for Chinese Undergraduate Non-English Majors

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Abstract: This paper proposes a new model for teaching English to Chinese undergraduate students that considers language differences and Chinese language characteristics. Reforms in English education, issues with curriculum requirements, English teachers’ eligibility, students’ learning patterns and learning ability, and influences on second language acquisition are also discussed.

With the trend of globalization, English education, especially Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), has been developed significantly in China. More and more Chinese learn English for a variety of purposes. Among these learners, the non-English major undergraduates, a dominant percentage of the overall population of Chinese college students, are of more interest in English teaching and learning research. As a result of increasing college enrollment in China, more and more effort is devoted to TEFL for non-English major undergraduates. Meanwhile, many problems arise from these TEFL education activities.

Traditional TEFL teaching in China is examination-oriented (He & Li, 2009). That being said, students’ proficiency in English is evaluated by scores on English language examinations. The emphasis on these examinations dismisses the importance of the English language applied in a communication context. Additionally, Chinese English learners’ language background is not considered in second language acquisition.

This paper presents the current problems of English education in China, and then proposes its possible improvement in pedagogy for Chinese undergraduate non-English majors (CUNEM). It starts with literature on (a) the traditional English language teaching system for CUNEM, and then it reviews the literature in the following aspects: (b) reforms in English language teaching (ELT) for CUNEM; (c) the inapplicability of new college English curriculum requirements in the Chinese ELT context; (d) Chinese English teachers’ eligibility and willingness in standard English teaching; (e) Chinese students’ learning patterns and learning abilities; and (f) the primary language’s influences on second language acquisition. Finally, it reviews a proposed teaching model in Teaching English for Chinese English learners.

Traditional English Language Teaching System for Chinese Undergraduate Non-English Majors

According to the Chinese English curriculum for non-English majors, College English is a mandatory course. To obtain a Bachelor’s degree authorized by Chinese Ministry of Education (MOE), a student is required to take 12 semester hours of College English, which are four three-
credit courses (He & Li, 2009). Although English courses for CUNEM are time-consuming, many students “are still deaf and dumb in English” (Ashmore, 2003, p.15, as cited in Song, 2009, p. 18). Song (2009) concluded that this is a consequence of the test-oriented and grammar-based English courses. Guo and Li (2004) stated that the College English curriculum for CUNEM emphasizes reading, writing and translating, ignoring students’ English communicative competence in listening and speaking.

Referring to the 1985, 1986 and 1999 curricula, Lu (2007) concluded that general English incompetence amongst Chinese undergraduate students is caused by the test-oriented nature of the traditional ELT pattern for non-English majors. The passing rate of Chinese English Test (CET) is considered as the top priority by Chinese universities (Chen & Zhang, 1998). Lu (2007) pointed out that non-English majors are required to pass two different sections of the CET before getting a degree. This impedes their linguistic competence in English learning (Chen & Zhang, 1998). Chen and Zhang (1998) argued that the content of CET was not well balanced between objective and subjective items and did not provide a valid overall evaluation of the students’ proficiency in English, since test items mainly “cover from multiple-choice questions rather than testing the students’ skills in expressing themselves in correct spelling, idiomatic sentences, coherent paragraphs, and meaningful essays” (p. 15).

Reforms in ELT for Non-English Majors in China

As Hu (2004) stated, after the Chinese Ministry of Education (MOE) recognized the limitations of traditional ELT methodology in improving the students’ overall English competence, efforts to raise the quality of ELT through the teaching reforms of College English had been developed. Guo and Li (2004) stated that this reform focused on improving the teaching model from test-oriented and grammar-based English courses to learner-centered, communicative and interactive courses. A multitude of Western English pedagogies were introduced. In 2004, the Chinese MOE launched the new College English Curriculum requirement on a trial basis (Hu, 2004). This standard required the curriculum for Chinese college non-English majors to incorporate learner-centered theory, communicative language teaching approach (CLT), intercultural classrooms, and collaborative group learning (Guo & Li, 2009; Song, 2009). Guo and Li (2004) concluded these standards emphasized students’ communicative competence, especially their ability in listening and speaking. Hu (2004) argued that Western pedagogical concepts are communication-oriented.

The Inapplicability of New College English Curriculum Requirements in Chinese ELT Context

Many studies posited that the national syllabus implemented by Chinese MOE (2004) demanded a Standard English teaching model (Guo & Li, 2004; Hu, 2002; Lu, 2007). The Standard English model required to create a native English environment for CUNEM (Lu, 2007). However, the cultural and contextual difference in China hindered the implementation of this model. For example, Chinese students learning English may have fewer opportunities to communicate with native English speakers in China. Such a limitation impedes their exposure to the native English speaking context.

Hu (2002) argued that this model did not consider different socio-cultural contexts. The Western English pedagogy should tailor to the specific context of English teaching and learning.
in China (Guo & Li, 2004). The model was insufficient to satisfy the reality of Chinese ELT practice, because it did not consider teachers’ and learners’ cultural background (Lu, 2007).

**Chinese English Teachers’ Eligibility and Willingness in Standard English Teaching**

One problem concerns Chinese English teachers’ eligibility in standard English teaching and their willingness to follow the standards (Lu, 2007). The philosophy of Western English pedagogy is a new concept to most Chinese college English teachers (Hu, 2002). Although Chinese MOE attempts to promote Chinese College English reforms by introducing new syllabi, textbooks and competence-oriented texts (Hu, 2002), these teachers have no clear understanding about how to implement them into real teaching practice. Du (2002) stated that the majority of these teachers only have the experience of learning and teaching English in China. According to Niu and Martin (2003), a limited number of competent teachers of college English have the ability to use the language in the cultural context. Therefore, as Hu (2004) demonstrated, the low teaching quality of Chinese college EFL teachers led to the ineffectiveness of the ELT reforms. Moreover, Guo and Li (2004) pointed out that many EFL teachers are reluctant to accept the new Standard English teaching model enforced by Chinese MOE, as they consider the grammar-translation model and test-oriented model in Chinese ELT as the most effective and practical. Niu and Martin (2003) stated that Chinese College EFL teachers are inclined to teach students in dissecting the grammatical rules, analyzing English writings, reading extensively, and memorizing vocabulary, while they neglect the pragmatic use of English language in class. In addition, many Chinese College English teachers’ pronunciation is not standard; therefore, it is difficult for them to implement the Standard English model into teaching class. They lack pedagogical fundamentals, professional competence in the subject, and the knowledge about the recent developments in foreign language education, both domestically and internationally. According to Song (2009), the traditional teaching principle in China is one of the most important constraints in the adoption of Western English pedagogy, since most teachers prefer to be a class authority rather than a class facilitator (Song 2009). Without immersion in or exposure of native ESL culture and language environment, it is difficult for teachers to implement Western pedagogy (Niu & Martin, 2003).

**Chinese Students’ Learning Patterns and Learning Abilities**

Another problem concerns Chinese students’ English learning abilities and learning patterns in Chinese education and culture context. Lu (2007) posited that “the alien culture in the original version of English materials hinders the students’ reading comprehension and increases their confusion about the practical use of linguistic rules” (p. 10). Chinese students tend to be quite passive learners influenced by didactic, product-oriented and teacher-centered ELT in Chinese universities, in contrast to Western approaches to language teaching, which emphasize individual orientations, personal needs, verbal interaction, and self-expression (Hu, 2002). Rao (1996) stated that “the Chinese tend to associate games and communicative activities in class with entertainment exclusively and are skeptical of their use as learning tools” (p. 467). Guo and Li (2004) concluded that the overuse of communicative language teaching in China may achieve little success for Chinese undergraduate non-English majors.

**The Primary Language’s Influences on Second language Acquisition**

At present, more and more Chinese learn English. However, in the English learning
process, it is inevitable that Chinese-English usage in speaking and writing often prevents Chinese language learners from expressing their intended meaning concisely. The way that a Chinese learner speaks and writes in English is usually in a typical Chinese English pattern—namely, English words spoken and written in Chinese syntax (Fu, 2003). A reason for this is that knowledge of language learners’ first language plays an important role in the process of acquiring and learning a second language. Corson (1999) also suggested that early brain development of young children is shaped by the signs and symbols involved in first language acquisition. Cummins (1996) maintained that we learn “by integrating new input into our existing cognitive structure or schemata” (p. 85). Consequently, a student’s prior experience is the foundation for acquiring and interpreting new knowledge. In a study of second language acquisition, Hakuta, Balystok, and Wiley (2003) concluded that in addition to age and socioeconomic factors, the amount of formal education in learners’ mother tongue is an important predictor in how well they master English.

**A Proposed Teaching Model in Teaching English for Chinese English Learners**

In order to help non-English major Chinese students cope with the problems mentioned above, college EFL teachers in China need to understand the causes of those frequently made “errors” in Chinese students’ English writing and speaking. Based on this principle, Lu (2007) proposed the China English (CE) teaching model in Chinese ELT. China English (also called Chinglish) has become a dominating mixed language among most Chinese English learners. Li (1993) defined Chinese English as “a variety with normative English as its core, but with Chinese characteristics at the levels of lexis, syntax and discourse” (p. 19). He further explained that Chinese English addresses issues regarding Chinese culture by means of “translation, borrowing, and semantic transfer” (Li, 1993, p. 19).

Lu (2007) argued that Chinese students learn English with a symbolic order encoded in Chinese. From his perspective, cognitive differentiation occurs in the process of “decoding the message encoded in the English language with a Chinese signifying system (Lu, 2007, p. 8). The CE model not only retains the integrity of Standard English, but also caters to the special Chinese cultural context.

Much of the literature supports the idea that a teaching model must be designed to cultivate students’ comparative ability within two languages and help students make constructive use of their local culture (Fu, 2003; Goldenberg, 2010; Helman, 2009, Lu, 2007). If teachers incorporate their primary language in their language teaching, Chinese learners could be aware of the contrast between the two languages in context (Fu, 2003). Fu (2003) argued that EFL teachers should use the primary language as a bridge or scaffold to learn the content in English.

By explaining the logic behind the structure of the two languages, students could have a better understanding of English and then improve their speaking and writing in Standard English. Helman (2009) suggested that English teachers should make use of the primary language for clarification and explanation, introduce new concepts in the primary language prior to the lesson in English, review the new content again in the primary language, and then focus on the similarities/differences between the two languages. In addition, English teachers should have an understanding of the background knowledge behind the English language, and EFL learners’ current levels of oral and written English (Dutro & Helman, 2009). This requires that English
teachers must identify students’ language skills and then structure appropriate learning opportunities through an instructional blueprint.

**Implications**

As a result of language difference between Chinese and English as well as the cultural effect of learning a second language, a more practical improvement of the TEFL pedagogy is to emphasize the two language comparison during the learning process. Specifically, the following approaches could be used to facilitate English learners’ language learning: (a) consider the Chinese ELT context for Chinese college non-English majors; (b) consider the influences of second language acquisition from the primary language and the culture, and apply contrastive linguistics in the teaching practice to give students a better understanding of the differences between the source language and the target language; (c) activate students’ language competence; and (d) use cross-cultural communication skills in language teaching to help students overcome barriers in language learning.

In sum, it is essential to build a systematic EFL pedagogy focusing on the unique situation of Chinese college non-English major ELLs in a non-native English speaking environment. The curriculum and instruction in China should help students learn the difference between Chinese and English by examining Chinese CUNEM’s colloquial and written English using typical Chinese language characteristics. Most importantly, it should be designed for the purpose of assisting Chinese English language learners to overcome the influences from their native languages.

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A Study of the Relational Component in an Academic Advisor Professional Development Program

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Abstract: The purpose of the study was to investigate the significance of the relational component of academic advisor training and development in the learning opportunities of the professional development program and the advisors’ evaluation score.

In 2013, a public research university in the southeastern United States implemented a professional development program (PDP) for its professional academic advisors to increase learning opportunities, and consequently, the knowledge base of the advisors. The program was built upon the best practices established by the Council for Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS, 2012) and the National Academic Advising Association’s (NACADA) Statement of Core Values of Academic Advising (NACADA, 2005). At the core of the program are an organized institutional support for advisor training and a requirement for each advisor to meet annual professional development goals in a form of Professional Development Units (PDUs). Advisors attend learning opportunities for which they receive PDUs and then report and reflect upon them through a web-based portfolio, and annually, the PDP leadership (one of their two work supervisors) assesses each advisor’s performance.

In one of the most cited models in the field of academic advising, there are three components of academic advisor training and development: informational, relational, and conceptual (Habley, 1987). Of the three, the informational component is stressed too heavily in advising training and development while the other two are neglected (Habley & Morales, 1998). Yet, the relational component “is perhaps the most essential…since it seeks to address the actual process by which the information to a student is delivered” (Ford, 2007, para. 9). The purpose of the study was to investigate the relationship between the relational component of academic advisor training and development (Habley, 1987) in the learning opportunities of the program and the advisors’ evaluation score. The research question for this study was: Do advisors with higher PDUs in the relational component achieve higher evaluation scores? The following research hypothesis was suggested: The number of PDUs reflecting relational content that an advisor completes has a statistically significant positive correlation with the advisor performance evaluation.

The extent to which the completion of the learning opportunities has an effect on the advisor performance evaluation and, subsequently, on field performance is unclear. Preliminary data analysis of the learning opportunities that advisors completed during the first year of the program will offer information on (a) quantity of the learning opportunities, and (b) quality of content completed by advisors.
Review of Literature

The relevant literature falls into two areas: (a) Habley’s (1987) framework of advising in training and development, and (b) supportive leadership and innovation policy in development of professional advisors.

Habley’s Framework

First, the conceptual focuses on students and student body, the philosophy of advising, and on the context of the school. The conceptual component is comprised of (a) a student’s perspective and (b) a role of advising in an institution. A competent advisor understands the identity of an average college student and the typology of a student attending to a particular institution. Furthermore, the advisor must thoroughly comprehend the institution’s expectations of academic advising, including the roles and responsibilities of the advisor and the advisee (Higginson, 2000).

Second, the informational dimension concentrates on proper laws, policies, procedures, resources, and departmental programs (Brown, 2008). Advisors must comprehend majors and programs to accurately advise students through the completion of their degrees (Nutt, 2003). The four elements of the knowledge component are (a) internal environment, (b) external environment, (c) student needs, and (d) advisor self-knowledge (Higginson, 2000). Accuracy is especially important because the advisor represents the university (Ford, 2007).

Third, the relational dimension focuses on interpersonal and communication skills for effective relationships with students. It consists of rapport building, reciprocal communication, solution-focused problem solving, and effective questioning techniques (McClellan, 2007). Without an emphasis on the relationship, advising becomes nothing more than the one-dimensional dissemination of information. Students accept the advice of trustworthy advisors who sincerely and genuinely care about the students’ needs and progress (Brown, 2008).

An advisor’s training should consist of each of the three dimensions: “without understanding (conceptual elements), there is no context for the delivery of services. Without information, there is no substance to advising. And, without personal skills (relational), the quality of the advisee-advisor relationship is left to chance” (Habley, 1995, p. 76). Unfortunately, very little training is given in relational area (Habley, 2004).

Leadership Support and Supportive Innovation Policy

Despite NACADA’s focused efforts for over four decades, academic advising is an emerging profession without a nationally-recognized certification process. Utah Valley University initiated a multi-step advisor certification program in 2007 to increase advisor development (McClellan, Moser, & Waterreus, 2008). Likewise, the professional development program under study was established to support advisors’ growth as practicing professionals, as key decision-makers recognize the precondition of leadership and organizational support in shaping the advisors.
The perception of organizational and supervisory support in learning acquisition, innovative behaviors, and updating activities is crucial in the development of desirable advisors performance in an environment with revised expectations (Potosky, 2010). Self-efficacy or one’s belief in the ability to perform a task (Brown & Warren, 2009) and self-rated job performance increased with perceptions of supervisory support and innovation policy (Potosky, 2010). Furthermore, an innovative and supportive organizational culture is not sufficient but must be accompanied by an innovative and supportive subculture, which is linked to motivation to transfer learning (Egan, 2008). Hence, a supportive and innovative leadership alone is insufficient; the leaders and advisors of distinctive colleges must genuinely echo the philosophy of the program and its performance expectations to gain successful results.

The performance expectations of PDP are specific and rigorous. Numerous goal-setting studies have found that specific and demanding goals increase job performance as opposed to more obscure goals, such as Do Your Best (Brown & Warren, 2009). PDP’s performance measurement rubric (see Table 1) incorporates specific and demanding goals for its advisors, and PDP offers organizational and leadership support for advisors to attain the goals. With specific and demanding goals combined with leadership and organizational support, PDP leadership expects to guide its advisors to achieve higher levels of professional development, and subsequently, higher levels of advisor performance correlating with students’ increased success.

Method

The program under study was established in 2013. The research was based on the scores given to 57 professional academic advisors on their performance in the program after the first year of participation. It evaluated the content of the PDUs completed by the advisors and the extent to which the completed PDUs correlated with the PDP leadership’s evaluation of the advisors. The authors reviewed the content of each learning opportunity completed by the advisors in the PDP and coded them as (a) relational, (b) informational, (c) conceptual, and (d) other categories, and the content was analyzed with the use of a multiple linear regression analysis in SPSS. The first three sub-groups reflect Habley’s (1987) three primary dimensions of advising, and the “other” group encompasses activities that did not belong to Habley’s three dimensions.

The participants of the professional development program were 57 full-time professional advisors advising undergraduate students at a public research university in the southeastern United States; 70.2% were female (n = 40) and 29.8% were male (n = 17). The advisors represented all colleges (e.g., College of Arts and Sciences) at the university. The director of the program oversees their professional development. As part of the professional development program, these advisors earn professional development units (PDUs) through learning opportunities in one of four categories: (a) attendance; (b) presentation; (c) service; and (d) independent study, research, and scholarly activity. Some of these opportunities are required for all advisors (e.g., university-wide advisor meetings), and other opportunities advisors select to reach their individual professional development goals. The advisors input the learning opportunities into an electronic portfolio, which is monitored by the director for appropriateness. The expectation is that they then reflect upon the ways in which the learning opportunities relate to their professional development goals and the practice and professionalization of advising. The office provided the authors with a document listing the learning opportunities that advisors
recorded in their portfolios. The advisors’ names were redacted and replaced with an arbitrary numerical code.

Because the goal of this research was to investigate the significance of the relational component of advisor training and development (Habley, 1987) in the learning opportunities of the PDP and the advisors’ PDP evaluation score, each learning opportunity was newly categorized according to Habley’s (1987) framework. Thus, the authors categorized each learning opportunity as (a) relational, (b) informational, (c) conceptual, or (d) other. Whereas the original categorization of activities was by format and type, the new categorization of the learning opportunities was based on a qualitative measure of the content of the activity (see Table 2). For example, a session focused on procedures and policies would have been categorized as “informational,” a session based on improving interpersonal skills would be marked “relational,” and a webinar about a cohort of students would be “conceptual.” The learning opportunities that could not be placed into one of the three categories, such as attending a conference where a number of sessions would vary based on content, were categorized as “other.”

Before the categorization process, the authors met with the program director to clarify the meaning of each of the categories and the method of the categorization process. The authors analyzed any learning opportunity that lacked clear identity to ensure consistency and created a master key detailing each learning opportunity, the number of PDUs, and the process of categorizing the learning opportunity. Rules were developed for certain types of activities: all publications (authored by the advisor), presentations (given by the advisor), and service (performed by the advisor) were categorized as “other” because they are hands-on activities where learning does not fit neatly into “informational,” “conceptual,” or “relational” vectors. Additionally, all reading activities were categorized as “conceptual,” except where there was a strong relational or informational component (e.g., “improving your interpersonal skills,” “Guidelines for working with international students”).

In order to categorize the learning opportunities, the authors relied upon two resources. First, any workshop that was offered appeared on a historical list containing information on the session, the date it was held, and the number of PDUs awarded for the session. Second, the program director was consulted for expert judgment in content categorization to (a) verify all categorization decisions, (b) locate more information about the activity when there was not enough information available, and (c) to ensure inter-coder agreement (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012). Once all learning opportunities were coded, the totals were calculated for each advisor.

Results

A preliminary analysis was conducted in SPSS to determine the relationships among independent variables (relational, informational, conceptual, and other). Analysis of variance (ANOVA) resulted in the following means (M) and standard deviations (SD): Other had the highest mean for PDUs (M = 42.42, SD = 32.842), conceptual the second highest mean for PDUs (M = 34.86, SD = 15.618), informational had the third highest mean for PDUs (M = 33.28, SD = 18.947), and relational had the lowest mean for PDUs (M = 7.91, SD = 8.131) (see Table 3). Levene’s Test of Homoscedasticity shows significant results (Levene’s Statistics = 16.383, p < .05). Some study findings advocate for a discontinuation of preliminary tests of
equality of variances due to error rates (Zimmerman, 2004). Therefore, the ANOVA results are interpreted, although with caution. The ANOVA yielded to significant results $F(3,224) = 30.163$, $p < .05$ suggesting that there is significant difference among the four categories. Tukey’s post hoc analysis was conducted, and it revealed two subsets. The first subset consisted of relational category ($M = 7.51$), and the second subset consisted of informational ($M = 33.28$), conceptual ($M = 34.86$), and other ($M = 42.42$) categories. The relational category displays a significantly lower mean for PDUs in comparison to informational, conceptual and other categories.

To investigate a relationship between evaluation scores given to advisors and each new category, a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted utilizing SPSS. The correlation table using Pearson Correlation yielded significant correlation between dependent variable PDP score and independent variables informational ($r = .429$, $p < .05$), conceptual ($r = .321$, $p < .05$), and other ($r = .619$, $p < .05$) PDUs. Relational PDUs proved to be insignificant ($p > .05$) (Table 4).

The linear regression model resulted in significant increase in $R^2$ for the model ($\Delta R^2 = .741$, $F[4, 52] = 37.228$, $p < .05$) indicating that 74.1% of the variance of the four PDU categories of relational, informational, conceptual, and other count toward the overall PDP Score (Table 5). The coefficients table shows that informational category significantly contributes to PDP Score ($\beta = .016$, $t = 6.722$, $p < .05$), indicating that each unit of informational PDUs results in .016 units increase in PDP score; conceptual category significantly contributes to PDP Score ($\beta = .008$, $t = 2.781$, $p < .05$), indicating that each unit of conceptual PDUs results in .008 units increase in PDP score; and other category significantly contributes to PDP Score ($\beta = .014$, $t = 10.013$, $p < .05$), indicating that each unit of other PDUs results in .014 units increase in PDP score. The relational category does not have a significant contribution to the PDP Score ($p > .05$).

The tolerance of (a) relational equals to .948, (b) informational equals to .910, (c) conceptual equals to .951, and (d) other equals to .948. Each tolerance value approaches the value of 1.000, and the individual categories can be presumed to be independent of each other with minimal occurrence of collinearity (see Table 6).

**Discussion and Limitations**

Our hypothesis was that the increased number of professional development units reflecting relational content that an advisor completed would have a statistically significant positive correlation with advisor performance evaluation. Although the original hypothesis was not confirmed by the findings, the findings substantiate the claim made in the previous body of literature that the relational component is underutilized in advising training and development (Ford, 2007; Habley & Morales, 1998). This study found that the learning opportunities categorized as relational constituted less than eight PDUs on average ($M = 7.91$) while the number of PDUs earned from the learning opportunities in the other three categories were higher and approximating each other (informational, $M = 33.28$; conceptual, $M = 34.86$; and other, $M = 42.42$). The results may have differed from our hypothesis due to either a small sample size (57 participants), a low frequency of relational PDUs accumulated by advisors, or a combination of the two. This may explain why the relational category did not yield significant findings in
comparison to the other three categories that had higher frequencies of PDUs and resulted in statistically significant findings. However, the findings add to the knowledge base of professional development of advisors.

Academic advising has been empirically linked to increased student retention (Astin, 1993; Pascarelli & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1987) and because sound interpersonal and communication skills are critical to effective advising (Hughey, 2011), it is essential that advisors receive proper training in relational competencies. Counseling theories regarding the counselor-client relationship (Sue & Sue, 1990) can be fruitfully applied to advising insofar as a healthy advisor-student relationship could produce significant results, such as increased student retention and graduation rates and improved student learning and satisfaction. The quality of relationships between advisors and students may correlate to students’ academic outcomes (Ford, 2007) in a similar manner that the quality of alliances between therapists and clients has been linked to therapeutic outcomes (Horvath, 2001). It is likely that advisees’ perception of positive rapport enhances trust and builds authentic advisor-student relationships. Empirical findings show that qualities, such as warmth, empathy, and congruence, improve a professional-client relationship (Lambert & Barley, 2001). Therefore, the advisees may be more receptive to advisors who care about the advisees’ needs. In addition, with proper training, advisors may recognize signs of distress and anxiety, which may increase retention. Although it is out of the purview of their professional practice to diagnose mental health and counsel these students, being able to make appropriate referrals is vital to the health and success of students.

The relational component was not found significant in this study, but future research should investigate the importance of relational competencies in advisor training and development. Although the current body of literature adequately demonstrates the importance of relational competencies to effective advising and its role in retention, many training programs undervalue or neglect the relational component altogether (Habley & Morales, 1998). Our findings revealed that advisors were relatively unengaged in relational learning opportunities, but the cause is unknown. Future researchers should seek to understand the reasons why advisors are not participating in relational activities and the ways in which relational learning opportunities could improve advisor performance. Some considerations include lack of learning opportunities representing the relational component, a disconnect in understanding the relevance of relational component to advising and building advisor-student relationships, lack of interest in the relational component, and lack of supervisor support in engaging in relational activities. Suggestions for future studies include a repeat of the current study with a larger sample size and researching programs that engage advisors in the relational component (adding frequency to the relational component). Suggestions for existing programs include developing clear and unambiguous expectations for professional development components, especially with relational concepts.

Conclusion

This study investigated the significance of the relational component of advisor training and development (Habley, 1987) in the learning opportunities of the program and the advisors’ evaluation score. Although the hypothesis was not confirmed by the findings, the results add to the knowledge base of professional development of professional advisors, signifying that the relational component is underutilized in advising training and development (Ford, 2007; Habley
In building advising training and development programs, there needs to be a concerted effort to add relational competencies to learning opportunities to practice skills and techniques. For example, through shadowing, the use of case studies, role playing, clinical observation, and cognitive apprenticeships (Duslak & McGill, 2014), advisors can have the opportunity to bolster their relational skills and competencies. Advising administrators should bear this in mind as they construct robust, comprehensive programs that give equal weight to informational, relational, and conceptual components.

References


Table 1
**PDP’s grading rubric of academic advisors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2-3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5-6</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PDU's</td>
<td>&lt; 100</td>
<td>100 &gt;</td>
<td>125 &gt;</td>
<td>150 &gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goals</td>
<td>NI</td>
<td>FME</td>
<td>CEE</td>
<td>FEE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>NI</td>
<td>FME</td>
<td>CEE</td>
<td>FEE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes</td>
<td>NI</td>
<td>FME</td>
<td>CEE</td>
<td>FEE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflections</td>
<td>NI</td>
<td>FME</td>
<td>CEE</td>
<td>FEE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: NI = Needs Improvement; FME = Fully Meets Expectations; CEE = Consistently Exceeds Expectations; FEE = Far Exceeds Expectations

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Representative example 1</th>
<th>Representative example 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relational</td>
<td>Students with emotional disabilities: Responding to advisors' questions</td>
<td>Helping underrepresented students succeed: How to influence student engagement, learning, persistence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informational</td>
<td>Excess Credit Surcharge Training</td>
<td>Innovative Educators webinar: developing an effective advising protocol for veterans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceptual</td>
<td>NACADA Webinar: Soldiers to Students: Academic Advising for Returning Veterans</td>
<td>Innovative Educators webinar: supporting academic and professional development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>State Conference: Florida association of international educators</td>
<td>Southern Association of Pre-law advisors conferences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3

**Means and Standard Deviations of four categories**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relational</td>
<td>7.51</td>
<td>8.131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informational</td>
<td>33.28</td>
<td>18.947</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceptual</td>
<td>34.86</td>
<td>15.618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>42.42</td>
<td>32.842</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4
### Pearson Correlation of PDP Score and PDU categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>r</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relational</td>
<td>.115</td>
<td>&gt; .05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informational</td>
<td>.429</td>
<td>&lt; .05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceptual</td>
<td>.321</td>
<td>&lt; .05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>.619</td>
<td>&lt; .05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 5

*Model Summary and ANOVA for PDP Scores and PDU Categories*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>ΔR²</th>
<th>df₁</th>
<th>df₂</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.741</td>
<td>.741</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>37.228</td>
<td>&lt; .05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 6

*Coefficients table*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>β</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Tolerance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>1.723</td>
<td>12.009</td>
<td>p &lt; .05</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relational</td>
<td>.009</td>
<td>1.693</td>
<td>p &gt; .05</td>
<td>.948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informational</td>
<td>.016</td>
<td>6.722</td>
<td>p &lt; .05</td>
<td>.910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceptual</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>2.781</td>
<td>p &lt; .05</td>
<td>.951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>.014</td>
<td>10.013</td>
<td>p &lt; .05</td>
<td>.948</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Theoretical Foundations of Developing Modeling Instruction Curriculum for College Biology Courses

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Abstract: Modeling instruction has been successfully implemented in high school science classes and in introductory physics courses at the university level. Noticing the gap, the author provides theoretical foundations to support the statement that modeling instruction curriculum should be developed for college biology courses.

It has been over a decade that college biology faculty, administrators, and students demanded for improving university biology education (Wood, 2009; Woodin, Smith, & Allen, 2009). Current studies on biology education pay too much attention merely on the improvement in students’ concept acquisition and/or academic grades. However, learning motivation (particular intrinsic motivation) is often overlooked, which plays a key role in initiating and retaining good learning habits (Palmer, 2005) and in promoting achievements. Intrinsic learning motivation, besides conceptual understanding, can be one of the characteristics that distinguish experts from novices. The intrinsic motivation in learning biology stimulates individuals to acquire more biological concepts and perform higher level of biological practices. Experts with high intrinsic motivation in learning biology tend to understand biology as connections of coherent concepts and seek solutions to emerging problems. If a student has no or not enough motivation to learn, he or she is not inspired to act (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Therefore, studies on motivation can contribute to the improvement of curriculum in university biology education. Significant research attention needs to be paid to examine students’ cognitive attitudes, motivation, expectations, views, and epistemological beliefs, all of which begin to link with concept learning and academic performance in introductory level biology courses. Taking the factors above into consideration, biology educators should use more effective instructional strategies to enhance undergraduate students’ motivation as an essence.

Early in 2001, the American Association for the Advancement of Science identified developing, implementing, and evaluating scientific models as one of the six essential student competencies to reform college biology education (Brewer & Smith, 2011). Since then, considerable studies on models and modeling in biology education have been conducted; however, it is still pending on what models are, what constitutes the practice of modeling, and how to improve modeling skills while delivering content knowledge (Odenbaugh, 2009; Stewart, Cartier, & Passmore, 2005; Windschitl, Thompson, & Braaten, 2008). Modeling instruction (MI) can be one of the leading educational practices in university-level biology education, which can enhance undergraduate students’ intrinsic motivation and fill the existing gap that MI curriculum is missing in college-level biology classes.
Modelling Instruction

From the MI perspective, teaching practice is designed and organized to engage students with specific concepts or topics, in developing models, and applying and assessing models in real life situations (Jackson, Dukerich, & Hestenes, 2008). First, a teacher demonstrates or discusses a specific concept or topic with students to build a basic understanding of it. Then students work collaboratively in small groups to model the real life question in an experimental setting to predict and explain the scientific phenomenon. The teacher, with enough knowledge in a certain field, is ready to answer students’ questions, guide their model developing, and evaluate their models. Through MI, the understanding of specific concepts is integrated into students’ real hands-on practice, which may promote their understanding of knowledge and help them connect scientific concepts with real life (Jackson et al., 2008).

MI in College Physics Education

The application of MI in physics education has been well studied and practiced for decades and has been reported on its positive effects on undergraduate students’ learning in introductory physics courses (Brewe, 2008; Brewe, Kramer, & O’Brien, 2009; Hestenes, 1987). Brewe et al. (2009), measuring with Colorado Learning Attitudes about Science Survey (CLASS), found that MI had a positive effect on students’ attitudes towards introductory physics.

Current Gap of MI in College Biology Education

As to biology education, MI has been applied in biology teaching in high schools (Cartier, 2000; Passmore & Stewart, 2002). With this instructional strategy, students are encouraged and directed to design, build, and evaluate scientific models to predict and/or explain a biological phenomenon according to related concepts. Through the process of instructional modeling, activities of biological practices are conducted and replicated in classrooms or teaching labs so that the explicit nature of biological themes in curriculum is integrated and transferred to students. However, the university biology MI materials are still under development, and the effectiveness of MI in biology education in universities is yet to be examined.

Given the gap in research studies and practices of MI in university-level biology education, this paper aims to establish a theoretical foundation to support the development and evaluation of MI curriculum for university biology courses.

Connections of MI and Social Cognitive Theory

MI emphasizes and values the importance of learning environments (Jackson et al., 2008), which is the essence of social cognitive theory (Schunk, 2000), in science education. It provides students chances to collaborate and interact with group members in a small group to complete a project, through which students can learn from each other. Students with lower self-efficacy and/or fewer skills can be motivated to perform better after observing and modeling the performances and achievements of peers with higher self-efficacy and/or more skills. The
atmosphere of autonomy in MI groups allows students to determine by themselves in how to
design, plan, and conduct a specific project, which increases their intrinsic motivation in learning
associated concepts from the project.

Social Cognitive Theory

Social cognitive theory (SCT) is based on the idea that people learn by observing others
(Schunk, 2000). People learn portions of their knowledge directly from their social
environments by observing others in social interactions, social experiences, and media content.
People learn by observing behaviors of models, and those models provide information to learners
about potential consequences of behaviors. Learners observe, pair, and remember behaviors and
associated consequences and then guide their own subsequent behaviors accordingly. People
retain observed behaviors that lead to successful consequences and refine or avoid behaviors that
result in failure and/or punishment (Schunk, 2000).

Self-Efficacy

Within the SCT framework, it is assumed that, if an observer (learner) has enough self-
efficacy, he or she will most likely learn the knowledge. Self-efficacy refers to the personal
belief of an individual about whether he or she has mastered particular capabilities to learn or
perform certain actions (Bandura, 1997). It is people’s personal assessment and belief of their
own skills and capabilities to apply those skills to real performance. Lent and Brown (2006)
described self-efficacy as a series of dynamic beliefs, rather than a single characteristic, of an
individual that are context-dependent. Self-efficacy partially relies on individuals’ abilities.
That is to say, in general, people with higher abilities tend to have higher self-efficacy in learning
and acting than those with lower abilities. However, self-efficacy is not ability. People with
higher self-efficacy are more active in learning and completing tasks, tend to put more effort, and
persist longer time than people with lower self-efficacy, which, in turn, improves their learning
achievements. People with high self-efficacy are more likely to be motivated to complete tasks.
Therefore, even if in the same level of capabilities, people with higher self-efficacy are usually
more active and perform better than those with lower self-efficacy.

People acquire information about their efficacies through their own mastery experiences,
observer’s performances, persuasion from others, and physiological factors. According to
Bandura (1997), an individual acquires his or her self-efficacy primarily from personal mastery
experiences. Successful experiences in completing a task may positively influence one’s self-
efficacy in completing a similar task (Bandura, 1997). The second source of self-efficacy,
vicarious learning experiences, is particularly important when one has no personal experience
with the task at hand or similar ones (Bandura, 1997; Zeldin & Pajares, 2000). VL refers to an
individual observing someone else performing a similar task. Others’ success on a task may
influence the observer’s self-efficacy in performing the similar task. Social persuasion
experiences such as encouraging words or positive social messages, as the third source, may
promote one’s self-efficacy and make this person to put extra effort and persistence to complete
a task. Bandura (1997) argued that SP has highest influence on those already with beliefs about
their ability to complete a task.
Empirical Studies of Self-Efficacy

Pajares (1995) reported that self-efficacy affected behaviors by regulating one’s choices of performance, the extent of one’s effort in performing specific actions, and one’s affective responses to certain behaviors. Based on self-efficacy theory, Ketelhut (2007) conducted an exploratory investigation on the relationship between students’ longitudinal data-gathering behaviors and their self-efficacy when participating in an authentic scientific inquiry-based activity in a multi-user virtual environment. Results of this study indicated a correlation between students’ self-efficacy and the amount of data-gathering behaviors they initially engaged in. Students with higher self-efficacy engaged in more data-gathering behaviors than those with lower self-efficacy. Findings in this study suggested that embedding collaborative scientific inquiry-based curriculum project in science teaching might promote students’ self-efficacy and learning outcomes.

Hazari, Sonnert, Sadler, and Shanahan (2010) reported that self-efficacy contributed to students’ retention in physics as one of the primary dimensions of their physics identity. Further, Sawtelle, Brewe, and Kramer (2012) conducted a quantitative study investigating the relationship of undergraduate students’ self-efficacy and their retention in the Introductory Physics course. This study applied self-efficacy theory to explain the difference between female and male students in persistence in the introductory physics course. The authors discussed four sources of an individual’s self-efficacy: mastery experiences, vicarious learning experiences, social persuasion experiences, and physiological state. They proposed self-efficacy theory as the framework to explore the sources of information that female students perceive and rely on to determine their capabilities to success in physics (Sawtelle et al., 2012), which was supported by the evidence from previous studies of Zeldin and Pajares (2000) and Zeldin, Britner, and Pajares (2008) showing gender difference in students’ self-efficacy sources in science learning. Sawtelle et al. examined the self-efficacy of students in the introductory physics classes to explore the gender difference in the sources of self-efficacy with regard to their persistence in physics. Results suggested delicate distinctions by gender in the predictive capabilities of the sources of self-efficacy regarding to students’ success in physics. The predictive capability for women’s success in physics primarily relies on vicarious learning experiences, while no significant contribution from social persuasion experiences. The predictive capability for men’s success in physics only relies on mastery experiences.

Self-Determination and Autonomous Learning Environment

Self-determination and autonomous learning environment is another critical characteristic of MI. It originates in infants and is people’s internal psychological need that, if satisfied, leads to optimal intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1991). Along with human development, the need differentiates into various areas, which is influenced by people’s interactions with environments (Schunk, 2000). Many extrinsic rewards in social environment may not originally fit with an individual’s need for self-determination, but they can stimulate good behaviors. As people develop, these extrinsic motivators may be internalized and produce intrinsic motivators through self-determination. Self-determination theory suggests that the motivated degree of behaviors differs depending on whether they are autonomous or controlled. Deci and Ryan (1991) argued that autonomous behaviors are developed originally from an individual’s integrated sense of self.
Controlled behaviors can be internalized to become autonomous, in which an individual identifies the value of specific behavior and accepts its regulation as one’s own. The degree of an individual’s behaviors are autonomous or controlled is influenced by the interpersonal context. By autonomy support, the teacher, as a person in authority, thinks from students’ perspectives, takes their feelings into consideration, and provides them with enough relevant information and chances to determine and select by themselves, while avoiding or at least minimizing the use of pressure (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Autonomy support facilitates in maintaining or improving intrinsic motivation and enhancing internalization of external regulation into internal regulation.

**Empirical Studies of Self-Determination and Autonomous Learning Environment**

Deci, Schwartz, Sheinman, and Ryan (1981) reported that students, autonomy-supported by their teachers, were more intrinsically motivated. Students in autonomy-supportive context, according to the research findings of Grolnick and Ryan (1987), had better conceptual acquisition. The study of Black and Deci (2000) examined the effects of students’ course-specific self-regulation and their perceptions of instructors’ autonomy support on students’ adjustment and academic performances in an undergraduate organic chemistry course. Results indicated that students’ autonomous reasons for learning organic chemistry predicted their perceived competence, interest/enjoyment, anxiety, and grade-oriented performance in the organic chemistry course and were also related to students’ dropping out of this course. Students’ perceptions of their instructors’ autonomy support predicted their autonomous self-regulation, perceived competence, interest/enjoyment, and anxiety. Students’ autonomous self-regulation further predicted students’ performance in the organic chemistry course. Furthermore, instructor’s autonomy support from students’ perceptions also directly predicted course performance of students with low level of initial autonomous self-regulation.

Deci and Ryan (1985, 1991) argued that motivation can be classified along with the level of self-determination, according to which intrinsic motivation is the most self-determined one and extrinsic motivation is the least self-determined one. Lavigne, Vallerand, and Miquelon (2007) proposed and examined a motivational model of persistence in science education, which is supported by self-determination theory. This model hypothesized that the autonomy support from science teachers positively influences students’ self-perceptions of autonomy and competence, and that these self-perceptions further positively affect students’ autonomous motivation towards science, which leads to their intentions to pursue science education and eventually work in a scientific area. Cognitive evaluation theory was also applied in this study, which suggests that social agents, such as teachers, may affect one’s motivation through autonomy support. The proposed model is supported by the results from this study. In addition, it was found that students’ perceptions of competence predicted their persistence intentions to pursue science education. Findings in this study direct future research in science education from a motivational perspective.

**Connections of MI and Constructivism**

In teaching practice, MI involves and promotes constructivist learning. Through MI, students learn scientific concepts by really experiencing them in working collaboratively to
model them in their real process to utilize specific concepts to explain and predict scientific phenomena. During MI process, students construct scientific knowledge internally by interacting with real science experiences, cooperative peers, and the teacher. The research study findings (Amaral, Garrison, & Klentschy, 2002; Park Rogers & Abell, 2008) particularly support the application of inquiry-based science teaching curriculum, which is one of the aspects of MI.

**Constructivism**

Constructivism assumes that people are active learners and that knowledge is not acquired automatically but constructed by learners via its interaction with learners’ experiences and perceptions of new information. Constructivism underlies integrated curriculum, which support students learning a topic in various ways. According to constructivism, teaching, rather than a simple delivery of knowledge to learners, is to provide materials and instruction to help students involved in active learning through social interactions with materials, peers, and the teacher. Those active learning activities include generating learning goal, monitoring and assessing learning process, observing, and working collaboratively with peers (Schunk, 2000). Individuals construct new knowledge from interactions between one’s mental framework and experienced environments.

From a constructivist perspective, teaching is to help students investigate and resolve conflict in their experiences (Sandoval, 1995). In science education, it is to help students identify and correct misconceptions (Mayer, 1999). It engages students in hands-on activities and collaboration with others to solve proposed problems through their experiences. Students come to class with their own personal pre-constructed scientific concepts. Thus, according to the constructivist perspective in science education, teachers could first know and understand students’ scientific preconceptions, then identify conceptual conflict with their preconceptions, and finally help them to explore and modify their scientific conceptions (Nussbaum & Novick, 1982). Teachers can associate hands-on experiences in science with students’ real life to promote their interest and motivation in learning science. According to Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978), learning is a socially mediated process, and people learn through interaction with others. As to the teaching practice, teacher should provide rich real experiences to encourage students to learn.

**Empirical Studies of Constructive Teaching in Science Classes**

Paris and Turner (1994) found that engaging students in hands-on biology activities improved their intrinsic motivation and self-regulation learning behaviors. Paris, Yambor, and Packard (1998) investigated the effects of an extracurricular hands-on curriculum and instruction in biology on students’ interest and learning achievements. Students’ both interest in science and problem-solving skills through all grade levels were increased. Female students reported more positive attitudes towards science and higher problem-solving skills than male students did. Data from qualitative interviews with three teachers supported the benefits of the hands-on biology curriculum and instruction.

Stohr-Hunt (1996) conducted a variance analysis of the relation between the frequency of students experiencing hands-on science and their science achievements. Data were collected by
the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 on a nationally representative sample of eighth-grade students. Students who engaged in hands-on activities every day or once a week scored significantly higher on a standardized test of science achievement than those who engaged in hands-on activities once a month, less than once a month, or never.

Amaral, Garrison, and Klentschy (2002) reported the findings of a four-year project in science education with English learners in grades K–6. Participating students’ achievements in science, writing, reading, and mathematics were measured and analyzed according to the number of years that students participated in the inquiry-based science education program. The English learners’ achievements correlated with the number of years they were engaged in the program. The longer they were in the program, the higher they scored in science, writing, reading, and mathematics.

Concluding Thoughts for Future Discussion

MI engages students collaboratively and autonomously in real hands-on inquiry-based scientific activities to develop and use models to describe, explain, and predict scientific phenomena. As a practical application of SCT, MI could enhance students’ self-efficacy in science learning, which could promote students’ learning motivation, rewarding learning behaviors, persistence in science learning, and further improve their academic achievements. It could also, through autonomy support, improve students’ learning motivation and attitudes and further improve their academic persistence in science. In addition, MI could promote students’ interests and academic achievements in science by providing real hands-on experiences and stimulating constructivist learning. With its inquiry-based characteristics, MI can enhance interests and motivations of both science and non-science major undergraduate students. MI may even benefit English learners in their science achievements as an inquiry-based science teaching strategy. MI may also contribute to the diminishing of gender gap in college biology education.

References


Academic Writing and Publication: My Journey of Learning Through the Development of Articles from my Master’s Thesis

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Abstract: In this essay, I discuss how I turned my master’s thesis into three peer-reviewed publications and the lessons I learned about academic writing and publication in the process.

Long before I became a published scholar of musical theatre, I thought deeply about musicals. As a music major during college, I was infatuated by the work of Stephen Sondheim, and in graduate school, I wrote my master’s thesis on his magnum opus, Sweeney Todd, the Demon Barber of Fleet Street. Little did I know how many years this musical would follow me around, providing a foundation for my identity as a scholar. Although I had some practice at academic analysis in my two years of graduate school, the real thrust of my education about scholarly writing and publication would start in Fall 2011 when I decided to revisit my thesis and begin to think about publishing articles.

Literature in many fields examine the process of academic writing and publication (Furman, 2007; Hartley, 2008; Murray & Moore, 2006; Rocco & Hatcher, 2011), some of which focuses specifically on writing during graduate school (Aitchison, Kamler, & Lee, 2010; Collins, 2015; Mizzi, 2014). Graduate students might receive training in academic writing during their degree programs but may not think about how to publish (Aitchison, Kamler, & Lee, 2010; Rocco & Hatcher, 2011). Perhaps graduate students do not have the resources and are discouraged by the intense process. Indeed, producing academic manuscripts demands rigorous logic and thought, sustained attention and commitment, and most critically, imagination and creativity. Hearing how others have published can de-mystify this daunting process (Collins, 2015). In this essay, I discuss how I produced three refereed journal articles from my master’s thesis over a 3 year period and the lessons I learned about academic writing and publication in the process.

Thesis Development

My thesis was concerned with how Sondheim constructed the score for Sweeney Todd. In all of the interviews Sondheim gave about the show, he mentioned two main points. First, he was inspired by the music of film composer Bernard Herrmann—in particular, a set of four pitches that Herrmann used in many of his film scores, especially Vertigo (1958) and Psycho (1960). The second comment Sondheim made about Sweeney Todd was that he was influenced, more generally, by a life-long fascination with cinema, which informed his artistic choices for the score. Thus, one of my thesis chapters was solely devoted to filmic elements of Sondheim’s score, some of which were techniques borrowed directly from film scoring while others suggested film on a more metaphoric level. During my thesis research, Tim Burton’s film version of Sweeney Todd—which had been in development for decades—was released. I saw the film and thought about how I might incorporate it into my existing study: considering how
(a) Sondheim’s lifelong fascination of cinema and how that interest shaped his musical, and (b) how *Sweeney Todd* ultimately transitioned to a film, provided fodder for thinking about the reciprocal relationships in terms of how a “filmic score” was adapted to film. Although I felt it was a worthy pursuit, I decided I could not add another layer of complexity to my thesis and, instead, suggested this was where future investigation should start.

After graduating, I presented my first conference paper based on my third chapter at the *Music and the Moving Image Conference* held at New York University. Although I was interested in developing the conference paper into a manuscript, nothing became of it at that time. Three and a half years later, I became restless, wanting to publish something out of my thesis. Because it had two explicit aims (i.e., to understand how film in general, and the music of Herrmann, in particular, shaped the score), I started by creating two separate documents and bisecting the thesis. The analysis of the score for the specific pitch class set 4-19 had been the most labor-intensive, and it was also the most obvious for a manuscript in terms of form, scope, and content. So, I started with that paper. Figure 1 summarizes the metamorphoses of the three papers: Paper I was accepted for publication with required changes. Then, I began paper II, at first rejected (IIa), so it was redeveloped (IIb). Paper IIb was also accepted for publication with required changes, but based on the feedback I received, I decided to split this paper into two articles (IIc and III). Paper III took about a third of the material from paper IIb, while paper IIc was re-developed based on the feedback.

**Manuscript Development**

**Article I**

To begin the process, I needed to work my thesis chapter 5 (how Sondheim had used this chord) into a manuscript form. Because it was also necessary to show Herrmann’s influence, I also had to use a good portion of chapter 4. The first challenge was that chapters 4 and 5 had a collective word count of 9,000 words and 50 musical examples. The luxury of an academic document was a lack of space limitations whereas in academic publishing, it is a chief concern. A manuscript would need to be roughly half of that length and be tightened considerably. When deciding how to transfer the analysis to a manuscript, I needed to determine the most important occurrences of the chord, focus on them, and develop my analysis of each beyond what was required.

I submitted the manuscript to *Studies in Musical Theatre* in early February 2012 and received a conditional acceptance a month and a half later. In the letter of decision, the editors noted three main problems. The sheer number of musical examples caused the first two challenges: the concern for copyright and sheer space. The third issue was the reliance on *Psycho* to show Herrmann’s influence on Sondheim. Rather than paying due diligence and digging into the score that really inspired Sondheim—*Hangover Square*—I had used the music for *Psycho* to show the connection because it was much easier to acquire. The reviewer rightfully held me responsible for showing the connection through an analysis of *Hangover Square* rather than *Psycho*. To acquire the music for the film, I did an extensive literature search and to my good fortune, one article (Whitesell, 2005) included several musical examples that I could analyze. I communicated with the author, who was quite helpful. Although I had purchased the film and watched it once, the reviewer’s comment forced me to re-watch several times to understand and analyze how Herrmann utilized the music.
allowed me to make connections between the film and its influence on Sweeney Todd. In the end, not only was my article stronger overall, but that the section on Hangover Square was probably the strongest section.

**Articles IIa and IIb**

With one manuscript in the publication cycle, I began to work on the second article. I was left with the cinematic aspects of the score, requiring me to revisit the film to note how it was adapted. Although I had to bolster the argument that Sondheim was influenced by cinema, my real task was to make insightful observations about the adaptation itself. By the end of Summer 2012, I felt confident about my new draft and I submitted to Music and the Moving Image, the journal of the conference where I first presented the paper. Three months later, I received rejection notice with some suggested revision notes. Although the piece was described by a reviewer as “interesting and informative,” it “needed a stronger sense of concrete information and discussion of the ‘cinematic’ aspects incorporated by Sondheim.” Particularly challenging was the reviewer’s mention of the need about “Herrmann’s influence and the use of music in Hangover Square. The reader is left to try and imagine what the actual point of influence might have been.” Because I had covered this in the other paper, I was not sure how to address this (valid) claim that readers were left guessing the influence. Also noted was that “there is little discussion of classical film scoring or specialist writing on the subject…for an essay dealing with ‘film’ influences, there is very little reference to specialized writing about film, leaving most of the discussion on a ‘common sense’ level when dealing with ‘the cinematic’.” The reviewer noted that my discussions were rooted in the musical theatre literature rather than film studies and that the article was primarily “interested in Sondheim’s stage musical and spends little time discussing the film.” Because of this focus, the reviewer wondered if I had sent the piece to the appropriate journal:

This piece may well be suited for a journal concerned with stage musicals, but for one concerned with film and music, I would suggest that there is a more direct and more detailed engagement with the translations (film ideas to stage musical, stage to film musical), perhaps with a section of Burton’s film broken down to illustrate the processes in action. (Personal communication)

A reviewer also noted that rigor of my writing was not up to academic journal standards, that it read “journalistically” and required “a more analytical character.” Also noted was my reliance on secondary sources. S/he offered that a “more close analysis would have been valuable and perhaps less quotation.” This comment was not particularly surprising, as my article was built around the contributions of other scholars who had observations about the influence of film in Sondheim’s work. Accordingly, “it could have drawn far more in the way of conclusions from the discussions.” Although I felt a setback by this review, it was a significant turning point for me as a scholar. I learned that I could not rely on other people’s ideas (even if I properly cited them) and that a publishable scholarly essay required not only a talent for piecing together good ideas, but demanded rigorous thinking about the subject to make original contributions to the literature. Sondheim may have made his aims for Sweeney Todd explicit, but in extending his argument, the evidence needed to be provided by me, not as an amalgamation of the work of other scholars.

For the next three months, I worked diligently on reworking my manuscript. Instead of
writing about a point because Scholar X did, I needed to engage with the material. I listened to Sondheim’s score while reading the music and I watched Burton’s film several times, taking notes about new observations. I read more related work from the literature. When I had done as much as I felt I could do, I presented the paper to two colleagues: a musicologist and a music theorist. In their feedback, both questioned some of the assumptions I had made, pointed to weaknesses in logic or in detail, and made suggestions of what to investigate. For instance, in trying to substantiate a claim Sondheim made about 80% of Sweeney Todd being accompanied by music, one suggested I make a table to show all of the orchestral cues. This was a way of presenting data and to substantiate the arguments I was making. He also suggested that I make very specific arguments about the various cinematic aspects of the stage musical that were changed for the film version. The second colleague pointed out that I was going into very little depth about the new scoring for the film. Again, because film scores are difficult to get a hold of, I had taken the easy way out by describing, minimally, the effect of the new music composed for the film.

In addressing both of these colleagues’ feedback in as much detail as possible, I ended up with a draft that covered a lot of ideas, but I felt good about the extensive work that I had done in re-working the version that had been rejected. The overhaul was so extreme that it looked like an entirely different paper. In January 2013, I sent the manuscript to Journal of Adaptation in Film and Performance, which I had discovered after having submitted to Music and the Moving Image. The new draft was entitled “Sondheim’s Sweeney Todd: cinematic nature and film adaptation.” To my delight, I received positive reviews and an acceptance with required changes in May 2013. Reviewer 2 described the essay as “a very welcome and fascinating article on a very important adaptation of the last few years. The range of context and criticism is convincing and its musicological analysis is at a very high level.” In describing Burton’s film as “the most ambitious and most ‘straight’ adaptation for film of a revered stage musical in a couple of decades,” Reviewer 1 went against my argument, which was that it was a radical re-envisioning of the stage show. I was unprepared to read the next line: “It is not especially well-written, and the text contains malapropisms as well as clumsy expression, inadmissible [sic] grammar and typos.” Although it stung, the reviewer’s point was well-taken and corroborated by the other reviewer: “the article is a little conversational and informal at times and the piece should be overhauled to clarify its academic rigour and avoid any ambiguities.” Despite my best efforts to make the article read as scholarly as I could make it, it still read as “journalistically” to these reviewers.

Beyond the general comments, however, I learned a great deal from the more detailed suggestions that followed. For example, the writing was not “sufficiently incisive. It spends most of its effort and length on discussing incidental music, misses a number of points” (Reviewer 1). Reviewer 2, who had less radical notes, wrote, “The piece is already long but it is strongly recommended that the author tightens some of the frames of reference.” Specifically, the reviewer felt that I neglected to show the history of how the 1847 tale transitioned through the decades to Sondheim’s musical. Reviewer 1 had some major suggestions. The first of which was the most dramatic:

For an article of 10,000 words, far too much emphasis is laid on incidental music. While tightening up some of the points and arguments about it, I would say that an article dealing with this topic needs to get further away from adulation of Sondheim (there are
too many quotes from him and it is too close to his own protestations in viewpoint) and take on questions of genre. (Personal communication)

Two things about this comment struck me. First, I had not realized it before, but after this comment, I took another look at my draft and noticed that nearly a third of it was concerned with underscoring (the music played underneath the dialogue) and I was really just scratching the surface. Suggesting that I eliminate some of the discussion on underscoring, the reviewer thought I needed to focus on aspects of genre.

Second, despite trying to develop my own thoughts, I was still relying too much on Sondheim. In addition to the broad concerns, the reviewer noted that the title should be more incisive, writing,

If it’s really about Sondheim’s [emphasis original] Sweeney Todd then it shouldn’t really be published in this journal. If it’s also about Burton’s, then we want to know: film adaptation of what? Musicals in general? An already cinematic musical? One man’s masterpiece as another’s? (Personal communication)

Thus, despite the extensive re-writes, the focus of the manuscript was still situated with Sondheim. Without sufficiently troubling the material, my analysis had not gone as far as it needed to go. Although it now contained more analytical rigor, the discussion could be enriched by thinking hard about when I wanted to include Sondheim, and when he was overpowering my discussions. With this in mind, Reviewer 2 asked if the ideas of the paper could be broaden the scope, but not extend the length of the article.

While mulling over these suggestions, I decided that I could not address everything requested in the word length of the piece. Further, it seemed to me that I had two arguments meandering through the draft. The first was to show cinematic thinking in how Sondheim developed his score and how those thoughts adapted to film in Burton’s adaptation. The second was how Sondheim used techniques of film scoring to sustain tension and how that transitioned in the film. The two aims of my paper were not aligning. In essence, I went back to my original design of chapter three of my thesis: That some of the filmic characteristics of the score were actually borrowed from film scoring and others merely implied it. I concluded that there were two independent papers. One would focus on the adaptation (through the metaphoric cinematic features) and another would focus on Sondheim’s extensive use of underscoring and both papers would be concerned with respective aspects of the film transformation. Once I had this realization, I saved a new draft (lest I was making a terrible mistake) and began bisecting again. At the beginning of Summer 2013, I had two half manuscripts, each of which needed to be developed in different ways.

**Article III**

I enrolled in a “Writing for Publication” graduate course as part of my doctoral program, the main requirement for which was to produce a manuscript to submit to a journal. The class afforded me an opportunity to develop my new manuscript (focused on underscoring). For those six weeks, I shelved the feedback I had just received on the ‘adaptation’ piece and focused solely on the underscoring in both stage and screen versions of Sweeney Todd. The new focus allowed me to zone in and make more complex arguments about what Sondheim had done with the
underscoring. With the help of my peer group, at the end of the course, I had developed a manuscript ready to submit to a journal. The name of the new piece became: “It might have been sophisticated film music”: The role of underscoring in stage and screen versions of Sweeney Todd, the Demon Barber of Fleet Street.” Although I had some reservation about sending the article to a journal in which I had already published, it made sense to send the piece to Studies in Musical Theatre. About six months later, I received another positive email, inviting me to develop the manuscript for publication. The reviewer wrote,

The idea behind this article is extremely sound and the way it proposes to embrace the stage and film versions of Sweeney Todd is certainly noteworthy, original, and potentially revealing. The article, though, needs some recasting in terms of vocabulary, content, and structure. (Personal communication)

In detailing the issues with the essay, the reviewer pointed out that I was using distinct concepts and terms indiscriminately. Thus, I highlighted every use of each of these terms and scrutinized carefully how I was employing them.

Another issue with which I contended was the organization. Although the general structure of the piece (discussion of the stage musical first and the film, second) was suitable, the layout within needed attention. Reorganizing the paper presented some significant challenges, but the reviewer’s point was valid: the discussion convoluted two different topics. So, I spent a few weeks working out the details of separating the discussion of the elements. Although I liked the reviewer’s suggestion of min-parallel structures, I was unable to make these structures work in the film section due to the content I covered.

The second reviewer also had some points, but they were less dramatic and in being more of wish list types of items, would have taken significant word count to address. Thus, although I had to address them, I qualified my response by saying that they were ideas worthy of pursuit— if I had had more space. In the Writing for Publication course, the instructors suggested that we create a matrix detailing the ways the feedback was addressed: the reviewers’ comments go in the left column and directly next to it, indicate (a) how we addressed the feedback, or (b) the reasons why we could not (see Table 1). I was given a month and a half to complete the rewrites and even though I had hoped to have them completed two weeks prior to the expected date, I was running right up to the wire despite my best efforts. I learned in the course that is crucial to let editors know if you cannot make a deadline. The morning the edits were due, I emailed the editors to let them know that I would be sending a draft later that day, but I needed a few more hours for the final edits.

One interesting challenge I encountered during the final copy-editing stage was how to cite myself and when to avoid self-plagiarism. Most of the material from Article IIb split pretty clearly between IIc (‘adaptation’) and III (‘underscoring’). However, one paragraph was relevant to both articles. One of the trickiest things I had to do for III was to rewrite the paragraph, completely paraphrasing and citing myself. However, it was complicated because both articles were in press at the same time. Thus, I had to consult with the editors of both journals to ensure that I was not self-plagiarizing. In the end, I decided the content originated in IIc and that III would cite IIc.
I was pleased to receive positive reviews and a conditional acceptance decision for article II, but at first I was not sure how to approach the requested changes. Unsure of how to proceed, I decided to write a detailed letter to the editor requesting some clarification and advice. After laying a general premise of my concerns, I specified a number of questions about clarification and plans of actions. My first point was that more emphasis should be placed on the adaptation and less emphasis should be placed on the underscoring. But I also recognized that the discussion of the underscoring was important to me, both in Sondheim’s original score and the new music written for the film. I noted that the reviewer was correct about some of the problematic descriptors I was using because of their limitations. However, I argued, “thinking about the functions or the underscoring …has merit.” I had not fully come to terms with how I would handle this and so I offered, “If I can discuss underscoring, I am certainly willing to condense a bit.” But condensing something so important and fundamental was not jiving. This cognitive dissonance led me to split the article, allowing for more space for each topic to be studied further. The rest of the points were either (a) questions about how to address the reviewer’s comments, or (b) detailing a plan of action. After six bullet points, I concluded that I was

enthused by the comments I received and am certainly willing to re-write sections and re-frame the overall argument. It seems to me that while both reviewer one and I agree that the adaptation is successful, we believe so for different reasons. I am wondering if this difference of opinion and vision for the piece is prohibitive in moving forward. (Personal communication)

I also asked about the process and timeline for revision. I never heard back from this editor. I share this experience for a few reasons. Most fundamentally, although the letter to the editor was thoughtful and detailed and probably an important exercise in terms of coming to terms with my reactions, my questions and my plans to move forward, it shows a novice scholar who was unsure of his work and how to proceed through the publication process. Indeed, my professor for the Writing for Publication course indicated that this was probably a “rookie mistake.” Although processing these emotional and intellectual responses was critical to the process, it would have been wiser to find a trusted colleague who could help me think some of these things through. After all, these comments were from reviewers in a blind process; they were not from the editor himself.

After I made the decision to divide the piece into two based on the comments I received from article II, I focused on the adaptation aspects of the work. Taking a third of the content out of the article allowed me space to discuss how Sondheim adapted a 1973 version of the 19th century tale from British playwright Christopher Bond and to incorporate some theoretical framework from the field of adaptation studies, an entire field that I did not know existed prior to this project. Once I removed the underscoring material, it did not take me long to determine the structure of the new version. I had my work cut out for me and I worked steadily over the next month. I sent the reworked adaptation piece in late July 2013. When I still heard nothing after four months, I sent an email of inquiry. I heard nothing, so six weeks later I sent another inquiry and learned it would be published in the spring issue. Soon after, I received a request for minimal copy edits and before I knew it, the work was published.
Conclusion: My Lessons

The writing and publication process can be daunting for a novice scholar. However, so much can be gained from not only the process of writing, but also by the publication process that follows. Although it is impossible to describe everything I learned about the writing and publication process over the five years of developing manuscripts from my master’s thesis, below are the major lessons:

1. Writing is a process, a long process. Writing will not likely be publishable until it has been through several rounds of revisions and before many people’s eyes. Outlining the structure of the paper can be helpful in most cases, but sometimes it takes writing through your thoughts to figure out how to organize a paper.

2. It is critical to pay attention to specialist language: in order to be taken seriously as a scholar, you must be well-grounded in specialist jargon and know the literature and how concepts and terms are used in an academic discipline.

3. It is not a bad idea to contact experts in your field. They may be willing to help guide and mentor you.

4. You should learn to scrutinize your writing more deeply and to understand that every word has meaning; similarly, putting your work out to so many people may help you to develop thick skin for receiving feedback about your work.

5. You should do your research, investigate the mission and scope of the journal, read other articles from that journal, and make certain you are sending it to the proper venue.

6. You should not take short cuts: reviewers and editors will call you out on them.

7. Learning to develop patience when wanting to receive a decision or feedback is critical. It can take a few months to hear back from an editor with peer reviews. When you do receive a decision from editors, it is okay to write back, but be sure not to ask superfluous questions that undermine your authority as a scholar. It is especially important to let editors know if you cannot make a deadline.

8. Once you receive feedback, you have to determine which are essential and which are “wish list” revisions. After you have completed all the necessary revisions, you should create a matrix describing how you addressed critiques or why you decided not to.

9. Several books about the writing for publication process exist. Reading them can be invaluable to learning about the scholarly publication process.

References


McGill, C. M. (2014). “It might have been sophisticated film music”: The role of the orchestra in stage and screen versions of Sweeney Todd, the Demon Barber of Fleet Street. Studies in Musical Theatre, 8(1), 5-26.


Figure 1. Manuscript development from thesis.

![Diagram of manuscript development from thesis]

Table 1. Example of addressing feedback.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Original Text</th>
<th>Revised Text</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>In the second paragraph, more discussion of the musical</td>
<td>Discussion extended.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>underscoring, the topic of the essay, is needed. One</td>
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<td></td>
<td>brief mention is made, but for ten minutes of music,</td>
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<td>further commentary on the musical treatment would be</td>
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<td></td>
<td>greatly welcomed.</td>
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<td>22.2</td>
<td>Three lines from the end of page 21, is “inconspicuous”</td>
<td>This section has been re-written.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>the best description? Does the music react through its</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>absence? Especially when “continuous music” is the norm,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>the cessation of music can be very dramatic.</td>
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<tr>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>Could the statement “The music of the film does nothing</td>
<td>I have elaborated and concluded the</td>
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<td></td>
<td>to salvage the horrors on the screen” be elaborated upon</td>
<td>main body of the essay with this</td>
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<td></td>
<td>in more detail? It’s a provocative thought and worthy of</td>
<td>thought.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>development.</td>
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<td>22.4</td>
<td>Conclusion. Music serves characters other than Sweeney</td>
<td>The conclusion has been reworked.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Todd, as you demonstrated with Mrs. Lovett’s “Not While</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>I’m Around.” The sentence following the block quote</td>
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<td></td>
<td>denies this. The conclusion includes the first mention</td>
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<td>of secondary characters being excised from the story for</td>
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<td>the film version. It is distracting to introduce a new</td>
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<td>topic, especially one such as this, in the final</td>
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<td>sentences of an essay.</td>
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<td>23.</td>
<td>In the works cited, please note that the Horowitz book is a</td>
<td>2nd edition noted</td>
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<td></td>
<td>second edition.</td>
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<td>25.</td>
<td>Please rephrase this, since several scholars are current-</td>
<td>Rephrased to suggest that although it</td>
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<td></td>
<td>ly studying orchestration. Doyle’s name needs the “I.”</td>
<td>is now being studied, it was under-</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>studied in the years prior.</td>
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<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>Non-functional harmony does exist in musical theater,</td>
<td>“Mainstream” qualifier added</td>
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<td>especially in some newer shows. Could you add the</td>
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<td>qualifier “mainstream” to the final clause?</td>
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Abstract: Little is known about how adults learn to take risks. However, learning to take risks can be beneficial to adults who fear uncertainty or struggle with academic achievement. Higher education can play a leading role in embracing risk-taking and raising the interest level of adult learners through strategic learning activities.

Adult learners participate in various formal and informal learning activities that help them stay in tune with the ever-changing global world (Reio, 2013). Adult education learning activities increased from 1995 to 2001. The learning activities included basic training skills, work-related classes, and part-time college and university degree programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). In 2005, there was a decline in individuals pursuing adult education, especially in higher education. Among the educational activities, part-time college and university degree programs were second to lowest in interest at 5% in comparison to the top educational activity of work-related courses at 27% (National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2007). Individuals in the age range of 16-24 had a higher participation rate (Hansman & Mott, 2010). Furthermore, 16-24 year olds made up the highest range of adults in higher education, while 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64 and 65+ follow in sequence (Hansman & Mott, 2010). Adult learners who participated in a bachelor’s degree program had a higher interest in adult education compared to those individuals who had some college or less education (NCES, 2007).

Adult learners are within the learning categories of goal-oriented, activity-oriented, and learning oriented (Hansman & Mott, 2010). Goal-oriented learners seek to achieve specific outcomes. Activity-oriented learners like to engage, but do not really care for what the activity entails, and learning oriented learners like to learn, thus becoming lifelong learners. Adult learners are diverse in age, race, class, gender, socio-economic status, and ability. With this diversity comes a responsibility to provide learning experiences and activities that foster creativity, innovation, critical reflection, and most importantly, taking risks to create positive outcomes. Learning to take risks benefits adults who fear uncertainty or struggle with academic achievement. Although there are several adult learning theories, models, and approaches that focus on how adults learn, little is known about how adults learn to take risks in higher education. Even minimal research that explores risk-taking in an educational setting is hard to find (Ponticell, 2003). For example, Uhrmacher (2011) states that risk-taking is not often mentioned in teacher education courses. Likewise, Robinson and Bell (2013) also agree that the phenomenon of academic risk-taking rarely appears in the education literature. This literature review aims to provide a comprehensive background of risk-taking and highlight academic risk-taking’s significance to the adult learner and educator.

Risk, Risk-Taking, and Academic Risk-Taking Defined

“Death, taxes, and risk are the certainties of life” (MacCrimmon & Wehrung, 1986, p. 4). Risk is the possibility of loss and risk-taking is how humans behave during the possibility of loss and uncertainty (Assailly, 2013). According to Byrd (1974), risk is the outgrowth of change, the only constant factor in our world today. Risk-taking behaviors involve potential for danger and/or harm although providing a chance for some type of reward. Risk is both dynamic and static. The dynamic and static terms are from the risk management field of insurance. Byrd (1978) suggests that dynamic risk relates to managerial, creative, and political risk, whereas static risk relates to potential loss. Dynamic risk is risking something certain to obtain something that is uncertain, vis-à-vis static risk, where loss is simply a loss, which oftentimes has various levels of consequences.
No exact or universally accepted measure for assessing risk-taking behaviors exists, but there are three rules to risk-taking (Byrd, 1978). The first rule of risk-taking is having the knowledge of how much one can afford to lose. This rule is easy to understand but difficult to apply because it is very subjective. The following guidelines could help determining the amount of risk someone can afford: plan ahead, set personal limits and follow through, obtain advice, avoid excuses for inaction and consider alternatives. The second rule of risk-taking is to avoid risking a lot for a little. This rule is both subjective and objective because one has to apply this rule subjectively although remaining objective to the situation. To prevent risking of a lot for a little, one must avoid taking risks for punitive reasons, losing face, and reasons of principle (Byrd, 1978). The third rule of risk-taking is to consider the odds and your intuition. Risk-takers need to be careful of compulsive patterns and cannot leave out the person making the judgments or decisions.

What inhibits risk is fear. The fear of failure, what people think, disapproval from others, and fear of uncertainty play major roles in behaviors of risk-takers. Organizations tend to use static risk over dynamic risk, which can often create a catch-22. This concept can also translate into an educational environment. Fear of failure is the most significant negative emotion expressed because this emotion leads to more cautious behavior patterns (Ponticell, 2003). In a learning environment, experiential learning can adjust fear of failure and provide results of action (March, 1996). Avoidance of behavior is fear. College students who are afraid of snakes would risk their fear of snakes, for up to $1 million, rescuing a life, or saving their own life (Kirsch, 1982). Kirsch provided other examples of risk-taking opportunities and found that fear, consequences, and inability encouraged the reluctance to perform some learning activities. Bandura (1983) affirms Kirsch’s examples through his self-efficacy theory. The greatest influence on fear is the interactive relation between the perceptions of self-efficacy and self-judgment (Bandura, 1983).

In the leadership literature, risk-taking is necessary because leaders can uplift and expand their followers (Erickson, 2007). Leaders can teach followers to envision a better future that is a result of risk-taking. In the risk-taking literature, the term knowledge insinuates that having prior knowledge of a learning activity is important. Knowledge is how one acts on and interacts with the world through experience or experiment (Dewey, 1916). One can assume experience is important to learning how to take risks. Thus, one can learn how to take risks by being in an environment that is continuing and experimental. Some work, community or educational settings foster experiment and continuity. Higher education fits because it takes a learner 2-10 years to complete a degree. In addition, most majors and academic tracks require some form of experimentation, internship, assistantship, or apprenticeship to gain experience.

Spitzer (1975) investigated the effect of group discussions on elementary and secondary school teachers’ attitudes towards risky actions. The study assists in explaining the nature of risky actions and applies it to the rigid and conservative American school system. Group discussions increased positive attitudes towards the concept of taking risks (Spitzer, 1975).

Knowing the psychology of risk behavior is an advantageous lens to look through to understand risk-taking in an educational setting (Ponticell, 2003). Loss and uncertainty are foundational to risk (Ponticell, 2003). A loss is “whatever a person believes he or she already has” (Ponticell, 2013, p. 6). Typical losses may stem from finances, social status, or aspirations. Uncertainty is being afraid of recognizing new realities (Byrd, 1974). Significance of loss is the value one places on the loss of something or someone (Ponticell, 2003). Researchers agree that risk-taking behavior is an area that requires further exploration. The areas that have risk-taking research are psychology, leadership, business, and risk management. In the educational literature on risk-taking, the terms of academic and
intellectual risk-taking are interchangeable.

“Academic risk-taking is the student selection of school achievement tasks that vary in probability of success and accompanied by feedback or the expectation of feedback” (Clifford, 1991, pp. 276-277). Academic risk-taking consists of learners assessing familiar and unfamiliar outcomes of a learning activity (Robinson & Bell, 2013). In addition, within the learning activity, the learner can choose to become involved based on possible benefits and consequences of what is being learned (Robinson & Bell, 2013). These learning activities are significant in the context of higher education because of the many academic majors, social activities, leadership activities, and opportunities post-secondary education affords.

Although the exploration of risk-taking is uncommon in higher education, Clifford (1991) and Dewey (1916) provide theoretical and educational considerations for further exploration of academic risk-taking. They believe it is important to embrace the mere idea of risk-taking in fostering the academic achievement of adults in higher education. Teaching students to take risks as a means of learning and motivation facilitates learning and increases effort in academics. (Clifford, 1991). There is a link between thinking and risk: during the thinking and learning process, a level of uncertainty arises. Because of this uncertainty, it is important to create an environment where adults can take risks (Dewey 1916).

Method

Primary and secondary sources were used to examine academic risk-taking and activities that encouraged and fostered risk-taking in an educational setting. The key terms academic risk-taking and intellectual risk-taking were searched in the ERIC database and Google Scholar online search engine. Based on the searches, the researcher focused on the key term academic risk-taking. It was important to go back more than 10 years to obtain the historical and foundational perspectives of risk-taking and academic risk-taking. The literature was mapped out study-by-study in the field of risk-taking, academic risk-taking, and adult education. Then, the most significant studies were selected to provide new insights into academic risk-taking in higher education. In regards to methodological limitations, most risk-taking research focuses on betting games, chance, and supposed situations with little room to incorporate educational activities. In addition, the definition of moderate risk-taking varies among the literature.

Analysis

Academic Risk-Taking

First, the literature revealed that adult students preferred near-moderate risks, articulated positive attitudes towards risk, and confirmed learning benefits. Optimal challenge was determinant of learning too. The benefits of an optimal challenge related to social, motivational, and cognitive benefits (Clifford, 1991).

Some issues with risk-taking in education were cultural attitudes and methodological limitations. An example of a risk-taking cultural attitude is modifying an individual’s behavior through the idea or threat of consequences or errorless learning (Clifford, 1991). An example is the difficulty of courses in higher education. An A in an easy dance course can equate to a C in a hard math course. The cultural attitude of reinforcement or the reinforcers determine success in each course. Current reinforcement practices in the classroom limit academic risk-taking by supporting and rewarding error-free performance (Clifford, 1991). An example of error-free performance is turning in a perfect paper to a professor. Educators use stickers, extra credit, monetary incentives, or treats to minimize risk-taking.
These rewards are forms of coercion that threaten the learning process by making learning safe and using the least amount of effort for maximum gain (Clifford, 1991).

Second, the levels of risk-taking were moderate in an online educational environment (Robinson & Bell, 2013). Adults who have high levels of risk propensity had a positive outlook on risk-taking and view the online course environment as a learning gain. A better understanding of the concept of academic risk-taking will enable instructors in designing an online blended course (Robinson & Bell, 2013).

Third, the age of the teachers and involvement in the decision-making in a school setting played a significant role in the level of risk-taking. Short, Miller-Wood, and Johnson (1991) investigated the relationship of teacher perceptions of involvement in decision-making, teacher age, and gender, to perceptions of risk-taking. Adults in the 50-59 age range had a more encouraging outlook because they had more experience. The age 50-59 teachers also had confidence in their abilities to take risks. Some strategies suggested to encourage risk-taking consist of supporting experimentation, fostering innovative ideas, and having the principals at the schools trust that the teachers are making wise decisions.

**Learning and Risk-Taking**

“Learning is the engine of practice, and practice is the history of learning” (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007, p. 294). In questioning how one learns to take risks, community of practice, experiential, and self-efficacy approaches emerged. A community of practice is a collection of people who engage on an ongoing basis in some common endeavor (Eckert, 2006). A community of practice involves the educator arranging real situations for learners to practice (Merriam et al., 2007). An example of a community practice is service learning, which entails volunteer work in one’s community. The concept of a community practice is under the umbrella of experience and learning.

How one learns risk-taking thorough community of practice is within group discussions (Spitzer, 1975). Risk takers choose to work in groups to attempt ideas or be open to conversations that they probably would not have attempted as individuals. The think-pair-share instructional technique helps facilitate this group discussion. In the think-pair-share technique, students listen to a question or presentation and think for a short time; then, they are paired with another student to talk about their reflections. Once the discussions conclude, they are delivering their message to a larger group. The educator uses cues to manage student thinking by combating competitiveness, impulsivity, and passivity (McTighe & Lyman, 1988). Think-pair-share also provides support for experiential learning as a way of learning and teaching risk-taking.

Learning from experience is a process that takes meaning, reflection, and time. Dewey is integral in the idea of experiential learning because he believed that learning was a social process and a method of intelligence (Dworkin, 1959). To Dewey, learning required practice, and through practice, one gains experience. In a review of adult learning, Boucouvalas and Lawrence (2010) provided six levels of experiential learning: prior experience, current experience, new experience, learning from experience, learning from loss, and learning from the experience of others. A level of experiential learning related to the term risk-taking, specifically, is learning from loss.

Learning from loss is when one experiences difficulty (Boucouvalas & Lawrence, 2010); this forms shared communities. Learning from loss can leave a lasting effect and generate widespread compassion. It is important that an educator can recognize that negative and positive experiences can manifest into the educational environment. Adult students have an immense amount of experience that can be used for learning and teaching. Activities that can facilitate this type of learning are
assistantships, work-study positions, and internships.

These experiences allow adult students in higher education the room to take risks towards their lifelong learning path. Assistantship, work-study, and internships are experiential learning and teaching through reflection and tangible situations. What learners gain are interpersonal, intrapersonal, communication, writing, teaching, technology, research, evaluation, and many more skills that are valuable in the global workforce.

The role of experiential learning depends on the theoretical lens of the educator. Educators can engage students through critical reflection, community service, therapy, and advocacy using a constructivist, situation, psychoanalytic, critical culture, or complexity approaches (Merriam et al., 2007). All of these approaches can assist a learner in developing self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy can be described as one’s own ability to pass judgment, organize, or execute behaviors to achieve a goal (Clifford, 1991). Increased self-efficacy benefits people who learn to take challenges and moderate risks. Collins and Bissell (2004) suggest a correlation between self-efficacy and grammar ability. Some students judge themselves as good or bad writers before they ever put a pen to paper. This lack of confidence may hinder someone from taking risks with grammar. Learning activities that may assist with self-efficacy from a learner’s or educator’s point of view are focus and constant feedback, encouraging student effort during assignment, use of peer models and goal setting. Goal setting may be one of the most effective learning activities for students because it teaches students how to take steps in accomplishing a goal. Goal setting is a tool that can be taught and learned.

Post-secondary education involves books, workshops, and strategies for teaching and learning how to set goals. The most common framework used is SMART goals. SMART stands for specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely. It emphasizes learning and teaching how to be specific with a goal, how one wants to measure this goal, how to contemplate the outcome, how to figure out the possibility and setting a timetable. It also establishes the self-efficacy levels of the learner. Self-efficacy learning activities encourage students to attempt difficult tasks. This can then equate to significant academic achievement. Because learning is a form of practice and practice is the history of learning (Merriam et al., 2007), academic risk-taking should be tied to the overall premise of adult learning in higher education.

Although this paper focuses on academic risk-taking, it is important to mention non-cognitive factors that contribute to learning. Non-cognitive factors related to academic performance in teaching learners are academic behaviors, perseverance, mindsets, learning strategies, and social skills. The non-cognitive factors highlighted can assist with shaping academic performance (Farrington et al., 2012). These non-cognitive factors have dualities of negative and positive experiences for adult learners. For example, a positive mindset for academic risk-taking can result in a learner graduating with a bachelor’s degree in three years. A negative mindset for academic-risk-taking can result in a cautious outlook in passing certification exam.

Discussion

Some of the benefits of risk-taking in higher education revolve around confidence, implementing learning approaches like think-pair-share, and connecting to groups/communities. These benefits are relevant because they assist with learning and facilitate risk-taking. First, confidence is relevant to academic risk-taking because it is a form of human motivation. Confidence requires a mid-to-high level of self-efficacy. If learners develop confidence within the learning environment, then confident learners will matriculate into the global workforce. Second, innovative learning strategies hone creativity.
Educators can establish various levels of criteria for creative risks. Brain-based education is an optimal approach. Brain-based learning promotes engagement, strategies, and principles in accordance to the way the brain is naturally designed to learn (Jensen, 2008). The brain based instructional technique of relaxed alertness aims to eradicate fear from learners, while preserving a challenging environment. Lastly, the benefit of connecting to others and working within a community appeared consistently in the academic risk-taking literature. Working in an environment amongst peers will assist with uncertainties and self-judgments. The arena of higher education provides many opportunities for working with a diverse and inclusive environment and people. Within a community of practice, one can commit to shared understanding and experiences. According to Reio (2007), the field of adult education and human resources development can play a leading role in embracing risk-taking and learning “as a means of stepping from the comfort of the status quo toward situations where adult learners’ beliefs and values are tested and found to be valid” (p. 8).

Conclusion

Time magazine published a report considering the future of the class of 2025: What should the class of 2025 know and be able to do by the time they enter the institution of higher education? Though these questions obtained various responses, what stood out was the term risk in the statement, “research universities must become more agile, collaborative, and global and open to risk” (Wise, 2013, p. 46). Higher education can facilitate this openness to risk by incorporating and teaching risk-taking within academics. Traditional learning has evolved and higher education should appreciate innovation. Thus, innovation requires risk-taking.

References


How Can Fredrickson’s Broaden-and-Build Theory Enhance Personal Resources?

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Abstract: Positive psychology has garnered great attention towards understanding how individuals develop personal resources to enhance wellbeing and flow. Fredrickson’s (1998) broaden-and-build theory suggests when individuals imbue various personal resources with more positive affect, individuals are more likely able to develop greater resilient assets as a result.

The branch of positive psychology seeks to ascertain how positive emotional states can be effective in promoting long term effects in wellbeing and overall positive affect. Evolutionarily, positive emotions have been dismissed due to the difficulty surrounding exploration of individual positive states, as well as of the individual components or responses defining them. These identifying components include muscle tone, cardiovascular alterations, facial output, attention and recognition and cognition (Fredrickson & Cohn, 2010). Despite this difficulty in original identification of positive versus negative emotions, a large body of empirical evidence suggests that maintaining a positive affect promotes more advantageous outcomes, including monetary successes, problem solving acuity, physiological health, enhanced personal relationships, and increased longevity (Cohn, Fredrickson, Brown, Mikels, & Conway, 2009). Additionally this theory suggests a state that is the opposite of our natural fight or flight responses, which have been previously associated with detrimental health outcomes. This paper seeks to provide evidence for the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions, for why positive emotions were evolutionarily significant, and for how their identification was essential for the expansion of the psychological field.

The Study of Positive Emotions

The study of human emotions and their individual psychological states have been prevalent within the field for much of its history; however, rarely was the focus so great concerning the positive emotional curve. Researchers within the field of positive psychology have been attempting to clarify what has been considered an unclear line between positive emotions and similar positive affect or mood (Fredrickson & Cohn, 2010). Clinicians have been seeking compromise within the individual definitions of emotions, suggesting that they are “best conceptualized as multicomponent response tendencies—incorporating muscle tension, hormone release, cardiovascular changes, facial expression, attention, and cognition” (Fredrickson & Cohn, 2010, p. 778). Emotional states are generally characterized by moments in time, which typically have a short duration, lasting from minutes to hours, and have some personal attachment which provides significant individual meaning (Fredrickson & Cohn, 2010). Mood states, however, differ from emotional states, insomuch that they have increased duration, lasting days or months.

Fredrickson’s (1998) initial research into the field of positive emotions resulted in the discovery that many psychologists minimized the importance of the positive scale and its contributions to a well-rounded and authentic individual. This lack of empirical evidence surrounding positive emotions stems partially from an evolutionary basis that hypothesized originally that positive emotions did not play a role in natural selection of dominant traits that propagated the species. Traits such as fear, anger, and aggression were considered more advantageous as they were elicited in response to threatening situations, engaging individuals in a fight or flight reaction promoting specific physiological and
cognitive cues (Brans, Koval, Verduyn, Lim, & Kuppens, 2013). Additionally, there has been less of a preponderance of positive emotions than negative ones, in terms of facial recognition, English-language associations, and identification of positive emotions when intertwined with negative states (Fredrickson, 1998). Furthermore, the initial engenderment of psychology was to discover determinants for underlying problems and psychopathologies, of which negative emotions and affects played a significant role. Positive emotions, conversely, posed rather few problems, making research efforts to understand positive emotions insignificant in comparison. Researchers of emotions had also compartmentalized emotions under one model of understanding, formerly suggesting that the majority of emotions fell under the category of “specific action tendencies” that promoted physiological action responses in relation to autonomic brain activation (Fredrickson, 1998, p. 302). Within the empirical evidence established by Fredrickson (1998), the engenderment of positive psychology, specifically the broaden-and-build theory, enhances and enriches personal resources designed to increase wellbeing.

The Broaden and Build Theory

Fredrickson’s (1998) broaden-and-build theory was engendered from the urge to move beyond the isolation models regarding all emotions, and promote the understanding of positive emotions as a formidable function in building personal resources and resiliencies (as cited in Fredrickson & Cohn, 2010). Prior beliefs regarding negative emotions under the action tendency research additionally suggested that negative emotions had a debilitating effect of narrowing focus, such as through the fight or flight responses elicited through fear or terror (Fredrickson & Cohn, 2010).

Fredrickson (1998) proposed that when positive emotions are employed, individuals have greater capacity to broaden and enhance cognitive ability, and engage in more open-minded and flexible responses to a multitude of stimuli, along both the positive and negative spectrum (as cited in Fredrickson & Cohn, 2010). Some of the elements prevalent within this theory are the study of interest, excitement, flow, exploration, contentment, and joy, often recognized as happiness (Fredrickson, 1998; Fredrickson & Cohn, 2010). These positive emotional states have been shown to increase appraisal dimensions inherent in emotional recognition, and furthermore, have been shown to enhance motivation and mastery of concepts (Isen, 2010).

The broaden-and-build theory also posits that the appraisal nature of positive states has a lasting effect which, in addition to broadening attentional focus, has the capacity to build resources in an upward and transformative fashion (Fredrickson & Cohn, 2010). This theory also suggests that the building of resources is more durable than the initial states that led to their development due to the integrative effects of resources; in essence these resources scaffold upon one another producing greater gains than independent factors would alone (Fredrickson & Cohn, 2010). From an evolutionary standpoint, the broaden-and-build theory explains how certain adaptations, such as exploration and creativity, have led to development of greater overall resources and increased the likelihood of increased survival, lifespan longevity, and capacity to procreate (Fredrickson & Cohn, 2010). For example, the evolutionary urge to seek out and explore areas that would provide more natural resources for the survival of a cultural unit, or the creativity that has inspired modern conveniences.

Schiffrin and Falkenstern (2012) have supported the broaden-and-build model of development through the identification of how certain resources contribute to enhanced adaptations in cognitive, social, and physiological capacities. Cognitively, positive emotional states have led to increased understanding of complex concepts, or problem solving skills, and greater ability to make connections between disparate concepts. For example, students with more positive emotional states have exhibited substantially higher Graduate Record Exam scores than those who have had negative emotional states (Lyubomirsky, Boehm, Kasri, & Zhen, 2011, as cited in Schiffrin & Falkenstern, 2012).
In addition, individuals who engage in more positive behaviors are better able to make interpersonal connections, to deepen meaningful relationships, to become more attentive towards others, to evoke greater empathy, and to develop trust resources are less likely to engage in stereotyping and antisocial behaviors than their counterparts (Fredrickson & Cohn, 2010). Research into social benefits of positive emotions has also expanded the understanding of how positive affect relates to hormone release and of the importance of neurological activation, such as social awareness and altruistic behaviors (Fredrickson & Cohn, 2010). Evolutionarily, individuals who were more socially engaged further increased the chance of population survival by participating as a community during times of crisis (Schiffirin & Falkenstern, 2012).

Physiological resources are closely linked with social development, such as interaction with others or play, insomuch that it generates development of fine motor skills, increase in strength, coordination, and stamina (Fredrickson & Cohn, 2010; Olcar, 2013). Cause and effect relationships evidenced by Woo and Sharps (2003) supports that physical activity can act as a form of negative emotional release, such as when utilizing exercise to counteract stressors; further evidence indicated that regular exercise has been shown to increase longevity through the reduction of detrimental psychological and physiological health effects.

**Play and Exploration as Impacted by Broaden-and-Build**

One of the prevalent themes in positive psychology is the implication that exploration and inventiveness had evolutionary impact on our ancestry due to the fact that exploration can build greater personal resources. Olcar (2013) suggested that one of the benefits of exploration also falls into the seven emotionally innate systems, which include seeking, or exploration, and play. Play and exploration have been considered genetically advantageous because they incorporate elements that improve cognitive and social functioning that would not be engaged through regular means (Olcar, 2013). According to Olcar (2013), play, or the impulses to engage in practice behaviors distinct from authentic experiences, are processed through the frontal cortex and engage neuronal activation. This suggests the act of play generates more coherent emotional reactions to various stimuli than would be generated if play were not carried out. Educationally speaking, engaging younger students in project based learning – based on real-world modelling – allows children to engage in behaviors and cultural practices that are inherent in real-world settings (“Five Year-olds,” 2007). Children additionally develop abilities such as cooperation, problem-solving skills, coordination, identification, and communication, enriching their transfer of classroom concepts into their environment.

In research developed by Panksepp (1993) one of the predominant functions of play is its ability to promote the activation of positive emotional states and moods, which in turn elevates flexible cognitions and creativity. Play, being a state of practice for real world concepts, allows individuals to experience a gamut of emotions within the safety and security of the environment of engagement. To this end, younger children who engage in play behaviors have the opportunity to identify emotions earlier and with greater acuity than those who do not, and this in turn provides for greater identification as adults. For instance, one situation in which children have evidenced resource adaption in educational environments involves going through the actions of taking a trip, including piloting a plane, going to the airport, checking in bags, and purchasing a ticket (“Five Year-olds,” 2007). When individuals engage in positive emotions and play in an explorative environment, Fredrickson (1998) posited that these newly acquired skills will be remembered more thoroughly, and will increase cognitive schemas over time because they were learned in a safe environment (Olcar, 2013). Furthermore, these thought-action systems that promote emotional behavioral arrangements develop psychological factors that increase wellbeing, such as positive social learning and the continuance of positive emotional feelings.
Broaden-and-Build Posit Positive Emotions Generate Change

Fitzpatrick and Stalikas (2008) introduced the concept of flourishing, a schema that positive psychologists have introduced in traditional forms of psychotherapy, and that has been earnestly suggested as an integral part of therapeutic research. Researchers further suggest while positive emotions are neither an antidote for all problems, nor the absence of negative emotions, it is important to recognize the recognition of both for successful therapeutic treatments and outcomes.

In terms of therapy, the broadening research model proposed in the broaden-and-build theory is essential for laying the groundwork for universal modalities of therapeutic change. This can occur when the client expands on new ideas, has greater reappraisal of situations or cognitions, integrates new behaviors, defines more advantageous solutions, and has more invigorating experiences (Fitzpatrick & Stalikas, 2008). This is also seen over several different modalities of therapeutic approaches, such as alterations in autonomic thought patterns of a behavioral approach, and deeper perception and accounts of traumatic events in a constructivist approach (Fitzpatrick & Stalikas, 2008). When these different modalities are studied at length, we can see how the broadening fundamentals as a part of the broaden-and-build theory present the foundation for more universal approaches for therapeutic design, and how they would produce greater outcomes.

The second tenet of broaden-and-build theory suggests that the building of personal resources within a therapy setting is essentially tied into positive emotional change (Fitzpatrick & Stalikas, 2008). Beutler, Clarkin, and Bongar (2000, as cited in Fitzpatrick & Stalikas, 2008) executed extensive research, which indicated that positive emotional focus has been linked to depression reduction. Additionally, shifting personal attentional focus from key words such as anger, resentment, and depression, to terms such as joy, flow, and happiness, yielded more positive results when incorporated into treatment sessions (Fitzpatrick & Stalikas, 2008). One important note about this research is that a paradigm shift needs to occur with psychologists in order to effectively administer treatments based on the broaden-and-build model of positive emotions. In this sense, therapists would have to shift conscious focus from negative emotional arousal to attachments based on positive attentional facilitation.

One of the techniques utilized by clinicians is to harness the feelings and personal links generated by positive events and outcomes to scaffold positive emotional arousal. This creates a spiral effect that has a dual purpose; firstly, it causes the client to recognize positive emotional situations which broaden cognitive and psychological focus into other similar situations, and secondly, it creates an adaptive mechanism wherein the client generates greater feelings based on the original stimuli, solidifying the spiral effect of understanding (Fitzpatrick & Stalikas, 2008). However, it is essential that the client learns to recognize both sets of emotions and their causations in order to identify and reduce the incidence of maintaining a negative mood or emotional state. Understanding and identification is a key component to positive engagement therapies as it incorporates the client’s values and objectives (Fitzpatrick & Stalikas, 2008).

Building Resilience

Although most of the research into the broaden-and-build theory has illustrated how, theoretically, cognitive, psychological, and social changes can be increased, in regards to short term effect, this paper will now focus on how this research has longitudinal applications. One of the ways in which broaden-and-build is defined is through the broadening of positive emotional understanding and building resources as a result. However, can these positive resources lead to more fruitful and fulfilled life gratification? Cohn et al. (2009) have expressed confidence that positive emotions deepen
resiliencies that do in fact illuminate life happiness and contentment, specifically, ego resilience. Ego resilience is an adaptive ability that enables one to integrate oneself into changing environments without succumbing to life stressors, and to mitigate stressors and rebound from stressful events more substantially than those with low ego resilience (Cohn et al., 2009).

In their original research, Cohn et al. (2009) studied the effects of life satisfaction and positive traits associated with ego resilience on university students. The foundation of the research suggested that, when measured over a month period of time, ego resilience will increase due to the manufacture of positive emotions and restoration of functional traits associated with happiness (Cohn et al., 2009). The study consisted of 120 university students of various ages who agreed to submit daily reports via computer on their emotional states utilizing a modified “Differential Emotions Scale” (Fredrickson, 2003, as cited in Cohn et al., 2009, p. 363). This scale rated various subsets of both positive and negative emotions and differentiated whether or not they fell into the category of life satisfaction or ego reliance (Cohn et al., 2009). The results of the study confirmed the research hypothesis, which showed, in fact, that university students who were more aware of their positive versus negative correlates built a substantially wider range of resources that combatted daily life stressors (Cohn et al., 2009). Additionally, because of this awareness individuals were more contented in daily life and resisted negative emotions more efficiently than individuals who ranked lower on ego resilient scales (Cohn et al., 2009).

An important factor of this study is that research findings did not show that individuals with higher ego resilience were less likely to experience negative emotions; on the contrary, they experienced the same emotional gamut. The thought-provoking research outcome was that they were more fortified against long-term effects and adopted more formidable resources to reduce future incidences of the negative emotional reoccurrence. One notation on this research is that while these findings substantiate the functionalities of positive psychology and the broaden-and-build theory of happiness and contentment, the body of research is still limited because there have been few longitudinal research studies corroborating this evidence.

Fredrickson et al. (2003) documented additional research of resilient traits related to the coping management skills and the usage of these emotional regulation strategies during times of crisis. Fredrickson et al. proposed study originally was conducted to determine if resilient traits established further validation for the broaden-and-build theory, but they expanded the study to investigate if individuals who have been exposed to traumatic events maintained the same resiliencies in light of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. Fredrickson et al. additionally hypothesized that resilient individuals are not only able to maintain a positive outlook in light of crisis, but are able to thrive. Participants were university students who agreed to participate in the original research held in March of 2001 and agreed to the follow-up research conducted at the end of September 2001 (Fredrickson et al., 2003).

In the March evaluation, researchers utilized a coping response inventory which rated current stressors on a 4 point scale and asked participants various questions, including how they would handle certain stressful situations and if they had the ability to see the good in bad situations. This scale was to assist researchers in their attempt to determine valance and emotional stability within the respondent body (Fredrickson et al., 2003). In the follow-up, researchers asked respondents more open-ended questions regarding their overall views of the September 11th attack. Although the wake of the terrorist attacks shook the American people, and resulted in many individuals feeling the detrimental effects of psychological and physiological stressors in the weeks and months following the attack, researchers discovered a phenomenal outpouring of positive emotions. While not immune to feelings of depression and anguish, individuals also experienced joy at seeing loved ones, survivors gratitude, satisfaction in
everyday experiences, and blessings towards others less fortunate (Fredrickson et al., 2003). In support of the second hypothesis, Fredrickson et al. discovered individuals who had already demonstrated high levels of trait resiliencies and coping mechanisms, and who had engaged in frequent positive emotional building, experienced the least amount of stress and depression from these attacks. Furthermore, indicators of resilience were also determined by the individual’s preexisting optimism, tranquility, and overall life satisfaction (Fredrickson et al., 2003).

Generalized situations of play, or what has been considered practice for life events, can allow for compartmentalization of emotions and traits that will later have future implications for growth and resilience. However, in times of crisis, the theoretical application of practice may not be as rapidly accessed due to overwhelming emotional factors, undoing the practiced psychological and physiological arousal (Fredrickson et al., 2003). However, despite overwhelming negative emotions resultant from crisis, this research illustrates how positive emotions, when supported and scaffolded upon productive resources can support individuals’ development of coping resources and resilience.

**Job Satisfaction and Educational Emphasis from Broaden-and-Build**

One of the aspects of broaden-and-build is the ability to adapt to environmental stimuli and build resources that mitigate negative emotions while simultaneously spiraling positive emotions. The adaptations have been shown to be beneficial in areas of therapeutic application, crisis management and coping skill development, but now we are seeking to explore how positive emotions can be facilitative in everyday situations, such as educational and career pursuits. Wright et al. (2007) have studied the significant effects of positive emotions and resource development to support psychological wellbeing and enhance job satisfaction and performance. The hypothesis of this research sought to test if the enhancement of skills and abilities related to specific job performance output could be an evaluator of increased job performance (Wright et al., 2007).

Empirical findings illustrate that when individuals who display satisfactory psychological skills creating a stable foundation and work ethic, experience high levels of job satisfaction, their job performance is enhanced (Wright et al., 2007). Furthermore, this evidence suggests that the broaden-and-build model would support work related influences that could bolster job performance from within individual companies. For example, individual units within company organizations or managerial teams could benefit from team building practices, and employee-focused events that would encourage individuals to consider themselves part of the company community.

Additionally, managerial teams can be trained to assist individuals within the company to become better trained in their field, or to motivate individuals to become more autonomous. Even having family oriented resources such as childcare services and onsite psychologists have been shown to mitigate workplace stress and enhance job performance (Wright et al., 2007). Evidence also corroborated the prior research conducted by Wright and Staw (1999, as cited in Wright et al., 2007) that examined the impact of these resources to facilitate persistence of job performance over time. Although this evidence is limited by the location and participant factors, it may be beneficial to examine how these factors could be evaluated in alternative occupations and trades.

Evidence of broaden-and-build within the category of job satisfaction and job performance may be found in the experiences of student teachers participating in an abroad immersion program designed to enhance cultural knowledge, and facilitate effective teaching. Stachowski et al. (2008) studied the immersion program for student teachers and discovered correlates between successful completions of the program and success in the community. Education is a highly evolving field and requires the eagerness and attention of new teachers in the field to be constantly evolving in order to meet the
demands of its ever-changing composition. This falls under the category of broaden-and-build as these student teachers are developing the resources necessary to elevate education through realistic and relevant exchanges of scholarship (Stachowski et al., 2008). Many of the qualitative reports provided by participants offered recollections ways in which their own experiences were broadened by the community in which they were located, and based on their personal connections to these experiences. One of the accounts of a student teacher highlighted their experience on a Navaho Indian reservation as initially being what she considered a mission to “save people,” and which moved to a desire to motivate and make a difference (Stachowski et al., 2008, p. 48). Both the resulting optimism and the hopefulness expressed in these accounts are components of broaden-and-build traits. Furthermore, Stachowski et al. (2008) noted that an individual’s ability to make interpersonal connections, to foster appreciation for diversified cultures, and to develop an understanding of global communities, promotes the development of the resources to make a more positive difference.

**Conclusion**

The basis for Fredrickson’s (1998) broaden-and-build theory states that individuals who engage in more positive thinking and behaviors are better able to adapt to their environments, elicit more fulfilling lives, engage in greater personal resource development, and that this engagement can enhance factors that would promote health longevity. One caveat to this research, however, is this field of study is relatively new, and few longitudinal studies have been issued to show the effects over time. Fredrickson and Branigan (2005) posited that only two decades of research has been conducted on the effects of positive emotions, and few studies with the external validity and neutral control groups that would evidence the strength of positive versus neutral emotions. Thus, this research remains unclear as to the strength of positive emotions and their attributions. Future research analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of this theory could contribute greatly to this developmental model, in lieu of other more widely recognized theories that isolate single emotions rather than identifying how they work in tandem (Lewis, Haviland-Jones, & Barrett, 2010). What remains, however, is the current research is highly supportive of the effects of positive emotions to manufacture future evolutionary resources.

But how do we apply this to our lives, and what does this mean for the future of psychology? This research confirms the benefits of the newly engendered but rapidly expanding field of positive psychology and the benefits of the broaden-and-build body of research. Furthermore, the broaden-and-build theory establishes that building interpersonal resources is essential to maintaining a more fulfilling life.

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Health Literacy and Medicare Recipients’ Knowledge of Health Insurance Options

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Abstract: Health literacy is a major problem for the aging population (Parker, Ratzan, & Lurie, 2003). The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between health literacy and knowledge of Medicare.

A key ingredient to healthcare outcomes is health literacy. Health literacy involves determining how capable one is to process healthcare information to reach desired healthcare outcomes (Sudore et al., 2006). Health literacy is a major problem for the aging population; this population is less likely to understand written and verbal information, to follow directions, or navigate the healthcare system (Boyle et al., 2013; Parker et al., 2003). Navigating the healthcare system does not only involve processing healthcare information like prescriptions to improve health outcomes, but also involves comprehension of health insurance policies, which could improve the financial health of the Medicare beneficiary and society as a whole. Medicare beneficiaries are confused about their benefits (Dallek & Edwards, 2001; Kessler & DuGoff, 2005). Harris-Kojetin, McCormack, Jael, and Lissy (2001) emphasized “a need to develop effective ways to inform, assist, and educate beneficiaries about their Medicare plan choices” (p. 21).

Background of the Study

Health insurance is a part of the external environment of the healthcare delivery system. It is an arm or extension of the economic forces that aid in driving healthcare costs up. According to Shortell and Kaluzny (2000), external environment is “defined as all of the political, economic, social and regulatory forces that exert influence on the organization” (p. 14). External environments are constantly changing and may not be the same from one healthcare organization to another.

The United States’ Department of Health and Human Services (n.d.) listed the determinants of health as an individual’s behavior and biology and how he/she interacts with the physical and social environment, policies and interventions, and access to quality healthcare. Kickbusch (2001) included education, literacy, income, employment, and working conditions to the determinants of health. According to Toofany (2007), literacy involves three levels: functional literacy, which involves basic skills to handle everyday situations; interactive literacy, which is the ability to gather information, interpret it and apply it to changing situations; and critical literacy, which is a step further than interactive literacy because it involves analyzing and evaluating information that ultimately influences life events. Kickbusch believed that health literacy must be added to the list of skills needed for adults to function successfully in society. The Institute of Medicine (as cited in Sudore et al., 2006) defined health literacy as the “degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions” (p. 770). One of Healthy People 2020’s Health Communication and Health Information Objective is to increase health literacy of the population. Health literacy involves understanding insurance-related terms and comprehending the rules of health insurance. This is achievable through reading health insurance scenarios. Consumers must understand their health insurance policies in order to communicate better with physicians, staff, and insurance companies about health decisions.

Research has been done showing a relationship between literacy and health outcomes (Baker, Parker, Williams, Clark, & Nurss, 1997; Howard, Sentell, & Gazmararian, 2006; Paasche-Orlow & Wolf, 2007). Research in health literacy also has been directed toward the education of patients so that they may understand diseases and how to maintain their health (Seligman et al., 2007; Tappe & Galer-
Statement of the Problem

Health literacy is a major problem in the United States (Evans, 2013). Senior citizens, who often have chronic diseases, are living longer, and utilize a large portion of healthcare services (Cutilli, 2007), are more inclined to have low health literacy skills (Boyle et al., 2013). Health literacy is related to cost (Baker et al., 1998; Weiss & Palmer, 2004). Studies have concluded that people with inadequate literacy/health literacy have higher hospital charges or higher risks of hospital admissions (Baker et al., 1998; Baker et al., 2002; Weiss & Palmer, 2004). Developing a better understanding of health literacy and Medicare beneficiaries’ knowledge may have a positive impact on the containment of healthcare costs.

Adult Learning Theory

Many theorists are associated with Adult Learning; perhaps the most well-known is Knowles. Adult learning theory originates from Knowles’ concept of andragogy (Merriam, 2001). Andragogy is the study of how adults learn (Baumgartner, Lee, Birden, & Flowers, 2003). Five tenets of andragogy include an adult learner having a deep sense of autonomy, rich life experiences, and needs that correlate with desired life roles; the adult learner is persistent in solving problems, and internally motivated to learn (Merriam, 2001).

Rudd (2007) suggested partnerships between the health industry and adult education industry are necessary to accomplish an increase in health literacy rates. Golbeck et al.’s (2005) recommendations include developing a better assessment tool to measure health literacy, establishing a set of health literacy competencies, and developing curricula to use in adult education programs. These are important recommendations, but adult education programs will not encompass all individuals who have low levels of literacy such as non-English speaking adults; therefore, other ways to educate should be undertaken.

Health Literacy/Literacy

Literacy is a major problem for the United States. An estimated 40 to 44 million people do not have basic English reading skills (Cutilli, 2005). It is ironic that this number and the number of uninsured are closely related. Another 50 million read but without good understanding (Cutilli, 2005). These statistics mean that about 90 million people in the United States do not possess critical skills to navigate the healthcare system or any other system (Boyle, 2013; Cutilli, 2005; Speros, 2005).

Health literacy is important to the consumer because it impacts health outcomes, health costs and quality of care. Health literacy has been measured using the Test of Functional Health Literacy in Adults (TOFHLA) and the Rapid Estimate of Adult Literacy in Medicine (Greenberg, 2001).

Paasche-Orlow and Wolf (2007) researched reading abilities as it relates to understanding patient education material to increase health outcomes. Baker et al. (2002) found a correlation between literacy and longer hospitals stays with higher cost. Williams et al. (1995) found that the majority of patients waiting in the emergency room were marginally health literate. In a study of Medicare patients, Baker et al. (1998) found adults with low literacy levels reported poorer health than those with higher literacy levels.

Understanding of healthcare information is a national problem affecting all age groups, not just Medicare beneficiaries. These problems have received nationwide attention. Rudd (2007) explained that numerous studies confirm healthcare information is written past a college education reading level; this stifles communication. Health literacy involves determining how capable one is to process healthcare
information to reach desired health outcomes (Sudore et al., 2006). Health literacy involves not only reading and understanding physicians’ instructions but also reading and understanding health insurance policies such as Medicare.

### Medicare Recipients’ Knowledge

Since the addition of Medicare Part C (also known as Medicare Advantage), many recipients have been confused about the services offered by Medicare (Dallek & Edwards, 2001; Hibbard et al., 1998; Kessler & DuGoff, 2005; Morgan et al., 2008). Hibbard et al. (1998) studied older people ages 65 to 80 and their knowledge and comprehension of Medicare and managed care. Important findings include that Medicare Advantage recipients learned about Medicare differently from Original Medicare recipients; 30% of the 1,673 respondents did not know anything about HMOs; Original Medicare recipients were better able to distinguish a HMO plan from a traditional plan; and Medicare Advantage recipients thought that HMO and the traditional Medicare plan were the same (Hibbard et al., 1998). Therefore, Hibbard et al.’s study supports the notion that health literacy has been a problem for Medicare recipients as it relates to health insurance for a number of years.

Kessler and DuGoff (2005) with help from the Medicare Rights Center and the Consumer Action Board concluded that the beneficiaries need guidance with Medicare options. The Consumer Action Board reported Medicare recipients did not understand their benefits. One reason for this confusion is the lack of knowledge about health insurance options. Recipients did not know basic differences between a managed care plan and a traditional plan. After the Balanced Budget Act of 1997, Medicare recipients had to choose between the original Medicare and Medicare Advantage (originally called Medicare + Choice). Medicare Advantage includes different health plans like health maintenance organizations and preferred provider plans that are managed by private organizations. Morgan et al. (2008) explains Medicare recipients find it difficult to choose a health plan. Dallek and Edwards (2001) explained that Medicare beneficiaries could not cope with sorting out the different plans that are included with Medicare Advantage. The Medicare handbook identifies five plans in Medicare Advantage: Preferred Provider Organization (PPO) Plan, HMO Plan, Private Fee-for Service Plan, Medical Savings Account Plan, and Special Needs Plan. These plans usually include Part A and B along with a prescription drug option; they may differ by cost, thus having different premiums, deductibles, co-payments, or coinsurance for services offered.

### Study Variables

The independent (predictor) variable in this study was health literacy (defined as knowledge of insurance-related terminology and reading comprehension). The independent variable of health literacy was measured by the Health Literacy survey. The dependent variable in this study was knowledge of original Medicare and Medicare Advantage; the dependent variable was measured by the Medicare Knowledge survey.

### Research Question

Research question: Is there a relationship between health literacy rates (knowledge of insurance-related terminology and reading comprehension) and knowledge of one’s health insurance options among Medicare recipients in a southwest Georgia community?

A. **Null Hypothesis:** There is no significant relationship between health literacy defined as insurance-related terminology and reading comprehension and knowledge of original Medicare and Medicare Advantage among Medicare recipients in a southwest Georgia community.

B. **Alternative Hypothesis:** There is a significant positive relationship between health literacy defined as insurance-related terminology and reading comprehension and knowledge of original Medicare and Medicare Advantage among Medicare recipients in a southwest Georgia community.
Medicare and Medicare Advantage among Medicare recipients in a southwest Georgia community.

Method

Approximately 100 senior citizens residing in supervised public housing in a Southwest Georgia community represented the target population of this study. The total number of participants was 66 Medicare recipients. Permission from Capella University Institutional Review Board and the local senior Property Managers of a Southwest Georgia community was granted, and the participants signed consent forms to participate in the study; lobby based and door-to-door surveys were collected.

The cross sectional quantitative surveys investigated the relationship between the independent variable of health literacy and the dependent variable knowledge of original Medicare and Medicare Advantage. Medicare knowledge and health literacy surveys, developed by Bann and McCormack RTI International (2005), were utilized for this study. A correlation study was used to examine the relationship between health literacy, and knowledge of original Medicare and Medicare Advantage. The Health Literacy and Medicare knowledge surveys were administered to senior citizens in the buildings where they live. Each survey had 11 questions. One survey measured health literacy with 7 questions about reading comprehension and 4 questions about terminology. The other survey measured knowledge of original Medicare and Medicare Advantage with five questions about original Medicare, and six questions about Medicare Advantage. All questions were either true/false, yes/no, or multiple-choice. Reliability and validity estimates were obtained by McCormack et al. (2009). According to McCormack et al. (2009), the alpha values for both surveys were .85; therefore, the reliability for these surveys was good. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software was used to analyze the data collected from surveys.

Sixty-six residents volunteered to take the Medicare knowledge and Health Literacy surveys. Descriptive statistics were obtained on the demographic variables including age, education, and race. Some participants did not complete all questions. The typical respondent was African American, between the ages of 66-70, and had a high school diploma. Thirty-two (57%) of the respondents had high school diplomas; twenty-four (43%) had 2 years or more of college. The ages of the participants ranged from 60 to over 81, but the majority of participants (17, or 32%) were between 66 and 70 years old; 60-65 (28%); 71 to 75 (17%); 76-80 (8%); and 81 and above (15%).

Results

The Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient was used to measure the association between health literacy and knowledge of Original Medicare (see Table 1). The correlation statistic $r$ was .39 ($p < .001$) for the independent variable of health literacy (reading comprehension score). The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

Table 1. *Pearson Correlation Coefficient Between Health Literacy and Knowledge of Original Medicare*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>$N$</th>
<th>$r$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Terminology</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>.039</td>
<td>.758</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Comprehension</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>.386*</td>
<td>.001</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Note. *Correlation is significant at \( p < .05 \).

Seven multiple-choice or yes/no questions measured reading comprehension on the Health Literacy survey. Some participants left some questions blank.

1. Participants did not have any major problems answering Health Literacy Question 5 (regarding Medicare information being available in Spanish); 45 (68%) participants chose the correction answer, and 21 (39%) chose the wrong answer or left it blank.
2. Forty-seven (71%) participants chose the right answer for Health Literacy Question 6 (regarding losing a Medicare card), and 19 (29%) chose the wrong answer or left it blank.
3. Thirty-seven (56%) participants chose the right answer for Health Literacy Question 7 (regarding speaking to a Medicare representative), and 29 (44%) chose the wrong answer or left it blank.
4. Nineteen (28%) participants chose the right answer for Health Literacy Question 8 (regarding plans that cover vision services), and 47 (71%) chose the wrong answer or left it blank.
5. Twenty-four (36%) participants chose the right answer for Health Literacy Question 9 (regarding plans that cover routine physical exams), and 42 (64%) chose the wrong answer or left it blank.
6. Thirty (45%) participants chose the right answer for Health Literacy Question 10 (regarding plans that have the lowest monthly premium), and 36 (55%) chose the wrong answer or left it blank.
7. Twenty-four (36%) participants chose the right answer for Health Literacy Question 11 (regarding plans that cover prescription drugs), and 42 (64%) chose the wrong answer or left it blank.

Please note that of the seven reading comprehension questions, the majority of the participants answered three of the seven correctly. The correlation statistic \( r \) was \(-.04\) (\( p = .758 \)) for the independent variable, health literacy (terminology score). The correlation is not significant (\( p = .758 \)). The null hypothesis was not rejected.

Four multiple-choice questions in the Health Literacy section of the survey measured terminology.

1. Thirty-eight (58%) participants chose the right answer for Health Literacy Question 1 (regarding the term appeal).
2. Forty-two (64%) participants chose the right answer for Health Literacy Question 2 (regarding the term assignment).
3. Forty-eight (73%) participants chose the right answer for Health Literacy Question 3 (regarding the term preventive care).
4. Thirty-five (53%) participants chose the right answer for Health Literacy Question 4 (regarding the term provider network).

The Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient was used to measure the association between health literacy and knowledge of Medicare Advantage. The correlation statistic \( r \) was \( .47\) (\( p < .001 \)) for the independent variable of health literacy (reading comprehension score). This correlation is significant at the 0.01 level. The correlation statistic \( r \) was \( .12\) (\( p = .359 \)) for the independent variable of health literacy (terminology score). This correlation is not significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected. In summary, health literacy (reading comprehension score) was significant for knowledge of Medicare Advantage, but health literacy (terminology score) was not significant for knowledge of Medicare Advantage (see Table 2).
Table 2. Pearson Correlation Coefficient Between Health Literacy and Knowledge of Medicare Advantage

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>r</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Terminology</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>.115</td>
<td>.359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Comprehension</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>.474*</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *Correlation significant at p <.05.

Discussion

This research examined the relationship between health literacy rates (knowledge of insurance-related terminology and reading comprehension) and knowledge of health insurance options among Medicare recipients in a Southwest Georgia community. In summary, the reading comprehension score of health literacy has a significant positive relationship with knowledge of Original Medicare and Medicare Advantage but the terminology score of health literacy was not significant, and therefore it did not have a significant relationship with knowledge of Original Medicare or Medicare Advantage. Harris-Kojetin et al. (2001) posited that because Americans are living longer with chronic diseases, it is essential that older Americans with chronic diseases understand their health terminology and be able to read with comprehension. Apparently, knowledge of the terms is not an issue with the participants of this study but understanding the terms with application is an issue. This echoes Cutilli’s (2005) finding that 50 million people read but without good understanding.

Medicare has existed since 1965, and therefore individuals may be more familiar with Medicare terminology. The complexity of Medicare has increased over time and now it is not enough to be familiar with the terminology but Medicare recipients need to apply their knowledge to the type of plan needed to fit their lifestyle.

Participants may not have been forthcoming about issues on the survey that they did not feel confident addressing. Perhaps due to trust issues and not knowing how this information would affect the individual’s Medicare, respondents did not always answer all of the questions. The sample may not be representative of the general senior citizen population, and therefore lacks external validity and the ability to generalize to other populations.

The more one reads about Medicare, the more knowledgeable one becomes about making Medicare health insurance decisions. Hibbard et al. (1998) found that Original Medicare beneficiaries learned about Medicare from reading news articles. Medicare is not learned through formal educational channels. Area Council on Aging Center representatives raise awareness of Medicare issues by visiting senior functions. Information is on the Internet and in the Medicare handbook, but many senior citizens do not know how to use the computer and if their reading skills are poor, they will not benefit from the handbook. Therefore, Medicare beneficiaries may be familiar with terms and hear information from speakers, but reading is still the key to increasing their comprehension of Medicare policies and procedures.

Conclusion
Medicare recipients in this Southwest Georgia community are familiar with terms of Medicare. Health literacy in terms of reading comprehension score has a significant relationship with knowledge of Original Medicare and Medicare Advantage. This study supports the recommendation made earlier by Rudd (2007) that the health industry and adult education industry need to partner to increase health literacy rates. This would create a generation that is more prepared to make healthcare decisions as they get older and encounter Medicare concerns (e.g. what plan to enroll in) and problems (e.g. how and when to change plans).

References


Gaining Insight into Teaching: The Lived Experiences of Teachers of the Year

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Abstract: What qualities describe outstanding teachers? Many stakeholders in education argue that student achievement indicates teacher quality. Ten Teachers of the Year participated in this qualitative study, showing their lives as outstanding teachers personify four roles and two phenomena. Findings indicate the need to investigate the moral dimension of teaching.

In 2005, Fenstermacher and Richardson asked if “there is any sure way to tease out the characteristics and properties of quality teaching” (p. 186), and the question persists. Given the current educational climate of teacher accountability and performance-based measures, the value-added model to measure the effectiveness of teachers has established itself as the gold standard in measuring teacher performance. It is accepted that the teacher is the most important factor to impact student performance (Goldhaber & Anthony, 2004), but the debate over the qualities, skills, and knowledge that characterize and identify good teachers continues (Berry, 2010; Harris & Sass, 2008). Goldhaber and Anthony (2007) explained that education research has failed to reach a consensus over which, if any, readily identifiable teacher characteristics are associated with students’ learning gains.

The common denominator among studies measuring teacher quality (McGee, 2006) is that “effectiveness is a vague concept when considering the complex task of teaching” (p. 30). The focus on linking effective teaching to student scores on standardized tests assumes that effective teaching arises solely from and because of the actions of the teacher. As such, the basis of current educational policy rests upon a causal connection between teacher quality and student learning as measured by students’ test scores. This policy, derived from the “Teaching as Transmission—Process-Product Research” (Fenstermacher & Richardson, 2005, p. 198) model, defines teacher effectiveness as the use of certain empirically-supported, successful instructional behaviors to transmit knowledge and skills to students. Students’ achievement signals the effective teachers, and in turn, the instructional methods of these teachers are touted as best practices. However, Fenstermacher and Richardson (2005) contend that teaching practices, in and of themselves, do not facilitate effective, quality teaching; rather, quality teaching results from a combination of learner engagement, a nurturing learning environment, sufficient learning opportunities, and intentional practices on the part of the teacher.

Furthermore, Polanyi (1962) and Schön (1987) explored the existence of an informal educational practice, whereby the intuition and feelings of the teacher unconsciously influence his or her way of being in the classroom. Palmer (1997) asserted that effective teachers know themselves, their students, and their subjects on a deeper level; the act of teaching materializes from one’s inwardness. Similarly, van Manen (1991) introduced the related construct of “pedagogical tact” (p. 122); where the effective teacher seems to tap into an undefined, internal source of understanding, facilitating spontaneous, appropriate responses or actions to actual situations.

Fundamental Western philosophical thought offers two distinct attitudes that direct meaning for the term “teacher”: (a) the teacher facilitates critical thinking and understanding through a mutually educative and caring relationship between himself and his pupil, and (b) the teacher delivers a set of prescribed mindsets to his student through directed methodologies (McEwan, 2011). The first speaks of a teacher who fosters a relationship with the students and works in collaborative “life situations in which the meaning of facts, ideas, principles, and problems is vitally brought home” (Dewey as cited in
McEwan, 2011, p. 134). This definition embodies a moral obligation and a realization that schooling “serves more expansive ends than scores of academic achievement” (Sanger & Osguthorpe, 2011, p. 570). Noddings (1991) asserted that nurturing the child’s moral fiber is the primary responsibility of teachers. Burant, Chubbuck and Whipp (2007) discussed the teacher’s practice in terms of ideas and feelings that reflect a “moral sensibility” (p. 405), which connects the selfhood of the teacher with his or her behaviors in the classroom.

The other philosophy describes the teacher engaged in formalized and generalized instructional methods. In this view, the teacher is responsible for the delivery of information via the deployment of an artificial or constructed system; teaching is only the act of “the application of approved techniques and practices” (McEwan, 2011, p. 128). This position asserts that education is for a specific product, rather than to value knowledge and reasoning abilities in and of themselves (Smith, 1996, 2000). This philosophy follows the scientific management and social efficiency theory models that emerged in correlation with the Industrial Revolution in the United States (Bobbitt, 2009).

In the midst of this ongoing struggle to define teacher quality, little research asks those individuals recognized as outstanding teachers about their own teaching experiences in relationship to good teaching. To date, few studies focus on self-defining the phenomenon of what it means to be an effective teacher. Although the literature reviewed included studies of Teachers of the Year (ToYs), these studies failed to illuminate the inner nature of being a ToY (Agne, 1999; Fenderson, 2011; Jensen & Templeton, 1993; McGill, 1999; McNeely, 2004; Puglisi, 1986; Rushton, Knopp, & Smith, 2006; Shanoski & Hranitz, 1992; Skretta, 2009; Van Schaack & Glick, 1982; Verner, 1999; Wallace, 2008). Lacking in these research efforts is the exploration of the ToY’s possible intangible dimensions, such as those represented by van Manen’s concept of tacit knowledge (1991) or Palmer’s concept of inner selfhood (1997, 1998).

Given the gaps in the literature, the researcher used a phenomenological platform for the study. Research conducted under the philosophical theoretic framework of phenomenology describes an experience and reflects on that description to “construct a possible interpretation of the nature of a certain human experience” (van Manen, 1991, p. 41); in other words, to come to know something and know that we know it. Phenomenology, as a philosophical framework of inquiry, is an appropriate foundation for the study of human behavior because it allows the researcher and the subjects of the study “to understand the meaning that people have constructed about their…experiences” (Merriam, 2002, pp. 4-5); in the human science model (Polkinghorne, 1983), knowledge results from new understanding about human phenomena. The phenomenological research questions were: (a) How is teaching experienced by recognized as outstanding Teachers of the Year (ToYs)? and (b) How do the feelings and perceptions of ToYs about being good teachers provide insight, if any, about the relevance to teaching of concepts such as pedagogical tact (van Manen, 1991), teacher selfhood (Palmer, 1998) and professional dispositions (Burden & Byrd, 2012)? The phenomenological framework supports the new understandings that surface from the descriptions of lived experiences, bringing a depth and breadth to our knowledge base; they deepen and enrich our perceptions, resulting in more valuable understandings than any formerly held about the world of everyday life.

**Method**

The researcher employed the phenomenological method to conduct this study because it offers the researcher and the participants the opportunity to be in the world and of the world simultaneously; derived meanings are subjective because they do not exist outside of one’s consciousness (Romdenh-Romluc, 2011). The phenomenological method is intentional in this sense; it is necessary for the researcher and the participants to recognize on a conscious level the relationship that they have to the
object under study. This method necessitates bracketing out personal intentionalities – one’s customary, taken-for-granted understandings or natural attitude. Emerging from this reductive process is the essence of a phenomenon. Studies conducted using phenomenology do not seek to confirm or negate a preconceived hypothesis, but rather gather, analyze, and synthesize interview data to construct themes inductively and to identify possible issues or factors that may offer an enlightened understanding of effective teachers in their lived experience. In this investigation, the goal was to understand the essential structures of the ToYs within their lived experience as recognized as outstanding teachers.

Sample

This investigation employed criterion purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002), requiring the participants to hold ToY status. Purposeful sampling generated a wide variety of participants (Figure 1), providing diversity in gender, years teaching, grade levels, subject matter expertise, educational background, etc., and in turn, afforded information-rich stories from the ToYs (Patton, 2002). The School Broward of County Florida furnished a list of the past 24 years of finalists and winners of their Teacher of the Year Award (BCTOY) who were still classroom teachers for the district. The researcher contacted and invited the ToYs to participate in the study via email. Using pseudonyms, 10 ToYs (Figure 1), participated in 60-90 minute, in person, audiotaped, semi-structured interviews.

Data Collection and Analysis

The primary method of data collection was semi-structured interviews of the participants. The phenomenological investigation customarily employs this method of inquiry because this research approach originates from the internal perspective of the participant and not from an external point of view (Moustakas, 1994). Although the researcher had a drafted list of possible interview questions, the participant’s responses determined probing or follow-up questions (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Personal essays written as part of the ToY application process provided supplementary data (Jensen & Templeton, 1993; Van Schaack & Glick, 1982; Verner, 1999; Wallace, 2008). It is typical for ToY applicants to respond to a variety of essay prompts that may reflect their philosophical and pragmatic dispositions of teaching as a lived experience (Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO], 2011). Bogdan and Biklen (2007) stated that such material could provide “rich descriptions of how the people who produced the materials think about their world” (p. 133).

The researcher maintained a journal during the data collection and analysis process, and interviews were transcribed manually and member-checked; the researcher and an independent peer in qualitative research individually coded the transcripts (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Merriam, 2002; Patton, 2002). The coding process facilitates the identification of themes that describe and define the lived experience of the participants.

Coding is a systematic classification procedure to organize the data collected. The analysis of the coded transcripts followed a manual implementation of the Moustakas (1994) modified version of the Van Kaam method of analysis of phenomenological data. This process requires the researcher to identify (mark), categorize, classify, and label the primary patterns or themes in the data (Patton, 2002). Analysis proceeds in four steps that drill down from one level to another, each time uncovering another layer of meaning, until the researcher can synthesize the textural and structural description of the data to produce a rich and comprehensive picture of the essence of the phenomenon. A peer’s independent coding verified the researcher’s identification and analysis of themes. Furthermore, the researcher’s journal provided opportunities for reflectivity and an audit trail of information collected.
Results

In response to the primary research question – How is teaching experienced by recognized as outstanding Teachers of the Year? – the data analysis generated four categories or roles: (a) Lovers, (b) Doers, (c) Shakers, and (d) Believers. The participants live these four roles concurrently. They do not separate their practice of teaching from the rest of their lives; for each ToY in this investigation, teaching is his or her life, his or her way of being in the world: “I mean this is my life, the classroom and everything; this is what I do” (Diane).

As Lovers, the ToYs love children, love teaching, love learning, and love their subject matter. Participants’ remarks exemplify the role of Lover: “If you don’t love children, find another job” (Juliette); “I fell in love with teaching” (Christopher). Sylvia said, “I love talking about this stuff. I can talk about this all day.” Each in his or her own way, the ToYs exude passion as they talk about themselves as a teacher. The researcher’s journal included comments such as, “Rosa sounds like her heart is doing the talking”; and “José is beaming; his smile is glowing.”

In their role as Doers, the ToYs explained that they accept responsibilities, set goals, and employ methods. Taina spoke holistically as a Doer: “Because there’s so much to get done… and you have to find the time.” James talked about his responsibility to ensure student comprehension: “How I can help the students step up, in terms of their understanding of the curriculum…I’ve done a lot of work toward the Internet to make sure that they have all the extra resources.” Diane discussed her main goal as “just to make them [her students] excited about learning and to push them to do as much as they can.”

The ToYs are Shakers because they described themselves as managing change, and managing authority and autonomy. Marie describes balancing administrative authority over her with her own autonomy: “I don’t presume to tell any administrator what should or shouldn’t happen…I’m careful about it; I ask, ‘How about if we try to do this?’” As a change-agent, Rosa recalled how she “started AP here with foreign language a long time ago,” and that “I [she] decided, you know, just have Spanish V after IV, because…they [her students] wanted to go on to V, as an honors class.” After 21 years teaching music, Juliette’s administrator assigned her half-time to music and half-time to PE. She admitted that she didn’t like it, but she managed to find common benchmarks in both content areas, and “I [she] tried to use Musical PE and Physical Music all year long.”

Lastly, the ToYs demonstrate an infinite capacity for hope – hope in their students, in themselves, and in the world. The cavernous scope and depth of their positive belief system echoes each time the ToY believes in a better tomorrow as he or she coaches, nurtures, or presents an optimistic attitude. “Well, I kind of look at myself as the coach….cheer them on, give them skills and things they can utilize” (Tom). As a nurturer, José called his students “my kids,” and his classes “a family.” He repeated the idea that he “prepare[s] them for life.” From Sylvia’s ToY essay, her optimism is clear: “My role is to be a catalyst for their growth…to teach them form and a way of being in the world.”

In response to the secondary research question – How do feelings and perceptions of Teachers of the Year (ToYs) about being good teachers provide insight, if any, about the relevance to teaching of concepts such as pedagogical tact, teacher selfhood, and professional dispositions? – the data analysis designated two phenomena: (a) Moments of Knowingness and (b) Inexplicable Power.

Both phenomena are metaphoric expressions to describe those moments when the ToYs know that good teaching is happening in their classrooms. Taina talked about “want[ing] to see children’s eyes light up” and Christopher compared the phenomenon of knowingness to being “like God said, ‘touch you.”
The metaphor Inexplicable Power relates to a strength or gift of force that the ToYs possess. The ToYs did not acquire or learn this power or control consciously; the ToYs only became aware of having experienced this phenomenon in the aftermath of their effecting a positive outcome in their respective classroom. Diane narrated the concept thusly: “You can turn something that’s ordinary into something extraordinary, just put a twist to it, a little effort, something different.” Sylvia asked the researcher if “being alive in the field of teaching [is] teachable.” In Tom’s discussion about comparing himself to water, he explained: “Water is harmless, but it’s flexible, persistent. It can move mountains.” Christopher may have said it best when he thanked me by expressing that he found renewal as a teacher from the interview experience; he remarked how “even this interview…it energizes you again.”

The findings reveal an intricate combination of factors among the ToYs, indicating that teaching is their lifeblood, the organic fuel that sustains life in them. José declared, “It’s how I am…I feel energy,” and Sylvia exclaimed, “I am alive in the field of teaching!” The four roles and two phenomena of the ToYs that surfaced from their stories suggest defined core attitudes (dispositions) and an unconscious, internal wellspring. The data analysis uncovers that the ToYs have an “an active sensitivity…an insight while relying on feelings” (van Manen, 1991, p. 144), and “if you go deep…you find the hidden wholeness” (Palmer, 1997, para. 71); the ToYs exhibit “values, commitments, and professional ethics that influence teacher behavior” (Burden & Byrd, 2012, p. 4). Thus, the lived experience of the ToYs suggests that they embody intangible aspects reflective of van Manen’s (1991) pedagogical tact, Palmer’s (1997) inner selfhood and spirituality, and Burden and Bryd’s (2012) professional dispositions.

**Discussion**

The results of this study indicate good teaching happens when the ToYs get through to their students using effective and moral means. The ToYs did not mention students’ test scores as part of their lived experience as a quality teacher.

The essence of the roles and phenomena revealed that the ToYs are effective in getting through to students by being emotionally open; they exhibit deep capacity to feel and trust their feelings; to teach from the heart; to teach who he or she is; to teach honestly and openly. Participants are effective in getting through to students by having a sense of the sacred in their knowing, in their teaching, and in their learning. The sense of the sacred is the inner selfhood of the teachers, connecting so strongly and intimately with their subject, their students, and their learning that they can know “the inwardness of the things of the world” (Parker, 1997, para. 45). Furthermore, the ToYs are effective in getting through to their students because they operate from a sense of intentionality: Intentionality means doing things for a reason, or on purpose. Intentional teachers are those who are constantly thinking about the outcomes that they want for their students (Psychology Campus, 2004-2008, para. 5).

The essence of ToYs is the manifestation of their fundamental moral fibers, representing the teacher’s value system (character), the teacher’s ability to understand and apply ethical behaviors (intellect), and the teacher’s capacity to demonstrate concern and compassion for others (caring). These moral fibers surface as dispositions that are identifiable by the teacher’s conduct (Sockedt, 2006).

**Implications**

In exploring the phenomenology of the quality teacher based on the lived experiences of teachers of the year (ToYs), this study speaks directly to the need for educator preparation programs to consider, foster, and measure the dispositions necessary for teacher candidates to address the needs of all students. In moving forward with ever-increasing standards and measurable systems of accountability, it is
difficult to envision how the emotional or affective nature of good teaching can thrive. In losing sight of values and beliefs that directly inform how human beings feel, then the practice of teaching is in trouble. If the inner selfhood of perspective teachers is not considered, then teacher educators and administrators may be training, recruiting, and hiring individuals without heart and soul. If pre-service and new teachers lack the nurturing and mentoring to develop heightened sensibilities and to trust their inner selfhood, then teacher education programs and schools forfeit the opportunity to grow good teachers. If a teaching soul can be educated, then teacher education programs should embrace a curriculum that assists pre-service teachers to understand themselves and to become aware of their inner selfhood.

Conclusion

Clearly, the stories of the lived experiences of 10 ToYs are an insufficient basis on which to build a platform for teacher education. However, the study paves the way for subsequent phenomenological explorations of the lived experience of teachers, such as those teachers whose students’ test scores show marked improvement from one year to the next, or those teachers having completed different pathways to certification. Teacher preparation programs should test and research curriculum and interventions that are specifically designed to develop heart and soul in pre-service teachers.

The current focus on identifying effective teachers does not include the moral dimension of teaching. Why is that the case? The idea of effectiveness linked to purpose receives credence from research on worker effectiveness in other professional arenas. Harris and Rutledge (2010), in their research on worker effectiveness, conclude that the choice of the effectiveness measure defines the educational outcomes that are important and establishes the purpose of the work. These authors maintain that the underlying purpose, or in their words, “theory of ethics,” lies within the realm of philosophy and defines what the work is supposed to accomplish, and the theory of behavior (or theory of action) is rooted in the social and psychological sciences and establishes how people achieve the objectives established by the theory of ethics. In this sense, an interconnection of the two theories exists, and one cannot have a model of effectiveness without the confluence of both theories. It seems logical then that the moral dimension of teaching would be a significant aspect to consider when identifying effective teachers.

References


### Figure 1

**Profiles of the Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Ethnicity and Gender</th>
<th>Highest Degree Earned</th>
<th>National Board Certified</th>
<th>ToY Finalist or Winner</th>
<th>Grade Level or Subject Taught</th>
<th>Years Teaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>White Female</td>
<td>MS</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Winner</td>
<td>Grades 9-12 English/Language Arts</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christopher</td>
<td>White Male</td>
<td>MS</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Winner</td>
<td>Grades 9-12 Biology and Chemistry</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>White Male</td>
<td>MS</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Finalist</td>
<td>Grades 9-12 Mathematics</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diane</td>
<td>African American Female</td>
<td>BS</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Finalist</td>
<td>Grades Pre K-5 Kindergarten</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosa</td>
<td>Hispanic Female</td>
<td>MS</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Finalist</td>
<td>Grades 9-12 Spanish and French</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taina</td>
<td>Hispanic Female</td>
<td>Ed S</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Winner</td>
<td>Grades 6-8 ESE, ESOL, and Reading</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juliette</td>
<td>White Female</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Finalist</td>
<td>Grades K-5 General Music</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>José</td>
<td>Hispanic Male</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Finalist</td>
<td>Grades 9-12 JROTC</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>Asian American Male</td>
<td>MS</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Finalist</td>
<td>Grades 9-12 Social Sciences</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sylvia</td>
<td>White Female</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Finalist</td>
<td>Grades 9-12 Drama</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX A: CODING CATEGORIES USED IN THIS STUDY

Research Question One

Four major themes emerged from the data in relation to research question one. A color marked each major theme. Sub-themes surfaced within each major theme. Abbreviations marked the identified sub-themes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Color Code</th>
<th>Abbreviation Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ToYs as Lovers</strong> (yellow)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lovers of Children</td>
<td>LC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lovers of Teaching</td>
<td>LT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lovers of Learning</td>
<td>LL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lovers of Subject Matter</td>
<td>LSM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ToYs as Doers</strong> (green)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doers accept Responsibilities</td>
<td>DR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doers set Goals</td>
<td>DG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doers employ Methods, Procedures and Processes</td>
<td>DMPP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ToYs as Shakers</strong> (pink)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shakers manage Change</td>
<td>SC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shakers manage Authority and Autonomy</td>
<td>SAA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ToYs as Believers</strong> (blue)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believers as Coaches</td>
<td>BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believers as Nurturers</td>
<td>BN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believers as Optimists</td>
<td>BO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question Two

Two major themes emerged from the data in relation to research question two. A number marked each major theme.

1. Moments of Knowingness (1)
2. Inexplicable Power (2)
Exploring Seventh Graders’ Perceptions of the Picture-Word Inductive Model in their Narrative Writing in China

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Abstract: In this exploratory study, the researcher interviewed 30 seventh graders in China about their perceptions of a new method, the Picture-Word Inductive Model (PWIM). The study found that participants welcomed PWIM and exemplified the positive influence of PWIM on their narrative writing.

China has the largest population of English learners and users now: approximately 440 million English-learning and English-using people (see Crystal, 2008), which is a result of the central educational policy of teaching English as a core and compulsory subject for decades. For those many years of teaching English in China, a strong instructional focus has been promoted on grammar, reading, and translation, with a method called “teacher-centered textbook-analysis-based grammar-translation” (Yang, 2000, p. 19). This traditional approach is not the only English teaching approach implemented in China nowadays, because the approach “has failed to develop an adequate level of communicative competence” (Hu, 2002, p.93) and the English learners and users in China need more competence and skills (e.g., writing, speaking, and communicative competence), principally due to economic, political, and social influences.

The Picture-word Inductive Model (PWIM), as a new English Language Teaching (ELT) approach that had never been used in China before, might be essential to the ongoing new English education because of its wide recognition and application in educational institutes in North America and Taiwan (Calhoun, 1999; Feng, 2011; Swartzendruber, 2007; Wong, 2009). This instructional approach potentially enables learners to manage the meaning and use of new words, empowers learners from passive learning to active and productive learning by expressing themselves using speaking or/and writing, and helps learners write up paragraphs step by step from adding up words, phrases and sentences.

In spite of its delicate narrations, true-to-life scenarios and wide popularity in other places than Mainland China, PWIM has its weaknesses in terms of research studies. Until now, there have been only a few research studies of PWIM (e.g., Calhoun, 1999; Feng, 2011; Joyce et al., 2009; Swartzendruber, 2007; Wong, 2009) since Calhoun’s (1999) research. In those research studies, PWIM is not the only intervention in the learners’ language development, so it cannot be inferred from the results that PWIM alone contributes to the learners’ language development. Moreover, the research studies of PWIM are even fewer when the studies are narrowed down to ESL or EFL learners. There is only one quantitative research study (Swartzendruber, 2007) and one qualitative research (Feng, 2011) found in the literature review, and none of them has been conducted with English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners in Mainland China.

Conceptual Framework

English Teaching in China
English teaching in China has its peculiar cultural, social and political context; moreover, China has experienced its own particular history of English textbooks and syllabi changes. Historically, English has been taught as a compulsory subject with a strong emphasis on grammar, translation, and reading, mainly through direct instruction approaches (Yang, 2000). Such traditional teaching approaches were characterized by systematic study of grammar, extensive use of Chinese-English translation, and persistent memorization of syntactic patterns and vocabulary (Hu, 2002). Such has been the tradition for many years; however, the traditional approach has failed to develop EFL learners’ communicative competence (i.e., the ability to use English for authentic verbal and textual communications—in other words, speaking and writing; Hu, 2002) well enough in China. Millions of EFL learners taught by this traditional approach were able to read, but not to speak or write well (Wei & Su, 2012). As a result, new English teaching approaches, focusing on bridging reading with writing and transforming learners from passive to active agents, have recently entered Chinese classrooms. This trend may be observed as a shift in the education policy.

In 2001, the National Academy of Education Administration in China (NAEA), known as the highest education authority in China, issued and mandated a policy that the age for compulsory English be lowered from 11 to nine years old (Nunan, 2003). According to the official rhetoric, students in secondary schools should have five or six 45-minute English lessons every week (Nunan, 2003). The suitably qualified teachers mentioned in this regulation referred to Chinese English teachers with formal English teaching education (Wang, Lin, & Spalding, 2008). Secondary English teachers received a credential in English education from four-year colleges or universities (Wang et al., 2008).

**Picture-Word Inductive Model**

PWIM is a teaching approach based on Calhoun’s (1999) research on early literacy. The fundamental tenet of PWIM is its use of “pictures as a stimulus for language experience activities” in classrooms to teach young students learning to read and write (Joyce, Weil, & Calhoun, 2009, p. 130). Calhoun (1999) suggested that PWIM be used to teach several skills as an integrated whole simultaneously, beginning with the phonetic and structural components of language—for example, the pronunciation and the spelling of a word. Students using PWIM see the item, listen to the teacher’s pronunciation, and then pronounce the word to reinforce word recognition. PWIM also covers explicit instruction and induction, as well as an immediate assessment of students’ needs and comprehension. Calhoun (1999) suggested that a teacher can arrange any individual activity, as well as small-group and large-group activities, with a PWIM format. She also suggested that PWIM can be modified and applied to older students (Calhoun, 1999).

**PWIM in class.** PWIM has many successful scenarios in classrooms (Calhoun, 1999; Joyce & Showers, 2002; Joyce et al., 2009). Calhoun (1999) stated that its successful applications were closely related to prescribed and detailed steps for implementation, an instructional sequence incorporating cycling and recycling through the 10 instructional steps (See Appendix A).

**Vocabulary learning through pictures.** PWIM embraces the development of visual perceptions, which was vital to children’s literacy acquisition (Astorga, 1999; Clay, 2001; Joyce, Calhoun, & Hopkins, 2002). Joyce and Weil (2009) showed how pictures may serve as important stimuli for connecting learners’ life experiences to their language learning in the classroom. The teacher writes each identified word on chart paper outside the picture and draws a line from the word to the item in the picture, essentially creating a picture-word dictionary which the students could employ to connect words with corresponding pictures. Joyce and Weil suggested that such a kind of connection contributed to developing new ideas and learning vocabulary.
Wong (2009) demonstrated that vocabulary learning is also achieved through connections via dual channels of speaking and writing. “Shaking out” the words from pictures (i.e., writing words around the pictures and drawing lines to link words with identified objects) and spelling the words brings “awareness to the letters in the word and connection between the spoken words onto written text” (Wong, 2009, p. 9). Reading aloud, spelling out, and writing down these words on the picture-word dictionary is the first step for children to know the phonetic and morphological form of the words. After they become more familiar with this mode of instruction, they start to write phrases, short sentences and later long ones about the pictures independently or with the assistance of teachers and more competent peers. This writing process involves learning form, meaning and use of those words. Gradually, these vocabularies are stored, as Calhoun (1999) suggests, in students’ long-term memory and become a part of their prior knowledge, which is used to learn new words.

Thinking inductively. Inquiry-oriented induction is another key feature of PWIM. Inductive thinking or induction promotes learners’ awareness of language development (Astorga, 1999; Clay, 2001; Joyce et al., 2002). Induction in PWIM refers to developing new ideas through building parallelism among unrelated information, ideas, and artifacts (Joyce et al., 2004). This type of thinking helps students notice and infer with patterns and relationships within the language—elements which should enable them to apply and transfer such learning to novel words. They also suggest that such induction empowers students to generalize language rules—for example, how to structure sentences on the basis of words and phrases. Students may draw generalizations after numerous PWIM activities by cycling and recycling the sequences mentioned above.

Resistance and unpreparedness of English teachers using PWIM. PWIM is not representative of the existing repertoire of most Chinese English teachers. Historically, Chinese philosophy has established inductive logic in terms of analogical reasoning (Tang, 1997); nevertheless, there is currently no logic class in public education. Nor is there a Chinese philosophy class (except for one called Marxism philosophy) for education majors in universities. Hence, Chinese English teachers have not been accustomed to thinking inductively, which is a key component in PWIM. Chinese English teachers might lack cognitive readiness with specific regard to PWIM (Wang et al., 2008).

With the empirical and contextual gaps mentioned above, the problem of this study was to explore young EFL learners’ perceptions of PWIM to their narrative writing in China. The research question was: What are seventh graders’ perceptions of PWIM when applied to their narrative writing in China? The purpose of this study was to inform educational officials and English educators in China about PWIM as a newly-triesd ELT method from learners’ perspectives, so that the leaders and practitioners can consider PWIM as a new teaching approach to be introduced and implemented widely in Mainland China, thus possibly enhancing the current teaching methodology in terms of helping learners acquire English literacy, develop inductive thinking and enhance narrative writing level effectively.

Method

The primary goal of the study was to explore young EFL learners’ perceptions of PWIM to their narrative writing in China. To achieve this goal, I chose an exploratory case study as my research design. Case study is an “intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity” (Merriam, 1998, p. 27). In this study, “a single entity” (Merriam, 1998, p. 27) refers to the young EFL learners. They share the same cultural and educational background, having been educated in school in a similar way, in a “bounded system” (Stake, 2005, p. 444).
Participants

In the current study, I employed a purposive sampling to select participants for this study through oral exchanges. The eligible participants were early adolescents in middle schools, who knew how to read and write in Chinese and in English already, started to learn how to write narrations in English and had PWIM trial sessions. The participants were in grade seven at the age of 12 from a public secondary school in China. They were all Chinese. All participants had already received four years of formal English education. Most of them started to learn English earlier in various English training centers or in even private kindergartens (equivalent to pre-school in the United States). They started to learn narrative writing in English from grade seven. The seventh graders received five 45-minute English lessons every week.

Recruitment

After all of the PWIM trial sessions in the class, I explained the research study and the interview protocol. I asked who wanted to participate and then handed out child assent forms, as well as parent consent forms afterwards to each hand-raising student. I asked each of the student to take the two forms in Chinese, read them carefully, and explain to their parents to get their parents’ signature. Participants were made aware of the process, the nature and procedures of the study, as well as the estimated time period for each interview, before they signed the consent forms. I also notified my participants’ and their custodians that they had the right to say “no” to the form, and that they could decide not to let their children participate at any time during the process of collecting data for any reason, without consequences. By this process, I had 30 (14 male and 16 female) seventh graders for the interviews. I guaranteed my participants’ confidentiality during and after the research study; thus, I gave each of them a pseudonym to protect their identity.

Procedures

I interviewed all of my participants in Chinese one-to-one using a digital recording. As a former student in public schools in China, I recognized the discipline of routinized school life, so I proposed a maximum of 10 minutes for each interview and my contextualized proposal got approved. During class breaks, self-learning classes, and minor classes (i.e., geography, physical exercise, and other classes apart from Chinese, Math or English), I pulled out those seventh grades one by one and interviewed them respectively. All of the participants were asked to omit identifiable information. The interviews provided rich description (Creswell, 2007).

Data Analysis

According to Merriam (2002), “data analysis is simultaneous with data collection” (p. 14). Due to tight schedule of interviews with seventh graders, I analyzed collected interview data roughly during data collection. As Stake (2005) stated, analysis refers to giving meaning to first impressions of those texts. I wrote down my first impressions on a blank page when I listened to the first interviewees’ audios.

However, I framed new questions for the following interviews as a result of what had been found from the previous audios (Seidman, 2006). I avoided “in-depth analysis of the interview data” until I finished all the interviews, because I tried not to “impose meaning from one participant’s interview on the next” (Seidman, 2006, p. 113). Hence I minimized “imposing on the generative” and inductive process of the interviews (Seidman, 2006, p. 113).
After all of the interviews, I transcribed them via listening to the recording and typing every word. Then their answers were translated from Chinese into English. After that, I conducted the coding by writing my first thoughts on the margins of the transcript in order to read through literal words. Different color highlights were used to categorize the coding. The coding categories were words and phrases which represented the regularities, patterns and topics my data covered (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). I categorized coding in order to find concepts and patterns and developed them into themes through thematic analysis to help answer the research question. To write up, I threaded my draft with themes, categorized answers and evidence from those analyzed data.

Researcher’s Role

I am an EFL/ESL learner and a former English instructor in China with doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction with specialty in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). I was also the PWIM trainer of the participants’ English teacher and researcher. My bias toward how my participants perceived PWIM before this study was that the traditional ELT cannot meet their needs and that their minds must be open enough to receive new methods. However, I was uncertain about whether PWIM was effective. To address my bias, I encouraged the participants to compare the traditional ELT method and PWIM, and prompted participants during the interview to explain their experiences of new ELT methods if any, and critique their strengths and weaknesses.

Findings

The following findings are displayed to tell each participant’s perceptions about PWIM in their narrative writing.

What is Narrative Writing to Them?

Xu liked English narrative writing more than Chinese argumentative writing, because the former was short and made up of everyday words. The topics were about personal experience, for instance, festivals and hobbies. He had pictures in his mind during his writing, and he believed that he could retrieve these pictures and use words conveniently. As a result, he believed his writing after the PWIM trial would have more words and be more descriptive than before.

Better Narrative Writing from PWIM and in PWIM

Many seventh graders talked about how PWIM helped them write more and better, when they were asked to write at the end of each PWIM circle. Zhang expressed such help in detail: “My English teacher would teach us some new extracurricular words when we wrote and needed the words to make sentences. We would use those extracurricular words when we need to write similar sentences in tests.”

Direct instruction and corrections. Zhang cherished the writing stage as a moment for her to grasp more vocabulary in both meaning and use. She also considered the post-writing class demonstration as a precious opportunity for self-correction and peer learning:

I liked the writing stage, when I can use those newly learned words, consolidate my grammar and learn more language knowledge from my peers through their writings…Moreover, [the] teacher may correct you when you read erroneous expressions from your writing, which leads to your improvement in tests later on.

He, another interviewee, also cherished writing practice in PWIM, because he could use words directly in the writing stage and learn more words by asking teachers, when thinking of some unknown words. Both Zhang and He mentioned direct instruction and correction from their English teacher. Li pointed it
out that such correction created a pressure-free atmosphere, compared to test writing, because her English teacher would correct any student without any point-deduction consequences. This gave Li a good chance of internalizing her teacher’s instructed knowledge, such as the differences among “What else do you do?”, “What else do you like doing?” and “What do you like to do?” Zhang even gave an instance that she heard and noticed some grammatical usages from her peers which she remembered later and would use in future tests, although Zhang could not recall what the usages were during interview. Guo also mentioned the demonstration time (i.e. their final presentation of what they had written) when he monitored and reflected on his own writing, because of his habitual structural problems in making sentences. When he heard others read their writing at the end of PWIM, he could check his own writing errors and made corrections correspondingly.

Peer learning. Peer learning happened when students shared their writings by reading them out. Zhang preferred learning from her peers’ writings to her teacher’s instruction, because she felt such a learning approach was so interesting and she could remember the shared knowledge more deeply. Zhu shared the same preference with Zhang: “Individual writings from my classmates are unique and worthy to learn.” Wu also spoke highly of peer learning because she could learn from others’ writings, regarding both how to write a narration and what to write about. She could imitate her peers’ and then write better. Chen stated that she learned from others’ mistakes in her peers’ writings, and some of them were common to every student.

Characteristics of better writing. Jiang expressed that he improved his writing in tests, with better grammar, sentence structure, and word choice. He asserted that he had better writing because he had memorized more words in a lively and figurative way through PWIM. The word-picture dictionary, as a teaching tool in PWIM, gave him chance to read those words after class and thus help him retain these lexical knowledge. He even used a small notebook to write down words (not only meaning and spelling, but also use and category) to memorize more. In addition to correct grammar and sentence structure, Liu and Zhu talked about the benefits of PWIM to their writings, saying that they could write more sentences and write them with more fluidity and flowingness, rather than the previous moments of stopping to think and feeling nothing more to write. Zhu asserted that he was more descriptive and could reach the minimum word requirement easily, thanks to PWIM. Because of PWIM, Huang could have a framework of writing before she started to write, because when she saw a topic, she would immediately have pictures in her brain, and those images came from her imagination, her textbook and her previous life experiences.

Connections of words to compose. Sun attributed closer connections of words to PWIM in her writing. Sun said that PWIM enabled her to connect seemingly random words when she wrote. Liu gave a similar statement by saying PWIM could help her connect previously learned words during writing. Liu thanked writing practice in PWIM for giving students the chance to review words, which deepended their memory of those words. Sun, furthermore, gave an example of a PWIM picture with a house and children. She had an image of going home; thus, she wrote “Children go home after school. They run home, happily.” She liked to put herself into her own self-made stories when she saw pictures. Zhu also developed a habit of having an image when he saw a writing topic. He also felt his writing became more smooth and flowing.

Affective benefits of PWIM to writing. Gong talked about affective benefits of PWIM to his writing. He admitted he was introverted and did not feel comfortable expressing himself in public, especially using English. PWIM allowed shy students like him to learn more words in terms of meaning, spelling and use, so he could write better and feel more confident in writing in English. He said that introverted students could and would use writing to express their thoughts more comfortably in written English. Li said that she started to write in Chinese in Grade 4 and in English in Grade 7. The
writing stage in PWIM gave her a chance to write her own thoughts and knowledge, and she had a strong sense of satisfaction in the process.

**Concluding Thoughts**

This exploratory case study has revealed that PWIM was perceived to have a positively academic and affective influence on the participants’ narrative writing or on their English learning in general. My participants found that they could write better narrations in terms of quantity and quality. They also felt that they were more confident and competent about narrative writings, thanks to PWIM.

**Recommendations**

ELT educators and policymakers in China may consider introducing PWIM because of its great impact on students. Furthermore, when introducing these new methods, they should consider contextual factors, such as English teachers’ professional development (to build up their constant exposure to, awareness of and strategic readiness for new teaching approaches), and English learners’ level of readiness and reluctance.

**References**


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Appendix A

Calhoun’s 10 instructional steps of PWIM:

1. Select a picture.
2. Ask students to identify what they see in the picture.
3. Label the picture parts identified. (Draw a line from the identified object or area, say the word, write the word; ask students to spell the word aloud and then to pronounce it.)
4. Read and review the picture word chart aloud.
5. Ask students to read the words (using the lines on the chart if necessary) and to classify the words into a variety of groups. Identify common concepts (e.g., beginning consonants, rhyming words) to emphasize with the whole class.
6. Read and review the picture word chart (say the word, spell it, say it again).
7. Add words, if desired, to the picture word chart and to the word banks.
8. Lead students into creating a title for the picture word chart. Ask students to think about the information on the chart and what they want to say about it.
9. Ask students to generate a sentence, sentences, or a paragraph about the picture word chart. Ask students to classify sentences; model putting the sentences into a good paragraph.
10. Read and review the sentences and paragraphs (Calhoun, 1999, p. 23).
Florida's Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Program's Influence on Preschool Teachers' Beliefs and Practices

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Abstract: Three veteran preschool teachers told their stories about navigating the implementation of VPK. Even with parents' misconceptions about VPK's goals, teachers were able to meet its standards by continuing to embrace a play-based, hands-on philosophy that also emphasized children's social and emotional needs.

The importance of providing a high quality preschool education is easily agreed upon by policymakers, child advocates, and child development specialists, but defining the characteristics of a high quality program is still debated. According to the National Association of Young Children (NAEYC, 2009), it is the shared responsibility of policy makers, early childhood professionals and other stakeholders to construct a comprehensive curriculum that is developmentally-appropriate, and assessment systems which measure the whole child in real-world settings, rather than measuring a narrow set of skills. Play is the way young children learn. Through play, children learn language, cognitive, creative, problem-solving, social and emotional skills (Hanline, Milton, & Phelps, 2008). Many preschool curricula are more narrowly focused on academic skills as precursors to kindergarten readiness with little evidence of the long-term effects (Fitzpatrick, 2008). This is still occurring in spite of decades of research that demonstrate high-quality preschool programs, grounded in child-initiated, open-ended explorations are linked to increased problem-solving abilities, long-term academic mastery, and greater social and emotional competencies (Ashiabi, 2007; Ramani, 2012; Smilansky, & Shefatya, 1990; Schweinhart & Weikart, 1997).

Play allows children to practice making decisions, negotiate with others and to move at their own pace (Ginsberg, 2007). Play promotes the long-term well-being of children by allowing them to develop a love of learning. Teachers who are knowledgeable about child development and pedagogy are vital to children developing a positive attitude towards learning. They form a relationship by which young children are able to learn and internalize success (Yoshikawa et al., 2013). These positive, early learning experiences provide a solid foundation at a time when the brain's architecture is developing and sensitive to new life experiences. According to Duncan, Ludwig and Magnusson (2007), the young child's developing brain is also sensitive to the growth of social and emotional skills such as self-regulation. Early emotional experiences, embedded in the brain's architecture, affect the child's ability to control aggression and the ability to maintain attention, thus affecting their ability to learn in school. These early years, especially the first six or seven years, are critical for developing social and emotional skills. A child who does not learn to relate to other children during this period often has long-term difficulties in social settings, including school settings (Dowling, 2000). Squires and Bricker (2007) reported that the majority of children who had difficulties in preschool classrooms often times have social and emotional problems that can interfere with learning basic skills including reading. Children who struggle with self-control issues in preschool were three times more likely to have social and emotional problems into young adulthood (Moffitt et al., 2011). Early childhood education must include opportunities to nurture the social and emotional development for children to be successful not only in relationships with self and others, but also for academic success. A high quality, play-based early childhood curriculum provides the platform for children to learn cognitively, socially and emotionally.

One of the latest policies to affect preschool education is the Florida Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) voucher program. With this policy came the enactment of learning standards for four year olds,
an assessment tool to measure student learning, and a preschool readiness score calculated to label how proficiently the preschool prepares its students for kindergarten on isolated skills such as letter recognition, phonological awareness and mathematical knowledge. When Florida VPK began, preschools were not guided by standards, curriculum or assessments. However, as policymakers looked to raise student achievement at higher grades, preschool quickly became the new starting point of children's formal education. This resulted in state standards and assessments for prekindergarten children. In 2011, the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) adopted the Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards for Four-Year-Olds. With the adoption of the state standards, children are required to be assessed within the first 30 days of kindergarten to demonstrate kindergarten readiness and to rate the preschool of origin. In addition, preschools are required to administer the Florida VPK assessment to children three times per school year to demonstrate learning gains (FLDOE, 2011). It has been said, "We measure what we value.” If that is true, then cognitive development is the primary domain that is valued within the Florida VPK "curriculum" as evidenced by the Florida VPK assessment, which includes the following categories: print knowledge, phonological awareness, mathematics, and oral language and vocabulary. Florida VPK assessment does not include criteria to assess children's social and emotional skills, even though research demonstrates the importance of developing social and emotional skills of young children.

Theoretical Framework

Child-initiated, play-based curricula are rooted in Piaget's (1952) constructivism theory of learning and Vygotsky's (1978) social development theory. Piaget (1952) posits that children learn best when they are able to investigate, manipulate, and play in order to construct their own knowledge about the world. Through these play-based experiences, children interact and often problem solve together, thus increasing their cognitive as well as their social and emotional skills. An advantage of constructivism is that it reaches students of all backgrounds, because it provides hands-on experiences that allow children to engage and learn in a way that is meaningful to them. Vygotsky's (1978) social development theory puts forward the idea that children need to interact with others in order to internalize new information to increase their knowledge. Teachers facilitate young children's learning by providing learning materials and experiences that help them meet challenging, yet achievable learning goals through a process known as scaffolding. These learning theories provide educators with a framework to promote the education of young children’s learning and development.

Research Questions

The implementation of the Florida VPK has provided all four year olds with access to early childhood education. However, the introduction of academic standards to the preschool environment is a new concept to veteran preschool teachers. Currently, there is no literature that describes how this policy affects the veteran preschool teachers who are teaching the children under the Florida VPK policy. The research questions guiding this study are (a) how has the implementation of the Florida VPK policy affected veteran preschool teachers' daily teaching practices, and (b) how do veteran preschool teachers experience the use of standards in prekindergarten? These questions will help guide this study to gain a more in-depth understanding of the ripple effect created by the VPK policy. Through the narratives of the preschool teachers themselves, the reader will be privy to a view inside the preschool classroom.

Method

A narrative inquiry approach seeks to understand a phenomenon through the story telling of those who have lived the experience (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000). Narrative inquiry is constructivist
in nature and a way to account for actions and events that shape everyday life. It enlightens the reader through the narrative to understand the meaning of the lived experience. Through this process, the participants were encouraged to tell their story about how the implementation of the Florida VPK policy has affected their daily teaching practices.

Participants

For the purpose of this study, qualified participants were defined as veteran preschool teachers who taught prekindergarten prior to the implementation of the Florida VPK policy and were currently teaching prekindergarten under the VPK policy. One qualified participant was acquired through a flyer distributed at a director's meeting in Broward County, Florida, with the remaining participants acquired through a snowball technique. Three participants who all worked at the same preschool, Preschool Play Academy (pseudonym) located in Broward County, Florida, were interviewed. The participants were offered the option of choosing their own pseudonym, but declined and allowed the researcher to choose one for them. The first teacher, Kelly had been teaching prekindergarten at this preschool for over 17 years. Leslie had been teaching a total of 12 years with the last nine years at the Preschool Play Academy. Finally, Megan, who had been teaching prekindergarten for 16 years, had aspirations of becoming a preschool director. All of the participants described how they became preschool teachers as a result of volunteering in their own children's preschool classrooms. Snippets of their individual stories will be narrated in the findings.

Data Collection

The researcher first spoke to participants on the phone to determine whether they were viable candidates. Once confirmed, the interviews took place at time and location that was convenient for the participant. Data were collected through individual, face-to-face interviews with each veteran preschool teacher. A general interview protocol guided the interview process, yet allowed the researcher the flexibility to probe and explore particular subject areas in more depth. Prior to beginning the research, each participant was given an informed consent form to sign. The consent form explained the duration of the interview process, and that their participation was voluntary and confidential. Once the informed consent form was signed, the personal interview began and was digitally audio recorded.

Data Analysis

The researcher transcribed the audio-recordings. The data analysis followed a constant-comparison method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) where each transcript was read in its entirety for overall meaning. Upon second reading, significant statements were highlighted and coded into a category defined by the researcher. The researcher copied the highlighted statements into an Excel spreadsheet with the assigned category code in an adjacent column. This allowed statements to be copied more than once if the researcher decided that the statements were to be included in multiple categories. The use of the Excel spreadsheet also allowed for the statements to be sorted by their categorical codes for further analysis. Through an inductive process of data examination, the researcher discovered emerging themes that illuminated what these veteran preschool teachers were experiencing in their daily teaching practices because of the Florida VPK policy implementation.

Process to ensure credibility. The researcher took care to transcribe the data carefully and accurately. Once the transcripts were complete, through a process known as member-checking (Patton, 2002), participants were given the opportunity to ensure the viability of their own words and thoughts. At this point, they were able to add additional information or delete information that they reconsidered. None of the participants added or deleted any information.
Process to ensure an ethical and reflexive study. Prior to beginning this study, the researcher attained approval through the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Barry University. Interviews began shortly after IRB approval. Because a narrative inquiry involves a synergy between the researcher and the participants, it is important to disclose researcher's views, presuppositions, and biases (Kramp, 2003). This helps to promote the transparency of research. The researcher, an early childhood education professional with 14 years’ experience, believes that preschool children need to be able to play, investigate and explore to learn and develop their knowledge of the world. This open-ended investigation allows them to develop their creativity and critical thinking skills, as well as, the opportunity to learn to play, share and cooperate with other children. With the teacher to guide and scaffold, there is a natural unfolding of literacy and numeracy exploration within the context of these engaging activities. The changing education system that now sets standards for preschool children to master basic skills prior to kindergarten, ignores the fact that young children grow and develop at varying rates and those children need well-developed social and emotional skills. Journaling was implemented as a technique to keep an awareness of thoughts and analyze reactions to the stories told by the participants. This reflexive journal enabled the researcher to analyze participants' words more objectively, so that the re-story of their narratives would accurately reflect how their teaching experiences have been affected by the Florida VPK policy.

Findings

Through analyzing the transcripts of the three participants, three themes emerged "It's still okay to play: Doing what we have always done"; "Building children's social and emotional skills first"; and "Parents need to know what VPK can and cannot do.” Each theme is defined with quotes from the veteran preschool teachers' stories to elucidate the theme's meaning.

It's Still Okay to Play: Doing What We Have Always Done

The three veteran preschool teachers believed that implementing fun, open-ended investigations was still the best way for children to learn. They felt that knowing the children personally and keeping them involved and engaged was the formula for successful learning. Kelly explained how important hands-on play was to her teaching philosophy:

My biggest expectation for them is to have fun in school. I love watching them learn, watching them discover things. Just being an outlet for them to explore different things. I do a lot of hands-on (activities) so they can see it, experience it, feel it, touch it, do all those things.

While Leslie felt the added pressure of the VPK standards and testing, she felt that she had to work harder to make sure that her students still played and had fun. She explained:

My philosophy hasn't changed. I think it is important to get their personalities from the moment they step in the door that's what helps make it work so that you can reach each one. The biggest change is you want to make all the learning fun even when you incorporate the letters and numbers.

Megan stressed that there was no need to change her play-based, teaching philosophy to meet the expectations of VPK. Through analyzing her lesson plans, she knew she was able to continue teaching the way she had always done:

If you are using what you always did, every standard is hit. When we do a lesson plan, we color code it so you can see what standard we hit. We hit every standard with every single thing we do because we do communication and math sitting in circle, or sitting at a math table. You can turn it into every standard that VPK requires.

Building Children's Social and Emotional Skills First
The three veteran preschool teachers believed that the most important thing was for the children to feel good about themselves. They wanted the children to be confident and sure of themselves. They also wanted them to be comfortable in the classroom so that they were not afraid to take risks to advance their learning. It was also important for them to be able to get along with their peers and teachers. They felt that these social and emotional skills needed to be in place before the children were able to attend to the task of learning academic skills. Leslie explained that she wanted the children "to feel good about themselves and confident because those are the building steps of learning. It's important that they feel safe and happy and if they can get more out of the school, that's even better." Megan saw the importance of academics but felt that its place was after working on the child's self-esteem, "I feel the academics at this age…the foundation needs to be there, but I feel the other stuff needs to take precedence and then the academics will fall into play when the child has self-esteem.” Kelly's view was more pragmatic and stressed the importance of children's self-help and social skills:

I think the most important skills they need are the socializing and self-help skills. They need to be confident going into school; comfortable that they were going to be able to function in that environment; and that they can do self-help things like open their backpacks.

Parents Need to Know What VPK Can and Cannot Do

The three veteran preschool teachers felt that parents thought VPK was about teaching their child to read. They also stated that they felt parents thought VPK was like elementary school, and it was the teacher's responsibility to teach the children. Prior to VPK, this particular preschool had many parents who volunteered to help in their children's classes, but since VPK began, parents volunteered with much less frequency. Because of parents' misconceptions, they felt that parents needed to be educated about realistic expectations of what the goals of the VPK program are. Kelly illustrated parents' misconceptions by talking about a typical conversation from the beginning-of-the-year parent meeting. "Parents ask (me) when are you going to teach them to read? I'm not, because that's not what we are here for. We are here to set the foundation so that your child will be ready to learn in kindergarten.” Leslie shared that parents were not even aware of the expectations of VPK. She explained, "They are surprised by things that their four year old is expected to know that they don’t even know: like identifying a pentagon and hexagon." Megan felt that although parents were well intentioned, they were often misinformed:

There is too much out there in the media; they're not getting the right information. There is too much stress on the parents. They think their child needs to be the best and they want them reading and writing, etc. I do think our parents need to be more educated.

These three interviews revealed that these teachers had similar views of how VPK affected their daily teaching practices. With many years in the field of early childhood education, they felt secure in their knowledge of child development and their decision to select teaching practices that met the needs of their students. Through developmentally appropriate teaching practices, they described how their students learned and thrived.

Discussion

The stories told by these three veteran preschool teachers helped to understand not just the numerical impact of the Florida VPK policy, but revealed how its implementation affected three veteran preschool teachers at Preschool Play Academy. Regarding the first research question about how the implementation of the Florida VPK policy affected veteran preschool teachers' daily teaching practices, at this preschool, the VPK policy seemed to reaffirm their beliefs in how to best approach teaching young children. The VPK policy had very little impact on these teachers' daily teaching practices. They
continued to implement developmentally-appropriate teaching strategies with play-based, open-ended investigations while the teachers guided and scaffolded the students' learning. As a result, the children had fun and learned without even knowing they were learning. Interestingly, the numeric readiness score calculated for Preschool Play Academy is among the highest in the county, which further cemented the teachers' beliefs that they know how to teach young children. The second question, concerning how veteran preschool teachers experience using standards in prekindergarten, these veteran preschool teachers revealed that they accepted the standards and requirements of this policy. Through their interviews they shared how by doing what they had always done, the standards that accompanied the VPK policy could be met without resorting to direct instruction.

**Limitations**

Time was the limiting constraint of this study. First, because of shortened recruitment time, three participants were recruited from the same preschool. Telling their stories individually and collectively illuminated a holistic view of how one preschool chose to handle the standards and assessments of VPK. If there had been more time to conduct the research, additional participants from a variety of preschools would have been interviewed and the findings may have resulted in very different stories. Second, because of limited time, the data analysis phase only scratched the surface of possible themes. More reflection time would have elucidated additional themes.

**Implications and Concluding Thoughts**

These preschool teachers demonstrated that teachers do not need to teach to the VPK assessment in order for children to learn. The children at this preschool learned and scored well on the VPK assessment without the teachers altering their basic teaching philosophy that young children learn best when engaged in play-based, hands-on explorations. In keeping with the philosophy of delivering high quality early childhood education, they continued to consider the social and emotional needs and development of their students first. This study suggests that high quality, play-based curriculum provides young children with the academic skills necessary to be prepared for kindergarten without ignoring the social and emotional skills that research has shown to be vital to overall student success. The implication early childhood professionals should glean from this study is that young children can learn without having to resort to teacher-directed lessons or teaching to a test. Future research that examines early childhood teacher beliefs about how young children learn would be beneficial to understand how to design professional development to address the gap among research, beliefs and practices.

**References**


Accountability, Quality, and Student Success in Online Education: A Literature Review of Empirical Studies

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Abstract: This paper examines empirical studies on accountability, quality, and student success in online education. It advances that accountability and quality are critical components for student success in online education. It concludes that there is a lack of empirical studies that examine the effects of these measures on student success.

There is a lack of empirical studies that examine the effects of accountability measures on student achievement in higher education (McLendon, Hearn, & Deaton, 2006; Rutherford & Rabovsky, 2014). One of the reasons for the existence of few empirical studies on this subject is that there is difficulty in attempting to analyze the effects of accountability mechanisms, particularly in relation to student achievement (Hanushek & Raymond, 2004). Thus, there are gaps in the empirical understanding of the way in which accountability mechanisms in education are related to student achievement (Rabovsky, 2012). In order to understand the effects of newly introduced accountability systems upon student achievement, consideration must be given to the range of factors that influence student achievement (Hanushek & Raymond, 2004). It must be also recognized that along with the range of interacting factors to consider, many accountability systems undergo systematic changes, which may overlap with previous accountability mechanisms, thus making the effects from the new accountability mechanisms even more difficult to analyze. In the few instances where empirical studies of these accountability measures have been conducted, the impact of accountability on higher education institutional performance and behavior has been determined to be relatively small, at best (Orosz, 2012). The majority of the studies conclude that the accountability effects on performance are either marginal or insignificant (Orosz, 2012; Rabovsky, 2012; Shin, 2010; Volkwein & Tandberg, 2008).

Empirical Studies on Accountability

Performance funding is an accountability measure that has become widespread in accountability regimes (McLendon et al., 2006; Orosz, 2012). In this type of accountability measure, institutions that have demonstrated the attainment of specific goals or targets set by the principal (state, the federal government, etc.) receive a specified amount of funding. Although most of the studies around performance funding in higher education institutions, including colleges and universities offering online education, show that student learning outcomes are not significantly improved by these accountability measures, Hanushek and Raymond (2004) have argued that student achievement growth is generally much higher with the introduction of new accountability measures than without them. Hanushek and Raymond’s (2004) assertion appears valid at the elementary and middle schools levels but studies focused beyond the middle school level conclude that the achievement growth resulting from accountability measures is less than significant.

Shin’s (2010) study analyzing the impact of states’ new accountability standards on changes in institutional performance in higher education indicated there was no noticeable increase in institutional performance by universities that had adopted new state accountability measures. Using hierarchical linear modeling to analyze graduation rate (dependent variable) for 467 higher education institutions (HEI) and research productivity (external research funding as the second dependent variable) for 123 HEIs, the study showed that accountability measures by the state accounted for only 15% of the variance in the institution’s graduation rate and approximately 6% of the variance in research funding. Shin (2010) determined that the new performance-based accountability standards did not contribute...
significantly to the variance in either graduation rate or research funding; instead, 76% of the variance in graduation rate is explained by institutional characteristics, such as the institutional mission, freshmen’s academic background, cost of in-state tuition, and dorm facilities. Shin (2010) concluded that the institutional performance was more linked to internal institutional characteristics than the external accountability measures. Shin (2010) then drew upon resource dependence and neo-institutional theories to explain the failure of state performance based accountability to translate to significant changes in higher education institutional performance.

Volkwein and Tandberg (2008) studied the association between states’ accountability practices and the performance of higher education institutions by analyzing a large cross sectional data set from 2000 to 2006. The researchers concluded that there is no statistically significant relationship between accountability and institutional performance as it relates to enhanced student learning outcomes. Therefore, according to Volkwein and Tandberg (2008), the accountability movement through performance funding policies has generated no significant improvement in student learning, and thus it can be classified as ineffective.

Similarly, a quantitative study by Rabovsky (2012) exploring whether adoption of state accountability mechanism augmented institutional performance concluded that accountability measures in higher education systems have not been positively correlated with enhanced institutional performance. However, Rabovsky (2012) took his analysis further by arguing that similar research focusing on the adoption of the accountability mechanism have failed to examine all of the steps in the causal chain. Therefore, conclusions about the effects of accountability on improving institutional performance have limitations.

Quality in Online Distance Education

Quality in online education is a subset of a broader focus on educational quality (Latchem & Jung, 2012). In measuring or introducing initiatives to enhance quality in universities and colleges, particularly those that have a strong focus on online education, there must be an understanding of the dimensions, parameters, and factors that affect the quality (Zaki & Rashidi, 2013). Scholars contend that the quality in higher education is influenced by a wide range of factors which must be closely examined in order to determine the impact made on quality. Consequently, research efforts to measure quality have been challenging because of the various dimensions and intangible constructs of quality that exist (McGorry, 2003; Parker, 2012).

McGorry (2003) developed a 60-item questionnaire to obtain a summary of indicators for measuring quality in online programs. These indicators were then organized into a model comprising seven constructs (flexibility, responsiveness and student support, perceived learning [self-reported by students], interaction, technological usefulness [perceived] and user friendliness, technical support, and student satisfaction). McGorry’s (2003) 60-item questionnaire showed internal inconsistency with 12 items. These 12 items exhibited low correlation loadings and were subsequently eliminated. The reliability of this revised instrument comprising 48 items was 0.96, which is a strong reliability coefficient. Beside the high reliability coefficient, McGorry’s (2003) instrument is well-supported as evidence by variants of these seven constructs found in the literature on quality in online education (Hirner & Kochtanek, 2012; Hirumi, 2009; Monroe, 2011).

Accrediting Standards

The practice of “applying QA (quality assurance) and accreditation processes to open and distance learning is a relatively new phenomenon” (Latchem & Jung, 2012, p. 13). The practice is
considered new in the sense that QA and accreditation processes were historically applied to traditional learning. Evaluations of the quality in online distance education must emphasize student learning while including other variables that serve as indicators of quality learning in an online environment (Meyer, 2002). These variables or measures of quality have been articulated by accreditors as benchmarks or quality standards that institutions or their programs must satisfy.

Dickison, Hostler, Platt, and Wang (2006) in a study examining the relationship between accredited paramedic education programs and students’ achievement of a passing score (minimum of 70%) on a national exam for paramedics concluded that students’ enrollment into accredited parametric education programs was associated with attaining a passing score. Using multivariate logistic regression, the researchers determined that enrollment into an accredited program was independently and positively correlated with a passing score, even after controlling for possible confounding variables such as age, sex, race, education level, level of experience, and number of attempts at passing the exam. According to this study, students were much more likely to be successful in programs that were accredited compared to unaccredited programs.

An analysis of Dickison et al.’s (2006) study would allow one to conclude that accredited programs reflect a greater amount of accountability than unaccredited programs by submitting to the process of accreditation, which is a form of external quality assurance and accountability. This conclusion is further supported by the assumption that “accreditation standards imply an organizational intervention for change” (Rivera & Huertas, 2008, p. 2). By voluntarily subscribing its program to accreditation, the institution signaled that it was prepared to adhere to the threshold accrediting standards set for paramedic education and enhance the preparation of its graduates for success on the national paramedic exam. The analysis of the data on the success of students on the national exam for both accredited and unaccredited parametric education programs should also lead to continuous improvement, which is a form of accountability.

As a form of accountability, in 2001, eight U.S. accrediting bodies developed the “Statement of Commitment for the Evaluation of Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs” that affirmed their commitment to assuring the quality of distance learning programs (Council for Regional Accrediting Commissions, 2001). This commitment was expressed by the following seven values: (a) education is best experienced within a community of learning where competent professionals are actively and cooperatively involved with creating, providing, and improving the instructional program; (b) learning is dynamic and interactive, regardless of the setting in which it occurs; (c) instructional programs leading to degrees having integrity are organized around substantive and coherent curricula which define expected learning outcomes; (d) institutions accept the obligation to address student needs related to, and to provide the resources necessary for, their academic success; (e) institutions are responsible for the education provided in their name; (f) institutions undertake the assessment and improvement of their quality, giving particular emphasis to student learning; and (g) institutions subject themselves, voluntarily, to peer review. (C-RAC, 2001, pp. ii-iii)

According to the Council for Regional Accrediting Commissions (2001), these seven values underpinning quality standards encapsulate the essence of a flexible framework for evaluating distance education, and they are regarded as important for catering to learning across both upgraded campus-based electronic programs and new types of delivery in distance education. However, the appropriateness of this framework to evaluate various forms of distance learning is questionable, given that accreditors have been cited for using standards designed for traditional learning and applying them to learning that takes place online (Eaton, 2000).

In 2012, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges
SACSCOC, one of the six regional accrediting bodies in the U.S., approved its *Guidelines for Addressing Distance and Correspondence Education*. These guidelines addressed nine standards for distance education: (a) mission, (b) organization structure, (c) institutional effectiveness, (d) curriculum and instruction, (e) faculty, (f) library/learning resources, (g) student support services, (h) facilities and finances, and (i) federal requirements. Most of the accrediting standards for online education developed by other regional accrediting bodies reflect C-RAC’s guidelines and seven values and the SACSCOC’s nine standards. Since the development of these guidelines, standards, and values for online education, researchers have conducted numerous studies on online education that focus on the growth of online education and its quality (Allen & Seaman, 2013; Hirner & Kochtanek, 2012; Latchem & Jung, 2012).

**Student Success**

There is no single factor that can be attributed to student success. However, various approaches to online distance education may result in different outcomes for student success. For example, the achievement of higher levels of student learning in online distance learning is most likely to occur when students are significantly engaged in their education and seek out opportunities for analyzing as well as applying materials presented in a variety of settings (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2010). Because there are neither geographical nor time bound restrictions in the online environment, multiple opportunities exist for students to become intensely involved in interacting with other students, faculty, and subject content. Consequently, the level of collaboration and engagement demonstrated by the student including employing multiple skills becomes vital for enhancing the student’s chance of being successful.

Measures of student success include GPA, final course grade, and student retention (Kerr, Rynearson, & Kerr, 2006; Kruger-Ross & Waters, 2013). Several models exist for predicting student success, such as Schrum and Hong’s (2002) student characteristic model, Marks, Sibley, and Arbaugh’s (2005) structural equation model, Kerr, Rynearson, and Kerr’s (2006) test of online learning success (TOOLS), and Kruger-Ross and Waters’ (2013) situational theory of publics. Proponents of these studies contend that their model represents a valid predictor of student success in online education. Moore and Kearsley’s (2012) comprehensive study cast doubt on the aforementioned models by concluding that educational background is one of the best predictors of student success in distance education. Moore and Kearsley (2012) argued that higher levels of formal education are associated with increased likelihood of completing a distance education course or program, whereas personal characteristics of students, though important, are less reliable predictors of student success. On the contrary, Yukselturk and Bulnut (2007) argued that the level of a student’s educational background as a predictor of student success in distance education has not been sufficiently demonstrated in the literature around student success. Instead, Yukselturk and Bulnut (2007) in their model of student success concluded that a student’s self-regulation (cognitive strategy use and self-motivation) is a more valid predictor of student success. Wilson and Allen (2011) found that grade point average (GPA) was the greatest predictor of success regardless of the type of learning environment. Wilson and Allen (2011) examined success rates across two groups of learners in terms of completion and withdrawal while also considering background variables such as GPA and gender. The researchers concluded that there was a significant difference in student success rates between online education and traditional education, with student withdrawal rates and failures being significantly higher in online education classes. Other studies have reported that face-to-face education has lower non-completion rates than online education (Allen & Seaman, 2013; Latchem & Jung, 2012; Parker, 2012).

One of the strengths of Wilson and Allen’s (2011) study was the profile of the different groups
of learners with the characteristics of online learners being portrayed as generally female, older, and having earned more credit hours than traditional learners. In addition, several statistical techniques—t-tests, ANOVA, and multiple regression—were used to analyze the data. However, a few weaknesses existed in Wilson and Allen’s (2011) study. The study was limited to a small sample size of only 100 students enrolled across two online courses and two face-to-face courses, which were all taught by different professors. There was neither randomized sample selection nor a control group. As a result, the research design was potentially vulnerable to confounding variables beside the learning environment and GPA.

In a study on student success in online distance education, Yukelturk and Bulnut (2007) examined the relationship between 13 predictor variables (gender, age, level of education, locus of control, dominant learning style, intrinsic goal orientation, extrinsic goal orientation, control beliefs, task value, self-efficacy, test anxiety, cognitive strategy use, and self-regulation) and student success in an online course. The authors found that of the 13 variables, only self-regulation was a statistically significant predictor of student success in online distance learning. One of the strengths of the study was its significance in offering valuable insight into student characteristics and how they relate to success in online education so that administrators and faculty could understand how best to advise and support students who select online courses. One of the notable weaknesses of this study was a small sample size of 80 students enrolled in one online course at one university, which had implications for the study’s generalizability.

Student retention, one measure of student success, was found to be much lower at institutions that provide solely online education than at institutions providing face-to-face instruction (Latchem & Jung, 2012). Additional studies support Latchem and Jung’s (2012) finding by reporting higher student retention rates in traditional learning than in online learning (Allen & Seaman, 2013; Parker, 2012). Low retention rate in online distance education has been frequently cited in the literature (Kruger-Ross & Waters, 2013; Latchem & Jung, 2012; Parker, 2012; Rovai & Downey, 2010). Reasons offered by researchers for these low retention rates in online education include students’ feelings of isolation and disconnection, inadequate technological support, poor course instructional design, faculty underpreparedness to teach online, limited student-instructor interaction, low student motivation, and lack of self-discipline. Planners of effective online distance education will be cognizant of these factors when designing and delivering online courses in order to mitigate high attrition and promote student success.

Empirical Studies on Quality in Online Education

Studies that simply compare student outcomes in online learning to student outcomes in traditional learning are prone to incomplete analysis and are poorly designed (Meyer, 2002), as studies having this design generally tend to ignore interacting factors and confounding variables, and oftentimes these studies present the classic no significant difference phenomenon. The distance education literature is replete with studies addressing the difference between online learning and traditional learning. Russell (1999) presented a comprehensive comparative review of 355 research reports that supported the no significant difference phenomenon. In light of this conclusion, this section emphasizes empirical studies that went beyond the comparative no significant difference design.

Gaytan and McEwen (2007) conducted a descriptive research study that surveyed a sample of 85 faculty members and 1,963 students, and found that four main strategies contributed to maintaining online instructional quality: (a) open communication lines, (b) similar course rigor to traditional instruction, (c) multiple instructional techniques, and (d) group work. According to Gaytan and McEwen (2007), integrating these strategies into the design of online courses would enhance student achievement.
Clawson (2007) examined instructional design quality standards for online education and developed a taxonomy for online course quality that included 18 standards and 109 sub-standards. Some of the 18 instructional design standards such as instructional strategies, student/instructor support, course progress, assessment, and course material appear in other studies found in the literature. A correlation analysis together with the Mann-Whitney test was used to answer Clawson’s (2007) research question about the extent to which instructional design quality standards in online courses were predictive of student satisfaction with the online learning experience. Clawson (2007) found that of the 18 quality standards, only instructional strategy standard was predictive of student satisfaction with the overall online learning experience. Gaytan and McEwen’s (2007) findings on strategies associated with maintaining online instructional quality support Clawson’s (2007) results. However, Clawson (2007) concluded that possible explanations for 17 of the quality standards not being statistically significant were the small sample size of selected courses (12), or that many of these standards do not affect student satisfaction.

**Conclusion**

In light of the significant growth of online education over the past two decades and findings about its higher attrition rates compared to face-to-face education, there have been calls for greater accountability for online education. However, there are a few empirical studies that examine the relationship between accountability measures, including accrediting standards, and performance funding, and student success in online education. There have been mixed findings regarding the association between accountability practices and institutional performance, particularly student learning outcomes. The majority of studies have concluded that the correlation between these variables is weak but that instructor-student interaction is critical to student success.

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Toward an Understanding of Faculty Perceptions about Factors that Influence Student Success in Online Education

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Abstract: This paper explores factors that faculty perceive as significant in influencing student success in online education. Technological support, degree of comfort with technology and a student’s personal characteristics were deemed by faculty as critical to success. Understanding these key factors could help to improve student success in online education.

More universities and colleges, approximately 70%, are turning to online education as part of their strategic plan to boost student enrollment (Allen & Seaman, 2013; Parker, 2012). As the online student population rises, faculty and administrators need to pay close attention to the conditions and factors that influence how well students perform in the online environment. Faculty are key actors who develop and deliver the curriculum as well as engage in numerous interactions with students. Accordingly, faculty are well positioned to provide depth of insight into factors that they perceive to be substantive in contributing towards student success. Online education is defined in this study as a form of distance education where 100% of the instruction and interaction taking place between students and faculty is conducted in either a synchronous or an asynchronous manner via the Internet.

Several empirical studies have examined online education with much attention given to comparisons between online and face-to-face education (McGorry, 2003; Parker, 2012; Rovai, 2004). According to the literature, a marked difference exists in student performance between these two modes of delivery, with student online non-completion rates and failures being significantly higher than in face-to-face classes (Allen & Seaman, 2013; Latchem & Jung, 2012; Parker, 2012). Non-empirical studies that explore the phenomenon of student success from faculty perspective yield rich data that provide depth of insight into the essential factors that influence student success in online education.

Student Success

Student success is defined as academic success measured by student retention, fulfillment of course objectives, and final grade received (Kruger-Ross & Waters, 2013). In the literature, several barriers to student success in online education are identified including feelings of isolation, use of the technology, need for technological support, balancing time for other responsibilities, limited student-student interaction, and limited student-instructor (Kruger-Ross & Waters, 2012; Rovai, 2004). With the increasing numbers of students enrolled in online education, close attention must be given to removing these barriers and ensuring the academic success of this population of learners.

Successful online students exhibit the primary characteristics of taking ownership for their own learning, reading and writing proficiently, effectively managing their time, being self-directed and motivated (Kerr, Rynearson, & Kerr, 2006; Rovai, 2004). These are all essential characteristics for a quality learning experience that leads to student success in online education, but in the student success literature, frequent mention is made to self-directness of learners. Knowles (1975) describes self-
directed learning as a process that involves learners taking the initiative on their own, recognizing areas for improvement and setting targets as well as adopting suitable learning approaches. The self-directedness characteristics identified in Knowles’ description are important in a student’s quest for success in either face-to-face or online education. However, because of the separation that exists between learning and instructors in online education, it would seem that the associated features of self-directedness would take on an even greater importance than in the traditional classroom.

The cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains of learning developed by Bloom (1956) also hold great significance for student success in the online education. It may be argued that Bloom’s taxonomy holds even more significance for online education than for traditional education. Some of the barriers cited in the literature, for example—stronger feelings of isolation in online education and essential levels of interaction—are indirectly addressed in Bloom’s affective domain of learning, which explains the role and importance of valuing, reception, response, and internalization (Bloom, 1956). This application would be beneficial, particularly in instances when students enrolling in online courses are unable to receive adequate technological support or appropriate levels of instructor-student interaction when most needed. In these instances, students often tend to rely more on their own intrinsic motivation and self-directed learning capacity than they would in a typical face-to-face classroom (Latchem & Jung, 2012). These students would then need to draw upon higher levels of thinking in their self-reliance efforts.

**Research Question**

The primary research question explored in this study was: What are the factors that faculty consider essential in influencing student success in online education? Open-ended interview questions were then designed around this research question to gain insight into the factors highlighted by faculty.

**Method**

This paper sought to identify the main factors that faculty perceived as significant in influencing student success in online education at a public university in the Southeastern region of the United States. A phenomenological framework (Patton, 2002) was adopted in order to understand how faculty described and experienced the phenomenon of student success in their online classes as well as what faculty believed were the key influencing factors in students being successful in online education.

The College of Education Teaching and Learning Department at this institution was selected as the research site, and the study was confined to professors teaching online courses, all of which utilized the Blackboard learning platform. The study included participation by professors who taught either or both undergraduate and graduate level online courses. Three participants were selected using criteria sampling (Patton, 2002). According to Patton (2002), criteria sampling refers to the selection of participants for a study based upon certain specified characteristics. The following criteria were applied in order to obtain a sample of faculty who would be capable of yielding rich data when interviewed in relation to the primary purpose of this study: (a) previously taught at least two online courses, (b) taught in the Teaching and Learning department, and (c) received at least 80% “very good” to “excellent” ratings on the overall assessment of instructor for the end of course student assessment of instruction.

First, data were collected from the Teaching and Learning department on all faculty who taught online courses during the 2012-2013 academic year. Next, a listing of faculty eligible to participate in the study, based upon the above mentioned criteria, was retrieved from public data available at the
university’s Office of Institutional Research website. Based upon the scope of the study and the criteria, three participants were selected. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of faculty. Professor Fisher was a tenured professor who taught two undergraduate upper division online classes during the semester in which the study was done. She taught online classes for one year and was instrumental in developing several new online courses in her program. Professor Smith was an adjunct who taught only graduate level courses and had approximately three years of teaching online. Professor Lee was an adjunct in his second year of teaching online with responsibilities for teaching lower division online courses. Collectively, the three participants had six years of experience teaching online courses.

A responsive interviewing method (Rubin & Rubin, 2012) was used to gather data. This interviewing method was intended as a “purposeful conversation” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 94) and was selected because of its potential to gain much insight into an interviewee’s experiential knowledge (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Each interview lasted for approximately one hour and sought responses on opened-ended questions, which probed factors that influenced student success. Thematic analysis (Patton, 2002) was then used to investigate the data.

Findings

Using thematic analysis (Patton, 2002), the following eight categories of themes emerged from the raw data: technological support, student degree of comfort with technology, ability to analyze and apply material presented personal characteristics of students, faculty advance preparation, limitations, time management skills, and academic support. Faculty agreed that (a) technological support, (b) student degree of comfort with technology, (c) ability to analyze and apply material presented, (d) limitations, and (e) students’ personal characteristics, were the principal factors that influenced student success.

Technological Support

The professors interviewed all agreed that technological support was crucial to having a quality online experience, which in turn affects student success. However, professors all believed that this support started with the type of technological support offered to faculty. Once faculty received adequate support and became comfortable, they found it easier to engage in the teaching-learning process. Faculty recognized the problematic nature of inadequate support. With online learning, faculty felt that this support must be on demand and because problems could arise at any time, it was therefore critical to have an available and capable technological support group. According to one professor, students’ ability to learn what they needed to learn was premised upon adequate technological support being provided to the professor. All professors interviewed agreed that technological problems sometimes arise and support was not consistently available. For example, Professor Fisher pointed out that some students indicated that “they [students] were unable to access the test or they were unable to submit it. This year, this semester there were some issue with Blackboard and I am not the only professor who noticed that.”

According to the data, faculty believed that the technological support was invaluable to being able to access online classes. If students or professors are unable to access an online class because of some technological difficulty, then possibilities for student success become jeopardized. Professors also recognized the challenges involved in the provision of adequate support, citing that technology support staff were overworked.

Student Degree of Comfort with Technology

Relative comfort with technology was noted as an important factor for working successfully in
the online environment. Professors believed that student needed to have a relative degree of comfort with technology in order to be successful students in online education. Professors agreed that students who possessed high technological skills were deemed more comfortable with the technology and were thus able to function more effectively in the online environment.

In online classes taught by two of the three professors, a 2-3 minute video presentation was a course requirement. Professors felt that students’ ability to complete this task well was either linked to their ability to navigate the technology or work with other knowledgeable classmates in group settings to complete the task. When asked about the demographics of students who were relatively comfortable with using the technology to navigate the online environment, professors expressed divergent views. Professor Smith pointed out that there was no one student demographic that could be deemed more technologically proficient. She further noted that some students were uncomfortable with the technology, whereas some other students were capable. On the other hand, Professors Fisher and Lee felt that their students were technological proficient. Professor Lee noted that “this generation of college students live and breathe and sleep with technology so the online sort of classroom is really comfortable, surprisingly comfortable to the students.” Professor Lee’s statement introduced the notion of millennials’ relative comfort with technology and being to navigate the online learning environment well.

**Ability to Analyze and Apply Material Presented**

In sharing their understanding of what embodies student success, professors reported that successful students demonstrate commitment to concentrating, analyzing, and reflecting on concepts taught. According to Professor Smith, successful online students “grasp new information, apply new information, and complete all of the assignments that are required for the course… I am more of a constructivist type professor, where the construction of meaning by students is really my bar of success.” This professor pointed to the need for students to comprehend new information and then to apply it to critical tasks. Professor Smith also reinforced this point by indicating her bar of success as being higher order thinking, demonstrated when students construct meaning and integrate key concepts into their various spheres of life.

**Limitations**

Faculty perceptions of limitations that influenced student success included language barriers for students who spoke English as a second language (ESL), difficult life circumstances confronting students, and faculty members’ inability to navigate the online learning platform well. Work commitments and other responsibilities were cited as limiting students’ participation in the online class. With these limitations, some professors felt that students did not perform as well as they could.

The language barrier was primarily referenced by the faculty teaching undergraduate courses, who all felt that language was a critical factor. They explained that concerns existed about students’ ability to express themselves in standard American English. According to one professor, Fisher:

They are students in my classes that I can barely understand because of the language background and even though they had passed the TOEFL standards, the TOEFL standards are very low and it becomes problematic when they take a test. They are reading what I write but they are not understanding it the way that somebody who is an English speaker would understand it.

With the exception of faculty teaching at the graduate level, faculty felt that because of the strictly text environment for their online classes, the language barrier limitation tended to be amplified.

**Students’ Personal Characteristics**
Very evident in the data about online learners was the theme of students’ personal characteristics in relation to student success. The characteristics identified were self-directedness, motivation, pro-activeness, insistent, participatory, and attentive. Professors singled out the top characteristics as self-directedness, pro-active, and insistent for success in the online environment. In addition, professors agreed that students who were thoughtful in that they paid keen attention to details and were analytical were most likely to be successful and perform far above minimum requirements.

**Analysis and Interpretation**

In arriving at a clearer picture of factors influencing student success in online education, participants were asked to highlight demographics about successful learners. From participants’ responses, no common demographics such as age, race/ethnicity, or gender were identified. Professors felt that there was no single demographic that related to successful online students. Professor Lee noted that females were more likely than males to be successful students based on the fact that there were more female than male students pursuing education as their major at the university. No solid evidence was given to support this view and this position can be deemed flawed because greater numbers from one gender do not automatically signal better performance than the other gender.

Technological support was repeatedly identified in the data, but the focus was more on faculty’s need for technological support instead of student’s need for it. Although faculty recognized the importance of students’ need for adequate technological support, faculty believed that students’ ability to learn was compromised when faculty were unable to incorporate effective instructional design, utilize key functions of Blackboard, and receive on demand technological support.

There were conflicting views about the degree of students’ comfort with technology, which could have implications for professors’ expectation of students’ success. For example, professors who taught undergraduate courses felt that undergraduate students were more comfortable, and their classes required students to produce a video presentation on a particular topic. Faculty did not indicate their measuring stick for recognizing students’ degree of comfort with the technology. However, there appeared to be an assumption on the part of faculty that if students did not complain about the technology and were able to post critical tasks, participate in discussions, and complete online tests, then they demonstrated comfort with the technology.

Although difficult life circumstances confronting students were identified by faculty as one of the main factors influencing student success in online education, this factor was equally applicable to face-to-face instruction. Limitations of language barriers for students who spoke English as a second language could be also regarded as equally applicable to face-to-face instruction. The underlying thread with both of these limitations was that the technology separated the student from the instructor. The distance resulting from the online instructional format posed a problem with providing the type of support for students in these instances. The lack of access to a wide range of student support services is regarded as one of the most significant gaps in online education (LaPadula, 2003). The issue of accommodation, a form of student support for distance learners, must therefore be properly incorporated in plans that seek to improve student success in online learning.

The professors all felt that faculty the play a meaningful role in cultivating successful students in online education. The literature revealed that the nature of the student-instructor interaction was principal to student success (Marks, Sibley, & Arbaugh, 2005; Rovai, 2004; Rovai & Downey, 2010). Consequently, when faculty and students were both highly invested in the online setting, students were likely to succeed. However, particularly with the undergraduate classes, language barriers imposed
limitations for effective instruction, which meant that faculty at this institution needed to spend more time decoding what students mean in their text submissions in the online environment.

Of significance in the data was the blurred distinction between student characteristics and factors. When asked about factors influencing student success, participants frequently highlighted the personal characteristics of students thus shedding light on an interaction between student characteristic as a crucial aspect in student success within the online environment. Although faculty discussed other factors, these other factors were mostly presented upon further probing, whereas characteristics of students were readily presented. This pattern would seem to suggest that although extrinsic factors play a role in student success in online learning, the most important factors were intrinsic factors expressed through students’ personal characteristics, which is consistent with the literature on student success (Kerr, Rynearson, & Kerr, 2006; Rovai, 2004; Rovai & Downey, 2010).

Implications

The findings of this study suggest that there is a need for further research on the role that demographics play in relation to student success in online education. Previous research has indicated mixed findings about demographics and student success in online education (Angiello, 2002; Volery & Lord, 2000; Yukselturk & Bulut, 2007). Having extensive knowledge about the demographics of successful students in online education will give institutions the advantage to target underperforming students and establish systems to enhance students’ chances of being successful.

Of importance, this study brings into focus the ubiquitous subject of technological support in the online environment for both faculty and students. Faculty in this study felt they received inadequate technological support for themselves and their students, which has implications for faculty, administrators, and students, as well as the level of resourcing associated with technology for online education. A significant finding of this study revealed that in the online environment, students’ personal characteristics appeared to be more of a key factor in student success than external conditions within the learning environment. Therefore, although emphasis may be given to creating the optimal learning condition for online students, students’ intrinsic factors such as self-directedness and motivation have an equally important part to play in how well they perform in online education, and as such, it is imperative that these innate student characteristics be cultivated by students and fostered by faculty.

Conclusion

This study sought to understand the essence of student success in online education by considering faculty perceptions of the principal factors that influence student success in online education. According to the literature, successful students in online education demonstrate personal characteristics of self-directedness, motivation, and strong engagement with faculty as well as with other students (Kerr, Rynearson, & Kerr, 2006; Kruger-Ross & Waters, 2013; Rovai, 2004). The literature also showed that successful students operated with higher ordering thinking capabilities and proficient reading skills, which supported the study’s data.

From the data, five principal factors were identified as critical to student success in online education. Knowledge of these factors will be especially valuable for faculty and digital instructors when delivering, developing, and revising online courses to ensure that student success is catered to in the courses. Researchers can extend this study to test these factors for various levels of online education such as graduate or undergraduate studies. Following further research, a theoretical model of student success for online learning could be developed based upon the factors identified or additional factors discovered. Moreover, language barriers in online learning that rely mostly on text based interaction
was noted in the data as worthy of further research particularly with diverse universities and colleges.

References


Transformative Learning Theory and Its Relevance to Managing Group Dynamics in a Competitive Work Environment

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Abstract: In any environment, group dynamics would exist. How we deal with it in a competitive work environment defines who we are using transformative learning. The focus of this paper is to explore transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1997) and its relevance to managing group dynamics in the competitive business environment.

In today’s competitive business environment, leaders face a constant struggle of finding innovative and effective ways to improve the performance of their workforce. With companies operating across various geographical locations, and with the collapse of boundaries within the work sphere, the effective use of work groups in the execution of critical tasks continues to provoke great interest. The focus of this paper is to explore transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1997) and its relevance to managing group dynamics in the competitive business environment. With organizations seeking to strengthen their market share, the focus is not only on acquiring cutting edge technology but also on securing the best talent capable of championing the desired change. Companies are interested in nurturing high performance work groups, and we believe that the subject of perspective transformation offers valuable insight into improving the relationship between and among members of a group (Mezirow, 1991).

Overview of Transformational Theory

Mezirow’s transformational theory (1997) involves critical thinking, which includes conducting an internal investigation into one’s views and philosophies to transform one’s life into a new significant way. Research has shown whether the new way of thinking is improved (Dirkx, 1998). According to Clark (1993), transformational learning is defined as learning that induces more far-reaching change in the learner than other kinds of learning, especially learning experiences, which shape the learner and produce a significant impact, or paradigm shift, which affects the learner’s subsequent experiences. Transformation can only take place when individuals are able to look at their selves, reflect on the beliefs that they possess, recognize that a change can be made, and make changes on their beliefs.

Transformation usually takes place when individuals have experienced such a radical change in life, that their beliefs and values are transformed. For example, a significant event such as September 11th 2001 can trigger a transformation with those who have experience the devastating event. The beliefs and values or even their ways of thinking can be transformed because of the negative experience. Another example that could have inspired transformational learning theory could be Hurricane Katrina. People who were affected by this event could have changed their ways of thinking, or their beliefs and values after being either victims or bystanders of this tragic event.

Jack Mezirow (1997) changed the name from the transformative learning theory to perspective transformation to reflect a change within the person. Perspectives are made up of beliefs, values, and assumptions (Dirkx, 1998), and they are all shaped by our life experiences. Our experiences are sometimes viewed from our own perspective, but do we sometimes look at them through other person’s lens? What shapes our beliefs, values, and assumptions are not just what we experience, but is shaped by our interactions with others.
Critical reflection is a key element in the process of perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1990). During this stage, individuals are able to critically look at every angle of the situation or experience, including other person’s point of view in order to avoid a one-sided transformation process. This level of reflection is essential because individuals can easily neglect the whole scenario and focus solely on their own psychological development. The benefits of critical reflections, within the context of perspective transformation, can be helpful to avoid one-sided or unilateral decision-making within groups or workgroups. Several theorists like Bion (1961) and Rioch (1970) who focus on group development, share the view that the group as a system must reinforce actions that support group decision-making. This is in no way an attempt to give prominence to the idea of groupthink. It is a sign of group maturity when ideas though unpopular can be aired and contested without members thinking they are being attacked.

Group Development and Dynamics

Tuckman (1965) identified five stages of group development. These are forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning. In the early stages, the members seek to build rapport. This is construed as small talk where limited information is shared. The storming stage occurs for any number of reasons and is identified as the tension that exists between or among the members of the group. One causative factor, often overlooked by organizational leaders, is the lack of clarity with respect to the objectives of a project. Diffusing such tensions will necessitate a mechanism that would be introduced to manage the emotional outbursts and expectations of the members. The norming stage captures the maturity of the group. Tasks are completed in a supportive and nurturing environment. This stage acknowledges the contributions of members and members feel invested in the outcomes. At the performing stage, members operate at a level of mastery. The group attains synergy and is able to call upon the different skill levels of its members. Synergy affords the creation of superior ideas because decisions are built on the contributions of the members. Loyalty appears to be high and output is held against established standards. The final stage, adjourning, occurs when the group has completed the task it was put together to manage. Tuckman (1965) explains that at this stage, the group may encounter fears and insecurities associated with the completion of the project. The termination of the group task can be interpreted as an end to the familial support that would have been a by-product of an engaged group. Following up on Tuckman’s five (5) stages of group development, one needs to understand that not all groups get to the stage of performing as they may encounter dysfunction that prevents them from achieving their goals.

Dalton, Hoyle, and Watts (2006) suggest that a “group consists of two or more individuals who are aware of one another, interact with one another on a regular basis and perceive themselves as a group” (p. 227). In an organization, this description is likely to be accepted by most as an apt description of the group process within a physical or virtual work environment. Inherent in the definition is the idea that individuals move along a continuum, subjugating their individual identities and adopt the identity of the group to which they belong. The aim is to achieve a sort of group fitness that conforms to the expectation of a larger system. For example, an organization faced with several challenges that is affecting its productivity, will seek to pull the best talent at its disposal from several departments to form a risk assessment group. The members of the group are expected to meet current goals of the company, that of putting forward cogent strategies to address untoward events. In this scenario, group members who never worked cross teams or departments might find this work dynamic challenging, resulting in low productivity or undelivered outcomes.

In an effort to understand the behavior of groups, Bion’s (1961) work is valuable. He is best known for his work as a psychoanalyst and is credited for insightful theories gained through his work with the Tavistock Clinic. Bion (1961) advanced the view that two issues are at play in the group
process: the work group and the basic assumption group. The work group demonstrates the conscious level of the group process. The members understand what is required of them; they understand why they were brought together; they understand the purpose of the structures/boundaries that are in place and acknowledge that they are accountable to not only each other but to the leaders of the organization.

Lipgar (2002) underscores that tasks are central to the group’s identity. It is what anchors the individual to the group. In the absence of clearly defined goals, Bion (1961) observed that his patients operated in chaos. Lipgar suggests that it takes a group to make a task. This view was constructed from Bion’s decision to organize his patients around a task-oriented goal. To aid his patience recovery, Bion (1961) suggested that they “make the study of their tensions a group task” (p. 29). This approach indicated a shift away from the psychologist being a central figure in the therapeutic session and now included the patients as active participants to their recovery. Applying this discovery to the organization one can appreciate that tasks, when properly developed and articulated, have the potential to engage members of the group and the focus on an activity or series of activities is likely to take primacy over work assumptions. Taking this a step further, there may be learning outcomes from group tasks that set the tone for amendments to the behavior of individuals and in the end, the group’s transformation toward a high functioning work group. Mezirow’s (1997) account of perspective transformation is an important body of literature to the conversations about organizational change, particularly at the group level. Therefore, there is a need to pursue research that could assess what conditions would improve group performance at the organizational level.

We cannot, however, discount the power of the basic work-assumption. “The basic work assumption is described as the unconscious group process where individuals adopt measures aimed at protecting themselves from the discomfort of working in groups” (p. 29). Examples of strategies adopted by members operating at the work assumption level include hidden agendas, challenging authority of the leader as well as being tardy for meetings. Bion (1961) explores the power behind three basic assumptions and exposes the potential risks to developing a healthy group encounter. The first is the dependency assumption. This behavior is characterized by the group’s need to feel a sense of security. In achieving this state, the group needs to feel as though they are protected by someone who will assume the leadership role and attend to all decisions on behalf of the group. An engaged leader will seek to reframe the relationship by reinforcing the specific talents of each member of the team. He or she will have to be open to reflecting on his or her own biases, controlling the impulse to act on them whilst attending to the creation of an environment that encourages the other members to see themselves as not mere followers but active contributors to the process. The dependency assumption is likely to be reduced if the organization makes a conscious effort to recognize and celebrate the performance of successful groups.

The second assumption is fight/flight (Bion, 1961). The groups rely on the leader to provide the appropriate kind of leadership at different times. The leader is expected to provide the right guidance to the group when threats surface. Rioch (1970) in her assessment of Bion’s work makes the point that the emerging group leader “should have a bit of a paranoid element in his makeup if he wishes to be successful, for this will ensure that if no enemy is obvious, then the leaders will certainly find one” (p. 60). This observation appears to speak directly to organizations that are labeled as toxic environments because the leader is seeking to remain relevant to the group by employing strategies that endears him or her to the group. If the leader fails in his or her role, the group will become bored with his or her efforts, thus rendering the leader useless to their needs.

The last assumption is pairing, which speaks to the act of reproducing (Bion, 1961). Sigmund Freud’s (1926) influence is present in Bion’s assessment of the group with the reference of pairing as a sexual encounter. Groups are expected to create a new reality. In many organizations, groups are
created for a variety of reasons and toward a specific end. In some instances, the groups are formed after an untoward event or established to address possible threats. The actors may be pulled from different departments with the objective of creating a new raft of responses. The group’s purpose is geared towards transformation. They are conscious of the task at hand; however, the basic assumptions can be distracting if not clearly understood. As the group adjusts itself, its members are being forced to put aside their own needs. Differing worldviews are at play, and although the group is task focused, they still have to navigate the complex paths toward harmonizing their effort. In mitigating threats, the group overtime, develops a response to external and internal stimuli. The group experience aids the interpretation of the environment, which is central to the learning outcome.

Transformation Theory and Group Dynamics and Processes

The process advanced by Tuckman (1965) explains the group’s transformation from merely members with their own agenda to cooperative team players anchored to the successful completion of a task. How then can organizations incorporate the benefits of Mezirow’s transformation theory (1997) with that Bion’s (1961) early work and Tuckman’s (1965) five stages of group development to produce an effective work team? What connects the three is the need to contain the erratic impulses at the individual level. There is also a conversation about change (transformation of the self) to an adaptive culture that positions the group’s role as superior to that of the individual’s needs. The strategies used to address group harmony must be deliberate, and to achieve this, the group has to evolve from being simply distinct members of the group, to a unit that is involved in the creation of new realities. The threats and tensions must be resolved for the group to reach the difficult stage of performing.

Bion’s (1961) work allows for us to reframe how we interpret the various tensions encountered by groups. Lipgar (1993) observes that Bion works as an “analyst/consultant/therapist and serves as a container for group projections” (p. 42). He adds further that “working with these projections in the resonating, complex and emotion laden context of a group requires a profound awareness of the self and others” (p. 42). The awareness that is discussed here connects with Mezirow’s thoughts (1997) on the reflective nature of an individual after experiencing an untoward event. The outcome of his reflection will inform how he engages with others and with larger systems. Slaatte (1968) introduces the concept of paradoxical problem solving, which adds some value to the discussion at the level of the group’s experience. He describes a paradox as an idea involving two (2) opposing or propositions which, however, contradictory, are equally necessary to convey a more imposing, illuminating, life-related or provocative insight into truth than either factor can muster in its own right. What the mind seemingly cannot think it must think; what reason is reluctant to express it must express. (p. 4)

Paradoxical Problem Solving

Group dynamics vary according to the different personalities that exist. Not very often would you have a group where there is a full 100% equal effort from all individuals. When we are told that we have to work in groups, the majority of individuals cringe at the thought because of the bad experiences that occurred previously; bad experiences are usually filed away and we take to new groups our old way of thinking.

However, in examining our thought processes, why not reframe how we react to present events (new groups) instead of trying to change the actual dynamics of the group. Transformation in this sense is to adjust our perception and response to the group dynamics. Instead of trying to change other individuals in the group, which is very difficult, why not instead alter the way we perceive our reactions and our thought processes to the group (Cloke & Goldsmith, 2011).
For example, in a group where an individual is portraying a very strong personality and taking control of the entire project, other individuals might perceive this as a negative attribute and might not be as engaged in the group project. How does prospective transformation work in this scenario? Individuals in the group should examine the individual who has the strong personality and adjust their own expectations to that of something positive, instead of looking at it as a negative. At a specific point in time, the individual, while examining and looking at oneself, might see their life as existing in a paradox (contradictory realities). The individuals in the group see a conflict but there can also be some resolution.

According to Cloke and Goldsmith (2011), paradoxical problem solving consists of the following:

- Recognizing the multiple, typically conflicting truths that shape and inform our problems.
- Challenge us to deploy higher-level skills and intelligence, to discern multiple truths and discover fresh ideas in the complex, contradictory nature of our problem.
- Turn problems into evolutionary imperatives and opportunities. (p. 171)

How are these paradoxical problems solved in a way that is conducive to perspective transformation? In a world where contradictory realities exists, Cloke and Goldsmith (2011) examine how a person can use the following five (5) steps in order to solve creatively while at the same time, transform:

1. Admit that a problem exists (person with a strong personality in the group)
2. Examine and clarify the elements and nature of the problem (the individual with the strong personality controls the group not lending space to those who have opinions or suggestions).
3. Investigate, analyze and prioritize the problem (why is the individual portraying such a strong personality? Are the other members of the group showing signs of wanting to be delegated? Is no one giving suggestions? Was a leader of the group chosen?)
4. Look at possible solutions that satisfy everyone’s interests without being attached to any solution (can the group participate and give suggestions? Can the group use suggestions from the ‘leader; and improve on them? Can the group look at these suggestions as a starting point in working together as opposed to looking at the ‘leader’ as a bully in the group?)
5. Jointly act, evaluate results, acknowledge efforts and celebrate success (the group as a whole use the results in Stage four (4) and act on the ones that benefit the group and as a result the individuals a well. (p. 188)

When examining the stages above, it is observed that during the whole process, perspective transformation takes place by individuals examining and looking at their selves, reflecting on the beliefs that they possess, recognizing that a change can be made, and then lastly, making the changes on their beliefs.

How do we look at ourselves in the competitive work environment and at the same time try to transform? Some elements that we need to consider are: ethical principles and shared values; what do we stand for? What do we as a group, want to ultimately achieve and as a continuation? What do I want to achieve? Who are we and what are our strengths and weaknesses? What stands in the way of us achieving what we want/need to achieve? How do we overcome barriers that exist? What do we perceive as our future achievements? How do we achieve our goal?

If an individual is able to answer each of these questions, perspective transformation can occur. Looking at the end result is a key element in transforming our way of thinking and seeking new values
and beliefs. In the previous example, when trying to work with an individual with a strong personality and who has taken on the leadership role, the group can use this personality trait to their advantage by turning it from a negative experience to a positive experience. This result can have such a significant impact on the individual that it causes the leader’s future experiences to be impacted as well.

Implications for Practice

Organizations, as complex structures, are beset by many challenges brought on by internal and/or external factors. The collapse of a number of entities has been blamed in part on the failure of leaders to motivate and develop the talent of potential high performers. The importance of creating and sustaining the qualities that inform a successful group is relevant to the discussion of perspective transformation. Work units do not work in isolation of each other. The members, although employed for specific skill sets, are called upon in today’s competitive environment to be adaptive. There is the expectation that our behaviors must conform to the will of the group and not our individual needs and aspirations. Taking Bion’s (1961) observations into account, there is a desire to manage the group process so as to minimize the intrusion of behaviors that will undermine the efforts of the larger system. Because basic assumptions are unpredictable and focused toward fantasy, it will require an engaged leadership that will contain the various forms of destructive behaviors.

For organizations to realize their true purpose, the authors submit that group harmony is an essential part of high performing teams. As a consequence, effective strategies ought to be developed to manage the tensions within the group. Mezirow (1997), Bion (1961) and Lipgar (1993), suggest that organizations will need to engineer a set of strategies that will seek to minimize incidents associated with the basic assumptions that veer groups off target. This view is accommodated by both Mezirow (1997) and Bion’s (1961) theories which point to a shared interest in developing healthy group dynamics and further adds value to the discourse on organizational development.

Mezirow’s Transformational theory (1997) and Bion’s (1961) perspectives on group development provide a key to assist organizations in their management of group dysfunction. The areas of cooperation are as follows:

1. Identify the underlying work assumptions that would prevent the group from meeting the desired goal. This will mean that a mechanism would have to be developed that will inspire trust among the members, whilst paying attention to the skill sets that will move the project forward.

2. Create a culture of recognizing success, where the individual is encouraged by the group’s achievement ahead of his/her selfish needs.

3. Provide opportunities for members of various departments to work on projects where their talents are best suited. As members become more active in the affairs of the organization (matching their specific skills), the more conscious they become of how they impact the results. Such opportunities allow for discoveries about themselves and their capabilities. It is through experiential learning that stereotypes are neutralized and greater opportunities for partnerships realized.

4. Cultivate leaders who are able to provide guidance that is imbued with their experiences that can help the team develop skill sets that will benefit the organization’s goals. Transformational leaders can be instrumental in championing improved relationships among group members by nurturing those behaviors that are consistent with a high performance work team.

The list above is not exhaustive but offers a look at what is possible if organizations can have the member explore his or her shortcomings as a part of a group. The shift in thinking is as a result of a
process of engagement with others, where the goal is not only to complete the given task but to develop the requisite skill sets that will make it easier to perform in other group settings.

References


Millennials in the Workplace: Positioning Companies for Future Success

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Abstract: Today’s workplace is undergoing dramatic shifts due to the growth of Millennials within the workforce and the insertion of their ideals, values, and identity in organizations. This paper explores the workplace profile of Millennials, their use of technology, their workplace engagement, and the ultimate impact they have on organizational success.

"Group life is never without change, merely differences in the amount and type of change exist" (Lewin, 1947a, p.308).

All groups, systems, and organizations exist in a world that is continuously impacted by circumstances, internal or external, that drive change (Brown & Eisenhardt, 1997; Burnes, 2004; Marshak, 2006). Changes in personnel, resources, leadership, the economy, goals, business models, laws, consumer behavior, environment, and competition can trigger change in an organization. Tomorrow’s success for today’s companies depends on how these companies develop and respond to change on a global scale. Companies that embrace Millennials, born between 1982 and 2000 (Howe & Strauss, 1991), as an active part of their organization’s development are most positioned for tomorrow’s success. Organizational development (OD) has emerged as the field of study that examines change in organizations through a variety of frameworks and theories (Burke, 2008; Marshak, 2006). Although many of the OD frameworks and theories compete for status, the body of knowledge that defines OD seeks to explore universal principles through which groups, systems, and organizations succeed or fail (Burke, 2008; Marshak, 2006; Maurer, 2006). The purpose of this paper is to advocate that companies in which Millennials are embraced as an active part of the organization’s development are most positioned for future success.

Organizational Development

OD is synonymous with change management, with most OD practitioners engaged in the strategic planning of an organization, directing change (Marshak, 2006; Schein, 2008). For many practitioners, the work of OD builds on Lewin’s model for a planned approach to change that consists of three steps: unfreezing, movement, and refreezing (Burke, 2008). Unfreezing is considered the ratification of complacency and the realization that change is needed in an organization (Burke, 2008; Burnes, 2004; Lewin, 1947b). The unfreezing of an organization produces the initial behavioral conditions of a group that are necessary for the second step of the model, movement (Burnes, 2004; Burke, 2008; Lewin, 1947b). Movement is change, as it requires the learning, identification, and evaluation of new forces (attitudes, skills, knowledge, and or attributes) that will thrive in the changed environment (Burnes, 2004; Burke, 2008). Once these new forces are established, the third step of the model, refreezing, becomes possible. Refreezing (or freezing) is the sustention and the stabilization of a change in culture, standards, strategies, and practices of an organization (Burnes, 2004; Burke, 2008; Lewin, 1947b). However, there are varying perspectives in OD on change and its management (Burnes, 2004; Choi & Ruona, 2011). There are several alternative constructs on change management, one dominating perspective being a culture-excellence construct (Burnes, 2004).

A culture-excellence construct of change management considers change as culture-centric with the belief that human nature (unpredictable personalities) is the condition under which organizational cultures shape and manage change of an organization (Burnes, 2004; Peters & Waterman, 1984).
proponents of culture-excellence, organizations are fluid entities and are never in a state of freeze as suggested by Lewin’s model (Burnes, 2004). Subsequent scholars, such as Pettigrew (1979), reject the idea that there are universal principles to change management, noting that change is a function of an organization’s systematic culture, an organization’s history, and the inter-relatedness of individuals, groups, and organizations, and the complexity of those variables interacting at any given point (Burnes, 2004). Brown and Eisenhardt (1997) similarly diagnose organizations as continuously being on the edge of order and chaos, reacting to forces that dictate the organization’s past, present, and future.

Despite their differences, all frameworks share the commonality of change and the fundamental belief that all members of a group, system, or organization must share in or participate in the change process to achieve success (Burnes, 2004; Maurer, 2006; Schein, 2008). Participation in a change process, however, through organizational structures and systems of power, is often coerced (Schein, 2008). To ensure success, as an organization responds to change, change has to be seen as natural and necessary for participants (Brown & Eisenhardt, 1997; Maurer, 2006; Stenzel & Stenzel, 2003). How an organization is managed is a critical component in the change process because successful change management requires new values to be established for an organization (Schein, 2008). Historically, managers regulate behaviors, trainings, reward systems, and disciplinary processes (Schein, 2008). However, organizations, in the most universal sense, are undergoing a dynamic shift in which employee control and coercion are considered outdated, and the ideals of coaching and personal expression are becoming intrinsic within organizations (Canals, 2011; Karsh & Templin, 2013). This is largely due to today’s growing workforce of the Millennial generation and the insertion of their personal ideals, values, and identity in organizations (Canals, 2011; Karsh & Templin, 2013).

**Millennials**

Millennials represent the most radical change in society’s ideologies since the Baby Boomer generation, individuals born between 1945 and 1964, and is impacting organizations similarly (Canals, 2011; Karsh & Templin, 2013). With ideals and values such as a communal approach to management, this generation is redefining how an organization develops, engages with employees, and responds to today’s technological advancements (Canals, 2011; Karsh & Templin, 2013; Schein, 2008). Resistance to change involves the disengagement of employees and an opposition to a shift in new values within an organization (Schein, 2008). For organizations today, the archaic top-down leadership model may not resonate with Millennials’ value system; however, Millennials’ appetite for engagement and appreciation for new values, such as technology, along with their ideals and identity, may make them less resistant to change (Brown & Eisenhardt, 1997; Canals, 2011; Karsh & Templin, 2013; Schein, 2008).

**Assertion 1**

A generation is defined as an identifiable group that shares birth years, age, location, and significant life events at critical developmental stages (Kupperschmidt, 2000). The three generational groups that compose today’s workforce include the Baby Boomers, Generation X (Gen X-ers), and the Millennials. Understanding the multi-generational workplace is a core competency within today’s organizations as Millennials are beginning to enter the workplace and companies are seeking to avoid conflict (Adams, 2000), misunderstanding (Bradford, 1993), and miscommunication (Jurkiewicz, 2000). Today’s workplace is approximated to have 78 million Baby Boomers and 45 million Gen X-ers, or those born between 1965 and 1980 (Howe & Strauss, 1991; Schaeffer, 2000). As Millennials enter the workplace, Boomers and Gen X-ers are currently considered to be the experienced employees and managers (Smola & Sutton, 2002). The profile of these three generations, their differences, and how
organizations and their managers respond to those differences, will determine how an organization will develop and be successful.

In 2015, the Baby Boomer generation consists of individuals who were between 51 to 69 years in age. Through their personal ideals, values, and identity, Baby Boomers have built and defined most of today’s organizational cultures and identity. Baby Boomers grew up in paternalistic environments leading to values of community involvement and company-centeredness (Howe & Strauss, 1991). Baby Boomers value hard work and tend to be exceptionally loyal to their employer (Howe & Strauss, 1991). Job promotion, loyalty to the employer, and favoring consistency are important work attributes for Baby Boomers (Yu & Miller, 2005). While loyal to companies, Baby Boomers are more concerned about money and recognition than other generations; nevertheless, they prefer job security and desire to be promoted step by step (Yu & Miller, 2005).

Gen X-ers are 35 to 50 years in age in 2015. They have redefined the workforce to embrace an emphasis on job satisfaction, quality of life, and workplace empowerment (Yu & Miller, 2005). Due to persistent financial, family, and societal insecurities, coupled with a plethora of change and the influx of diversity, Generation X embodied a sense of individualism over collectivism (Jurkiewicz & Brown, 1998). Gen X-ers tend to be loyal to their profession as opposed to their employer and seek opportunities to improve their individual work skills instead of advancing their organization (Yu & Miller, 2005). The individualistic nature of Gen X-ers results in the preference to work alone and favor the individual over the group and or organization (Howe & Strauss, 1991). Gen X-ers expect educational rewards, job challenges, and rapid promotion while craving higher salaries, flexible work arrangements, and more financial leverage (Jennings, 2000).

The organizational culture of today’s workplace is being redefined yet again as the Millennial generation enters the workforce. Millennials typically hold a global perspective on life and seek meaningful roles on teams consisting of highly committed, motivated coworkers (Martin, 2005). Millennials thrive on challenging work, caring more about creative expression than leadership roles in organizations (Martin, 2005). Millennials are entrepreneurial thinkers who relish responsibility, demand immediate feedback, expect a frequent sense of accomplishment, and have a high need for organization engagement and support (Martin, 2005). Although Millennials have an urgent sense of immediacy, they adapt well to new people, places, and circumstances, thriving in environments with consistent change (Martin, 2005). As such, Millennials are beneficial to companies undergoing change processes.

Assertion 2

Millennials live in a rapidly changing era and are considered the digital generation in which technology shapes their way of life (Martin, 2005). Although technology was present and became consistently easier to use throughout the life cycle of previous generations, Millennials are entrenched in its advancement and development (Martin, 2005). With technology’s profuse presence in today’s workplace and Millennials’ vast exposure to its progression and application, members of this generation are positioned at an advantage over other generations. As time has progressed, it has become more prevalent for households to have access to home computers and internet, resulting in a larger number of Millennials with such access than in previous generations. Consequently, Millennials have developed a symbiotic relationship with technology and use it far more often than those of previous generations. According to a 2010 Pew Foundation study, 83% of Millennials place their cellphone directly on or right next to their bed while sleeping, compared to 68% of Gen Xers and 50% of Boomers (Pew Research Center, 2010). These behavior patterns depict the “information-age mindset” phenomenon, in which the difference between the attitudes and aptitudes of individuals who did and did not grow up with technology are described (Oblinger, 2003). Moreover, the constant use of and exposure to technology
has reshaped the manner in which Millennials navigate their day-to-day interactions. The acquisition and repetition of technology has biologically modified the neural circuitry of Millennials (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010).

Due to unremitting use of technology, Millennials are often multitasking between mobile devices, engaging in social media, or browsing the Internet. Technology has made an abundance of information readily available, and the Millennial generation has honed the ability to rapidly obtain and filter the material to acquire the desired information (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). With the success of many organizations reliant on the collection and processing of data, Millennials can transfer their developed skills into the workplace for the betterment of the organization.

The avid use of social media has also advanced the collaboration skills of the Millennial generation. The Millennial effectively works as a member of a team and thrives in a supportive and nurturing environment that promotes teamwork (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). Millennials prioritize the success and welfare of the team above personal attainment (Deal, Altman, & Rogelberg, 2010). Although it was initially thought that the Millennial generation held a sense of entitlement and were difficult to work with, further research indicates that these notions have been attributed to each generation as it entered the workforce (Deal et al., 2010).

**Assertion 3**

The ability of Millennials to adapt to evolving change can be attributed to their engagement in the workplace. Employee engagement is defined as the process of positively motivating employees cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally toward fulfilling organizational outcomes (Shuck & Herd, 2012; Wollard & Shuck, 2010). From a multigenerational perspective, workplace engagement varies from generation to generation (Schullery, 2013). Although there are numerous researchers who negate the existence of multigenerational differences, there is a lack of current literature to support such assertions (Levenson, 2010; Schullery, 2013). Each generation values varying workplace factors; Baby Boomers prefer experience, optimism, and the willingness to work overtime (Gilbert, 2011), while members of Generation X prefer stability (Levenson, 2010), and Millennials seek meaning in their work (Schullery, 2013). Millennials desire authenticity and meaningfulness when establishing relationships (Goldgehn, 2004). Employee engagement is crucial for an organization that seeks to gain and retain employees of value from the Millennial generation (Schullery, 2013).

Due to the existence of multiple leadership theories and concepts, it is difficult to identify which theory will best aid a specific organization. The integrative leadership model suggests that leadership of successful change or organizational development requires a vision, values and culture, strategy, empowerment, and motivation and inspiration (Gill, 2010). Organizations in which leaders support values, culture, empowerment, motivation, and inspiration facilitate success (Gill, 2010). Gill (2010) suggests that the integrative leadership change model can assist a company with organizational development. Millennials will most likely connect to and be successful in organizations where meaning is embedded within what the model espouses. A hindrance to the integrative leadership change model concept is resistance to change. The need for constant information regarding the current affairs of the organization or a lack of conviction to change is where resistance can take shape (Kubr, 1996).

Millennials believe in teamwork, fostering relationships, and work-life balance (Gilbert, 2011). Often, the interpretation of engagement for Millennials in the workforce can be misguided as Generation X and Baby Boomers see the need for social interaction, immediate results, and instant advancement as weaknesses of Millennials (Gilbert, 2011). Millennials desire input in an organization, seek understanding of the inner workings of the organization, and desire to be a part of the decision-making
process. Forward thinking for the Millennial consists of continual innovation and risk taking. If Millennials are not a part of the process of input and forward thinking, they are most likely to disengage from the workplace and find meaning elsewhere.

Workplace engagement leads to meaning making which shapes our self-consciousness (Chalofsky & Cavallaro, 2013). Today, many Millennials are opting to work in positions that are not well-paid or career-oriented but rather are enjoyable, satisfying, and integrate work-life balance (Chalofsky & Cavallaro, 2013). Millennials seek work that is meaningful and solidifies their self-efficacy. Although members of other generations also seek to complete meaningful work, Millennials’ sense of self and self-efficacy makes them less stressed or fearful of changing jobs or building safety nets.

Chalofsky (2003) utilized his construct for meaningful work to understand generational differences of meaning and purpose. His construct is focused on increasing the fit between self and work. He attested one cannot be effective without knowing one’s self; the construct defined self as identity, purpose, and agency (Chalofsky & Cavallaro, 2013). How employees learn and master proficiencies is what generates meaningful work (Chalofsky & Cavallaro, 2013). Therefore, practitioners should pay close attention to the quest for meaning because new generations (i.e., Millennials) desire meaning in their work. Their attitudes toward work and formal education have changed significantly compared to other generations. Millennials can be used to assist Baby Boomers and Generation Xers be less resistant to change based on their willingness to become engaged.

Conclusion

The paper contributes to the existing literature on OD and generational impact in the workplace through the linkage of the two constructs. Previous literature on OD and generational impact is largely separate. Our position has been to highlight a need for further review and research on (a) generational differences’ impact on organizational development, (b) a non-biased exploration of the Millennial profile, (c) successful companies that engage and utilize the talents of Millennials, and (d) engagement tactics for different generations of employees.

The relationship between OD and generational differences can have important implications at the individual and organizational levels for human resource professionals. Future studies should indicate a relationship between employee engagement and generational profiles and the use of technology. Human resource development professionals should understand how OD and generational impact on the workplace are linked and could aid organizations in a strategic process of OD.

References


Program Evaluation Primer: A Review of Three Evaluations

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Abstract: Program evaluation is an essential process to program assessment and improvement. This paper overviews three published evaluations, such as reduction of HIV-contraction, perceptions of teachers of a newly adopted supplemental reading program, and seniors farmers’ market nutrition education program, and considers important aspects of program evaluation more broadly.

Few human resource development (HRD) scholars, professionals, and practitioners would argue that the sub-field of program evaluation is not essential to the learning and performance goals of the HRD profession. Program evaluation, a “tool used to assess the implementation and outcomes of a program, to increase a program’s efficiency and impact over time, and to demonstrate accountability” (MacDonald et al., 2001, p. 1), is an essential process to program assessment and improvement. Program evaluation (a) establishes program effectiveness, (b) builds accountability into program facilitators and other stakeholders, (c) improves the implementation and effectiveness of programs, (d) assists with the allotment and management of limited resources, (e) is important for marketing a program, (f) helps to justify existence of budget for program, and in its ultimate purpose, (g) is critical for the continuous development and improvement of the program. Program evaluations can be approached from a number of different paradigms, and this paper focuses on Kirkpatrick’s (1975) four-level model of evaluation. The purpose of this paper is to review three program evaluations in differing fields to examine similarities within the three program evaluations based on the Kirkpatrick’s model. In order to understand the basis of the reviews, Kirkpatrick’s model is discussed in the following section.

Kirkpatrick’s Four-Level Model of Evaluation

Although there are many different possible ways to approach program evaluation, one model has been in operation for six decades. First introduced in 1959, Kirkpatrick’s four-level model is one of the most commonly used approaches of program evaluation. Bassi et al. (1996) reported that 96% of companies surveyed used some form of the Kirkpatrick framework to evaluate training and development programs. Twitchell, Holton, and Trott (2000) performed a meta-analysis of studies done in the last 40 years. Their research indicates the following ranges for the use of Kirkpatrick's four levels: level 1 (86-100% of surveyed programs), level 2 (71-90% of surveyed programs), level 3 (43-83% of surveyed programs), and level 4 (21-49% of surveyed programs). Although some companies do not use the model for all four levels, all four levels of the evaluation should be utilized to avoid biased conclusions (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006).

The versatility of Kirkpatrick’s (1975) model allows it to be used for the evaluation of the effectiveness of any program. Many things should be considered when conducting a program evaluation: (a) determining program needs, (b) setting objectives, (c) determining subject content, (d) evaluating the program, (e) selecting participants, (f) determining the best schedule, (g) selecting appropriate facilities, (h) selecting appropriate instructors, (i) selecting/preparing audiovisual aids, and (j) coordinating the program (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006).
In designing his model, Kirkpatrick (1975) considered what impact the training would have on participants in terms of their reactions (level one), learning (level two), behavior (level three), and organizational results (level four).

Level one, reaction, simply evaluates the extent to which the trainees liked the program (Kirkpatrick, 1975). First, the evaluators must quantify the key determinants of the program expectations, design the program around the key expectations, and then, evaluate the trainees’ reaction to the program designed around the expectations. Determining the information that is needed to refine the evaluation process and design an evaluation that will quantify the reactions of the participants is crucial during this period. Second, the evaluators must create a form to measure participant reaction and decide how to capture it. A set of standards is needed to measure the reaction of the evaluation process. It is important that the participants’ perception of the evaluation process is positive, which should be reflected in the immediate written response with comments. In addition, they need to encourage written comments in addition to the multiple choices in such design. For most accurate results, 100% of the answer sheets should be collected, which can be maximized by the agenda design. If the program participants are allowed to complete the evaluation before leaving the training, such as prior to a price drawing that engages the audience, a maximum results can be achieved (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006).

Specific objectives of the program need to be developed for level two, learning (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006). This is the phase in which the learning evaluations should be targeted to the specific objectives of the program and should be used to evaluate all projects. Learning can be measured immediately after the training or very shortly after the training has occurred. The evaluators should consider whether or not the participants understood the concepts, principles, and techniques presented by trainers and whether or not the trainees acquired new and improved skills or attitudes. Learning can be evaluated by measuring knowledge, skills, and attitudes by (a) measuring knowledge, skills and attitudes before and after the training, (b) using paper-pencil test for knowledge and attitudes, and (c) developing performance measures. A 100% response is desirable, and using a control group would enhance the design, although it is often not practical.

Evaluation of level three, behavior, attempts to answer the question of whether the training has been transferred to daily activities: “Are the newly acquired skills or attitudes being used in the environment of the learner?” (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006). Behavior can change on if the condition is conducive (Mind Tools, n.d). Measuring behavior changes is one of the most important and often most neglected particulars of evaluation (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006). The fact that a trainee succeeded in the learning objective does not translate to the trainee behavior changes at the work environment. The change is not necessarily in any way linked to the trainee. The changes may not have occurred due to various reasons, including supervisor resistance to apply changes, lack of trainees’ positive attitude regarding the changes, lack of opportunities, changes in job description, policy changes and other reasons unrelated to achieving the learning objectives. The goal of the Level 3 evaluation measures not only if behavior changes occurred despite the multiple factors that may have prevented it, but also attempts to identify the reasons it may not have occurred. In measuring the participant’s behavior, the following guidelines are recommended: (a) evaluate before and after training; (b) provide adequate time period for change (3-6 months); (c) collect information via survey or interview from all parties involved; (d) obtain 100% feedback from all parties involved; (e) when possible, use a control group and a treatment group; and (f) consider the cost of the evaluation compared to the possible benefits (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006).

The ultimate goal in Kirkpatrick’s model is for the corporation to receive desired benefits or results (Level four: Results; Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006). This represents the phase for measuring the effectiveness of the program and its expected outcomes. Depending on the type corporation, the
benefit may be monetary, humanitarian, service-oriented, and other. Although evaluating the results is desirable, it is often difficult to draw cause and effect relationship between training conducted and consequent results. The time gap between training and results may be lengthy, and multiple other factors may contribute to training program success besides the program in itself. However, the program developers and conductors must justify the positive impact the program has for its trainees. Otherwise, the program may be cut. The developers need to define the results in measureable terms, such as monetary benefits, increase in efficiency, improved morale, refined teamwork, and more satisfactory customer service, such as reduced number of complaints and more expressions of appreciation.

Application of Kirkpatrick’s Framework to Published Evaluations

In this section, we discuss programs from three published papers: (a) reduction of HIV-contraction in the Latino community (two cases from Conner, 2004); (b) perceptions of teachers of a newly adopted supplemental reading program (Inman, Marlow, & Barron, 2004); and (c) evaluation of the South Carolina seniors farmers' market nutrition education program (Kunkel, Luccia, & Moore, 2003).

Reduction of HIV-Contraction in the Latino Community

Conner (2004) examines evaluations on two separate cases, each dealing with programs aiming to reduce the contraction of HIV in the Latino community. The purpose was to discuss the importance of culturally sensitive designs in evaluating programs. Conner frames the chapter with the intent of refining the concept of multicultural validity, which is “the accuracy, correctness, genuineness, or authenticity of understandings (and ultimately, evaluative judgments) across dimensions of cultural difference” (Conner & Kirkhart, 2003, p. 1). This is significant because cultural issues and differences can be important factors in understanding which variables did and did not cause differences in programs (internal validity), which effects generalize over other settings and times (external validity), and what effects mean for higher-order constructs and implications (construct validity). (Conner, 2004, p. 52)

Although the purpose of the programs and the subjects of the larger Latino community were commonalities, the programs, and thus, the respective evaluations of each, are very different from each other.

The first case study looks at the Tres Hombres sin Fronteras (Three Men Without Borders) program, which was developed to educate Latino farmers about the dangers of unprotected sex with prostitutes and the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS. It consisted of 89 participants who were surveyed in both study groups. For the program, farmers worked with developers to create an eight-page fotónovela, telling the story of three farmers who come into contact with prostitutes and the ramifications of having unprotected sexual intercourse. To augment this fotónovela, they developed a booklet with instructions on the proper way to use a condom. The goal of this program “was to test the effectiveness of the educational program in changing HIV-related knowledge, attitudes, and practices” (Conner, 2004, p. 54). The purpose of the evaluation was to see if the program was effective in conveying the dangers of unprotected sex to Latino farmers in Mexico (measured by decreased rates of HIV contraction) and to determine whether to continue the program, and if so, how it could be improved.

The second case described Proyecto SOLAAR, a group aimed at educating urban-dwelling gay and bisexual Latino men. The group of men was especially vulnerable to HIV and other sexually transmitted infections because they are caught in the middle of two cultures with different norms and assumptions. The purpose of the Proyecto SOLAAR program was to educate these men not only about US cultural norms, but also about developing healthy behaviors and decision-making. The program was
conducted as a weekend retreat, “during which a small group of men discuss issues and engage in some exercises and games that focus on topics that include relationships, dating, communication, self-concept, and HIV/AIDS” (Conner, 2004, p. 56). The program included facilitators helping participants to develop an individualized “dating plans” and “HIV risk reduction plans” (p. 56).

Supplemental Reading Program

In 2003 -2004, the state of Louisiana implemented EduSTRAND, a program designed to examine the perceptions of teachers of a newly adopted supplemental reading program in Louisiana (Eladrel Technologies, LLC, 2011). No Child Left Behind (NCLB) of 2002, a federal law that was supposed to reduce the reading achievement gap by 2014, was the impetus behind this program. The program incorporated 153 public schools between first and eighth grades and included 600 teachers whose goal was to analyze the effects of the reading program on student’s performance. The sample size represented 10% of the Louisiana’s schools. The mean average of teacher-student ratio was 14:1. At the time of the study, Louisiana had a total of 1,484 schools, with 124 school districts and 48,481 teachers (Eladrel Technologies, LLC, 2011). The ultimate goal of this program was to ensure that all students achieved the highest possible performance on the standard achievement measures. This study design utilized a mixture of Quasi-experimental and non-experimental methods. The method used to obtain data was past students’ academic achievements, which provided a benchmark for comparison data and surveys which were mailed to teachers for their feedback responses.

Seniors Farmers’ Market Nutrition Education Program

United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Commodity Credit Corporation administered the Seniors Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) in 2001, and the program evaluation was published two years later (Kunkel et al., 2003). An extension of a larger government program introduced by Massachusetts Department of Food and Agriculture in 1986, the initiative is a social and educational program targeting low-income seniors and local farmers. The SFMNP’s purpose was to (a) provide locally grown fresh fruits, vegetables and herbs to impoverished seniors, (b) increase the consumption of domestic, agricultural products, and (c) assist in development of additional community-driven, agricultural enterprises such as Farmer’s Markets, and roadside stands. A fourth purpose appears as to find evidence in support of or opposition to additional government funding for the program. At the time of registration, South Carolina Department of Social Services (SCDSS) distributed five 10-dollar vouchers for each of the 15,000 participants with a pamphlet containing nutrition information of available produce. The registration sites included churches, Farmers’ Markets, Council on Aging, and Community and Senior Centers, among others. At the end of the program, a survey was mailed to a random sample comprised of 1,500 participating seniors with a 44% survey return rate, and 102 farmers with a 53% survey return rate (Kunkel et al., 2003), which were used for evaluation purposes.

Common Elements of Program Evaluation

Kirkpatrick’s (1975) model evaluates reactions, learning, behavior, and results. The four programs evaluated by the three evaluators utilized Kirkpatrick’s four-level systematic approach, however after the evaluation, we looked among the papers for other subcategories of commonalities. Twelve detailed commonalities important to program evaluation were found, most of them falling under Kirkpatrick’s four levels. The following categories were observed: (a) define target group, (b) delineate expected outcomes, (c) operationalize success, (d) how the program was received, (e) unintended exclusion of target group members, (f) learning by target group, (g) valuable information not learned due to a design flaw, (h) behaviors changes of the target group, (i) gaps in program design, (j) intended
results, (k) unintended results, and (l) suggestions for program improvement. In Table 1, we detail each of these throughout the three published program evaluations.

**Program Evaluation Summary**

Program evaluation design should be based on expected and desired results. For example, consumer-oriented approaches rely on understanding on consumers’ perception on the product whereas judicial approaches investigate the pros and cons of the program. Moreover, accreditation approaches evaluate how the program would measure up to other similarly accredited programs, and utilization-focused methods concentrate on the way stakeholders will use the findings (Preskill & Russ-Eft, 2005). Although a variety of evaluation methods are available, the three authors utilized Kirkpatrick’s (1975) four-level model to critique the programs for its widespread recognition as a comprehensive program evaluation model (Twitchell, Holton, & Trott, 2000).

The implications of the review of three program evaluations is that, in fact, common elements can be teased out of distinctively different program evaluations to understand the impact of the program for the participants and most importantly the effect on the organizational success to achieve its intended goals. Therefore, underlying similarities exists in program evaluations across the fields. Program success can be measured in infinite ways but the reality is that a program funded by a specific corporation is not successful unless it translates to measurable benefits for the corporation funding the program. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to the program evaluators to understand organizational goals and measure them effectively. Consequently, if the measures indicate that the program did not produce favorable results, which may be monetary, human service oriented, or other, the program evaluators might make suggestions, adjustments, and arguments for programmatic changes that would produce favorable future results.

Program evaluation relies on theory, but it is truly measured in practice. The evaluators must be committed to understanding the real-life, practical goals of the organizational and how to guide the organization to achieve its desired results. Theory in itself will not complete the job but the actual findings, recommendations, adjustments, and final results will define success of the program evaluation journey. In order for evaluators to arrive at valid conclusions, draw implications and make recommendations, it is critical that they pay attention to (and base their procedures upon) these types of validity. However, it is more than just knowing the correct methods of each approach of evaluation: “the evaluator must learn about and respond to the context [emphasis added] of the evaluation and its culturally related components, as well as to the participants in the evaluation and the cultural issues relevant to them” (Conner, 2004, p. 52). In particular, whenever a program evaluation is done, it is critical to pay attention to the characteristics of its participants. “To meaningfully assess and engage these culturally sensitive programs, evaluators need to develop and implement evaluations sensitive to the cultural issues that characterize and are important to the populations, as well as to program participants and stakeholders” (Conner, 2004, p. 51).

As can be surmised from the cases discussed above, five factors must be part of a multiculturally-sensitive evaluation process: (a) involving participants in the evaluation study planning, (b) speaking the literal language of the participants, (c) speaking the figurative language of the participants, (d) working collaboratively with participants during implementation, and (e) sharing the benefits. The five factors are critical when evaluating a program through a multicultural lens. However, in the study of perceptions of teachers, the perspectives of gender, race, and socioeconomic variables were not discussed. Demographics of the teachers’ years of experience and education level, school enrollment, class size, and the students’ grade levels were included in the study. However, race, gender and socioeconomic status of teachers and students were omitted.
When writing up results on program evaluation, it is critical to provide the reader with enough details about the program, the considerations for evaluation, the methods used, and the results of the evaluation. Although the cases discussed in Conner (2004) provided a clear description of the purposes of the program, it was hard to gauge the adequacy of the evaluation plan because too little detail was provided. For example, there was very little justification and explanation for the one-month intervals for the illiterate Mexican farmers. The sessions were described in one paragraph, but given that so much of the procedure was relationally-driven, not much was said about the interactions between the facilitator and the various groups. Was the dynamic different among the groups? How did the impact learning? More detail would probably have given the reader a better idea of the methods used for the evaluation. The implications for stakeholders were given no attention. Indeed, it is not entirely clear who, beyond the farmers themselves, are the stakeholders. The study involving teacher’s perceptions did a better job in this aspect—here, the evaluator was wise in involving his stakeholders, the teachers, in the direct development and implementation of the educational tool.

References


### Aspects of Program Evaluation of the Three Published Studies

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>HIV Reduction</th>
<th>Teacher Perception</th>
<th>Farmers' Market</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Target group</strong></td>
<td>Illiterate Mexican Farmers</td>
<td>1 - 8 Graders in Louisiana Public School</td>
<td>Low-Income Elderly and Farmers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Latino Gay Men</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Expected outcomes</strong></td>
<td>Reduce incidence of HIV/AIDS</td>
<td>Increase in reading levels</td>
<td>Increase nutritional intake of elderly; revenue of farmers</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Operationalize success</strong></td>
<td>Decrease HIV/AIDS among Latinos</td>
<td>1 - 8 grade readers reach expected reading levels</td>
<td>Healthier nutritional habits of elderly; increase in farmers' income</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>How was the program was received (Level 1)</strong></td>
<td>Too little detail included</td>
<td>Difficulties getting participants</td>
<td>Scores increased at all levels except in sixth grade.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Individuals excluded by program design</strong></td>
<td>Farmers who could not make it to group meetings</td>
<td>No information available</td>
<td>10% of the targeted population in Louisiana public schools were selected</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Learning occurred (Level 2)</strong></td>
<td>Correct use of condoms</td>
<td>Views on cultural norms, dating, safe sex</td>
<td>Ways to increase reading scores among grades 1-8</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Valuable information not learned</strong></td>
<td>Too little detail included</td>
<td>No information available</td>
<td>Demographic variables such as socioeconomic, gender and race were not part of the study.</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Behavior change (Level 3)</strong></td>
<td>Too little detail included</td>
<td>No information available</td>
<td>Responses only surveyed the teachers and not the students</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Gaps in program design</td>
<td>Too little detail included</td>
<td>Too little detail included</td>
<td>Need to design lessons to address special needs, especially with 6th graders</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intended results</td>
<td>Changes in HIV/AIDS-related knowledge</td>
<td>No information available</td>
<td>Increased reading levels were met with all grades from 1-8 except with 6th graders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unintended results</td>
<td>No information available</td>
<td>Difficulty getting participants lead to a year-long recruitment campaign</td>
<td>No improvement in sixth grader’s reading levels; possibly a Hawthorne Effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggestions for program improvement</td>
<td>Meet the farmers at their location for easy program access</td>
<td>Consider privacy aspects of the program</td>
<td>Inclusion of other demographic factors such as gender, race, socioeconomic status</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
South Florida Education Research Conference Symposium
Development of Independent Living Skills in *Project Panther LIFE* Students during the Summer Residential Program

**Abstract**

*Project Panther LIFE: Panther Learning Is For Everyone* is an ongoing collaborative partnership between Florida International University (FIU), Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS), and Parent to Parent of Miami, Inc. to develop, implement, support, and expand a non-degree postsecondary transition program for students with intellectual disabilities (ID). In Summer 2014, the program launched its first on-campus three-week Summer Residential Program (SRP) which focused on the development of independent living skills and self-determination skills. An overview of the SRP components, program support systems, and benefits of the experience will be given through the perspective of key personnel, partnerships, and students.

**Participants**

Diana Valle-Riestra, PI, Project Panther LIFE

Amanda Guist, Panther LIFE Program Coordinator

Rene Sierra, M-DCPS Program Coordinator

Angela Obregon, M-DCPS Program Coordinator

Nickolas Preciado, Panther LIFE RA

Kevin Maestre, Panther LIFE RA

Michael Deschapell, FIU Panther LIFE Student

Limarkis Cail, FIU Panther LIFE Student

Vanessa Suazo, Panther LIFE Student

Janelle Espinosa, FIU Parent
Development and Application of a Multi-dimensional Strategy for 
Measuring Fidelity of Implementation of a Districtwide Intervention

Abstract
This symposium describes a multi-dimensional strategy to examine fidelity of implementation in an 
authentic school district context. An existing large-district peer mentoring program provides an 
example. The presentation will address development of a logic model to articulate a theory of change; 
collaborative creation of a data set aligned with essential concepts and research questions; identification 
of independent, dependent, and covariate variables; issues related to use of big data that include 
conditioning and transformation of data prior to analysis; operationalization of a strategy to capture 
fidelity of implementation data from all stakeholders; and ways in which fidelity indicators might be 
used.

Participants

Steve J. Rios, Ed.D. directs his research and strategic initiatives to college-bound foster youth. One of 
the founding members of SFERA, he is VP of a local research and evaluation corporation. He earned his 
doctorate in Adult Education and Human Resource Development.

Latrell Carr is Program Manager for the districtwide peer mentoring program. With nearly 20 years in 
secondary and higher education, she holds a Bachelor’s degree in Psychology, a Master of Science in 
Counselor Education and an Educational Specialist degree in Educational Leadership, and membership 
in a number of professional organizations.

Maria Rosa Ligas, Ph.D. is Program Professor of Educational Research and Evaluation at the Abraham 
S. Fischler School of Education at Nova Southeastern University, and active member of the South 
Florida Education Research Alliance. Her areas of interest include evaluation of programs for at-risk 
student populations and longitudinal research.

Russell Clement, Ph.D. is a Research Specialist in the Student Assessment & Research Department at 
Broward County Public Schools, Florida, and active participant of the South Florida Education Research 
Alliance. His areas of interest include education intervention effectiveness, decision-making processes, 
and testing and measurement.

Gerene K. Starratt, Ph.D. is a cognitive psychologist and education researcher with Barry University’s 
Adrian Dominican School of Education and an active member of the South Florida Education Research 
Alliance. Her areas of interest include community-based research and program evaluation as well as 
quasi-experimental, and mixed methods designs.

Isadore Newman, Ph.D. is a psychologist, Distinguished Professor Emeritus at The University of 
Akron, and Adjunct Professor at Florida International University and Andrews University (Michigan). 
Coauthor of countless books, book chapters, monographs, refereed articles and scholarly presentations, 
and methodologist on over 300 dissertations, he specializes in research methodology and evaluation.
Giving Voice to Voiceless: Engaging Urban Youth for Possibilities

Abstract

This symposium will discuss the expansion of The Education Effect – Booker T. Washington, as a university community school partnership designed to engage urban youth for college and career readiness. The partnership is focused on developing collective impact and capacity for academic achievement, social success and college completion. The partnership aligns university expertise, resources and evidenced based strategies to address educational needs through the improvement of teaching and learning; increase graduation rate and parental involvement.

Participants

Dr. Donnie Hale, Jr., Florida International University Faculty Director of The Education Effect at Booker T. Washington Senior High School, a university community school partnership with Miami Dade County Public Schools and the Lennar Foundation. His research agenda is focused on race, equity, educational opportunity, college access, and human development.


Chanika Young, MSW, Site Coordinator, The Education Effect at Booker T. Washington Senior High School. Focus areas: Social Work, Human Development and Mental Health
Best Practices: Lessons Learned by a South Florida Non-Profit Community Based Organization while Designing and Implementing a Career Exploration Evidence Informed Framework in Urban Communities

Abstract

The panelists in this symposium work at a non-profit community-based organization in South Florida, they will share best practices that the agency has learned over the last 13-years while delivering family strengthening programs in urban at-risk communities. The agency’s All A’s evidenced informed framework is a career exploration strategy designed to help children, youth and adults. All A’s prepares disadvantaged, underemployed adults and youths with quality self help skills thus assisting them to become productive members of society. This session will be of interest to faculty, staff, students, and employees of community-based organizations working in urban communities.

Participants

Newton Sanon, President & CEO, Opportunities Industrialization Center of South Florida (OICSFL)

Arlene Connelly, Director of Communications & Strategic Partnerships, OICSFL

Robyn Mclymont, Division Director Youth & Family Services, OICSFL

Dr. Rehana Seepersad, Training and Education Manager, OICSFL

Jeanette Gordon-Marshall, Reentry Services Manager, OICSFL

Keisha Hill-Grey, Program Manager, OICSFL
Evaluating the Sandcastles Program: A Group Intervention for Children of Divorce

Abstract

The Sandcastles program has been utilized nationwide as a one-time group intervention to assist children of divorcing parents. For several years Miami-Dade family court services mandated participation in the program for divorcing or separating families. Currently, there is a paucity of research and evaluation to ascertain the efficacy of the program. This symposium will provide details and discussion regarding the planning and process used to establish an evaluation plan to assess the effectiveness of the Sandcastles program for families in Miami-Dade County. Any preliminary outcomes available at the time of the symposium will also be shared.

Participants

Gerene Starratt, Ph.D. is a cognitive psychologist and education researcher with Barry University’s Adrian Dominican School of Education and an active member of the South Florida Education Research Alliance. Her areas of interest include community-based research and program evaluation as well as quasi-experimental, and mixed methods designs.

Lauren Shure, Ph.D. joined the faculty in the Department of Counseling at Barry University in 2012. She currently collaborates with various community education agencies on research and evaluation projects such as Broward County Public School’s Black Male Success Initiative and PROMISE Program and the Youth Environmental Alliance’s Sailing for Success program.

Alvaro Domenech, LCSW, graduated with a Masters in Social Work from Barry University in 1995. He has been the Coordinator of the Divorce program for Miami Dade College since 1996 and is the Director of the Outreach program for the Institute for Child and Family Health, Inc.

Isadore Newman, Ph.D. is an Emeritus Distinguished Professor at The University of Akron where he taught graduate and postgraduate research courses. He is currently associated with Florida International University College of Education as a Visiting Scholar. He has written 17 books and chapters, over 150 refereed articles, and 300 refereed scholarly papers.
How Local Universities Support Graduate Student Writers

Abstract

The limited literature available on the topic of addressing the academic writing needs of graduates student suggests that most universities do not offer graduate-level writing classes within the disciplines, that serving the needs of graduate students who need writing help becomes a “hot potato passed between university departments” (Simpson, 2012, p. 97), and that learning to write as a scholar is inextricably linked with the development of the scholar identity. Panelists in this symposium represent member-institutions of the South Florida Education Research Conference Consortium. They will speak briefly about their institution’s efforts to assist writers at all levels, efforts aimed at graduate students in particular, what they believe would work best at their institution and in academia in general, and implications of the needs of graduate student writers that might not be readily apparent.

Participants

Dr. Tonette Rocco is the Director of the Office of Academic Writing and Publication Support at Florida International University. She is also the Program Leader and a Professor for the Adult Education / Human Resource Development Program in FIU’s College of Education.

Lori Ann Gionti is the Assistant Director of the Office of Academic Writing and Publication Support at Florida International University. She is also a Doctoral Candidate in the Adult Education / Human Resource Development Program in FIU’s College of Education.

Dr. Michael Record is the Associate Vice Chancellor of the Writing Program at Keiser University. Dr. Record’s dissertation was titled “Underprepared Graduate-Level Writers: What Faculty Members Think Should Be Done,” a mixed-methods study on faculty perceptions.

Dr. Sarah Nielsen is an Associate Professor of English at DeVry University in Miramar, FL. She is the Proceedings Editor for the South Florida Education Research Conference.
# South Florida Education Research Conference Posters

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<td>Author</td>
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Appendices

The 14th South Florida Education Research Conference 2015 Program
The purpose of the Annual South Florida Education Research Conference is to enhance the existing culture of research in colleges and universities in South Florida. The conference provides a meaningful vehicle for the preparation, mentorship, and presentation of scholarly work by students, faculty, and alumni.

Partially Funded by the College of Education Title V CLAVE Project: Creating Latino Access to a Valuable Education (US DOE Grant # P031M090054)
Acknowledgements

The South Florida Education Research Conference Steering Committee (SFERC) would like to thank the member universities and their faculty and students for supporting the fourteenth annual SFERC. The members of the steering committee include Florida International University, DeVry University, Miami Dade College, Florida Memorial University, Johnson & Wales University, Keiser University, Barry University, Florida Atlantic University, St. Thomas University, University of Miami, and Nova Southeastern University.

Special thanks must go to the College of Education at Florida International University and the Office of Graduate Studies. We also wish to thank Dean Garcia for securing the grant, Creating Latino Access to a Valuable Education (CLAVE) and for its support of the conference. Caprila Almeida, Pierre Schoepp, and Fabiola Hernandez-Cook deserve special thanks for their assistance with registration, volunteers, logistics, recordkeeping and numerous other details that go into a successful conference. Their professionalism and attention to detail are much appreciated and valued.

Special thanks must also go to Barry University, particularly Gerene Starratt and her team, who have so carefully executed all of the details involved with hosting this event. Hosting a conference is a large endeavor, and their hospitality and logistical expertise are greatly appreciated.

Thank you to Keiser University for their new sponsorship of the Keiser University Graduate School Poster Presentation Award. Thank you to Michael Record (Keiser) for his organization and handling of all aspects of this award. Thank you also to Thomas Reio (FIU) and the Lorraine R. Gay Award for Excellence in Research/Scholarship Committee for their work.

Sarah M. Nielsen (DeVry) has served as editor of the proceedings for years, and now serves as editor in chief. Her attention to detail, editing skills, and patience have made the proceedings a quality publication. Teresa Lucas (FIU), Jacqueline Pena (MDC), Lori Ann Gionti (FIU), and Sarah Nielsen (DeVry) all co-chair the Paper Review and Selection Committee and facilitated the review process. This includes locating faculty to review, prompting reviewers to return reviews, being third reviewers when the student and faculty reviews are opposed, and doing additional reviews when reviewers fail to return their reviews. Lori Ann Gionti (FIU) also headed the poster review and selection committee.

Without the continuing support of so many, this conference would not exist, so thank you again for making our fourteenth annual conference so successful!

Tonette S. Rocco, Chair, South Florida Education Research Conference Steering Committee
8:00 – 8:30 a.m.  
Registration & Continental Breakfast  
Andreas Room 111

8:30 – 9:30 a.m.  
Andreas Room 111

Welcome  
Christopher Starratt, PhD  
Interim Provost  
Vice President, Division of Mission & Institutional Effectiveness  
Barry University

Morning Keynote:  
Living With the Dark and the Dazzling: Children Leading Us Back From the Edge  
Joan Wynne, PhD,  
FIU College of Education

Joan Wynne, Ph.D. directs the Urban Education Master's Degree Program in the College of Education at FIU. The influence of her students and educators like Lisa Delpit, Asa G. Hilliard III, and Bob Moses has driven her research and writing about transformational leadership, quality education as a constitutional right, and building partnerships among youth, parents, schools and communities. Her newest book, Confessions of a White Educator: Stories in Search of Justice and Diversity, explores what works and doesn’t work in public schools. In the fall of 2015, her text, Who speaks for justice? will be published.

Wynne was a tenured professor for over 10 years at Morehouse College, where she designed and directed The Benjamin E. Mays Teacher Scholars Program, funded by the Lilly Foundation. At Georgia State University, she was the Associate Director of the Criminal Center for Urban Educational Excellence, where she co-designed, directed and taught in the Urban Teacher Leadership Master’s Program and also served and chaired doctoral committees. Also at GSU, she co-designed two research grants, a 7 million dollar award from the Annenberg Foundation, and another from the Spencer Foundation. While in Atlanta for twelve years, she facilitated a multitude of high school and college faculty workshops as well as corporate forums concerning team and leadership skill building and “un-learning racism.”

At FIU, she has continued her research in education for liberation, supported by grants from the Urban Education Corps, the National Science Foundation, and the Children’s Trust. She has also served on and chaired many doctoral committees at FIU. While at all three institutions, she has written and been awarded a multitude of federal, state, and foundation grants.

Her last twelve years have been dedicated to two lines of inquiry. One concerns researching the visionary curriculum and pedagogy of the Algebra Project and the Young People’s Project, organizations that are deeply rooted in American history and grassroots communities. The second is the exploration of what it means to be a citizen of the world. For several years, Wynne facilitated university faculty workshops to explore the content of global learning and the kind of pedagogy needed in college classrooms, in all disciplines, to engage students in looking at the world through multiple lenses. She is committed to the vision of the global learning initiative to develop college students as collective problem-solvers, not just as individual vessels of knowledge for self-promotion. She has published in diverse journals and books, nationally and internationally, co-edited a number of texts, and has made hundreds of presentations at international, national, and local conferences. In 2001, she received “The MLK Torch of Peace Award for the Promotion of Racial Harmony.”
### Symposium 1

**Best Practices: Lessons Learned by a South Florida Non-Profit Community Based Organization While Designing and Implementing a Career Exploration Evidence Informed Framework in Urban Communities**

**Room 101**

*Chair:* Newton Sanon, Opportunities Industrialization Center of South Florida (OICSFL)

*Discussants:* Arlene Connelly, Robyn Mclymont, Rehana Seepersad, Jeanette Gordon-Marshall, and Keisha Hill-Grey, OICSFL

The panelists in this symposium work at a non-profit community-based organization in South Florida; they will share best practices that the agency has learned over the last 13 years while delivering family-strengthening programs in urban at-risk communities. The agency’s *All A’s* evidenced informed framework is a career exploration strategy designed to help children, youth and adults. *All A’s* prepares disadvantaged, underemployed adults and youths with quality self help skills, thus assisting them to become productive members of society. This session will be of interest to faculty, staff, students, and employees of community-based organizations working in urban communities.

### Session 1

**Online Learning**

**Room 102**

*Toward an Understanding of Faculty Perceptions about Factors that Influence Student Success in Online Education*

Michael Porter  
Florida International University, USA

### Session 2

**Workplace Engagement**

**Room 103**

*Millennials in the Workplace: Positioning Companies for Future Success*

Debaro Huyler, Yselande Pierre, Wei Ding, and Adly Norelus  
Florida International University, USA

*Transformative Learning Theory and Its Relevance to Managing Group Dynamics in a Competitive Work Environment*

Suzette Henry-Campbell, Nova Southeastern University, USA  
Salma Hadeed, Florida International University, USA

### Session 3

**Academic Writing**

**Room 104**

*Academic Writing and Publication: My Journey of Learning Through the Development of Articles from my Master's Thesis*

Craig M. McGill  
Florida International University, USA

### Poster Session 1: Teaching Strategies

**Andreas, Room 112**

*Instructional Gaming*

Pamela Crossett and Gerene Starratt, Barry University

*Project-Based Learning, Achievement, and Engagement in Second Graders*

Sabrina Dixon, Barry University

*Hands-on Activities and Engagement in Kindergarten Students*

Marina Hanssen and Gerene Starratt, Barry University

*Reciprocal Teaching*

Jannet A. Machado, Florida International University

*Writing in Mathematics: Using Problem Solving to Promote Student Buy-In*

Denise Raposo, Mercedes Gimenez, and Barbara King, Florida International University
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10:35 – 11:20 a.m.</td>
<td>Symposium 2, Concurrent Sessions 4, 5, &amp; 6, and Poster Session 2</td>
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**Symposium 2**

**Development of Independent Living Skills in Project Panther LIFE Students during the Summer Residential Program**

Chair: Diana Valle-Riestra, Florida International University
Discussants: Amanda Guist, Florida International University; Rene Sierra, Miami-Dade County Public Schools; Angela Obregon, Miami-Dade County Public Schools; and Nickolas Preciado, Kevin Maestre, Michael Deschapell, Limarkis Cail, Vanessa Suazo, and Janelle Espinosa, Florida International University

*Project Panther LIFE: Panther Learning Is For Everyone* is an ongoing collaborative partnership between Florida International University (FIU), Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS), and Parent to Parent of Miami, Inc. to develop, implement, support, and expand a non-degree postsecondary transition program for students with intellectual disabilities (ID). In Summer 2014, the program launched its first on-campus three-week Summer Residential Program (SRP), which focused on the development of independent living skills and self-determination skills. An overview of the SRP components, program support systems, and benefits of the experience will be given through the perspective of key personnel, partnerships, and students.

**Session 4**

**Diversity in Education**

**Room 102**

*A Historical Overview of the Challenges for African Americans K12 through College Education in America*
Arthur C. Evans III
Keiser University, USA

**Session 5**

**Science Education**

**Room 103**

*Theoretical Foundations of Developing Modeling Instruction Curriculum for College Biology Courses*
Feng Li
Florida International University, USA

**Session 6**

**PreK Education**

**Room 104**

*Florida's Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Program's Influence on Preschool Teachers' Beliefs and Practices*
Laura J. Monsalvatge, Barry University, USA

**Poster Session 2: School-Home Connections**

**Andreas, Room 112**

*Parental Involvement*
Theodora Cherelus and Gerene Starratt, Barry University

*Students' Educational Use of Technology Outside of the Classroom*
Diahann Holder, Barry University

*Extracurricular Activities and Academic Achievement in Fourth Grade Students*
Jacqueline J. Perez and Gerene Starratt, Barry University

*Application of an Educational Research Lab (ERL) Model to a Community Sailing Program*
Lauren Shure, Emilie Ney, Precious Broffee, Gerene Starratt, and Andy Rogers, Barry University and Youth Environmental Alliance

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**11:30 – 1:15 p.m.**

*Lunch is served buffet style. Quickly and quietly get your lunch at the back of the room, find a seat, and prepare for a delightful keynote address.*

Andreas
Lunch Panel Discussion:
Breaking the School to Prison Pipeline

Amalio Nieves provides the day-to-day leadership, vision and focus as Director for the Diversity, Prevention, & Intervention Department for Broward County Public Schools, the sixth largest school district in the nation. Mr. Nieves has extensive experience in the field of prevention and intervention education and services. He has collaborated with school and community leaders to ensure prevention plays an integral role in establishing a safe and secure learning environment for developing the whole child. Most recently, Mr. Nieves has been instrumental in the development of the District’s PROMISE program, an intervention program for students, designed at addressing and reducing the school to prison pipeline.

Dr. Debra Pane is Founding President of Eradicating the School-to-Prison Pipeline Foundation, Inc. (E-SToPP), a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization dedicated to building a grass-roots network of transformative schools and educational opportunities for youth, especially those who are placed at risk of or already involved in suspension, expulsion, incarceration, and/or the process of reentering to family, school, and community. Ultimately, E-SToPP seeks to transform systems, policies, and mindsets that disproportionately funnel Black and other youth of color out of school and into prison. E-SToPP’s transformative mission and vision was born from Dr. Pane’s staunch belief that “systemic and philosophical changes must occur before we as a society will develop truly effective and humane schools and educational opportunities that all of our children deserve.” Since its inception in 2011, E-SToPP has initiated the Positive Peer Leadership Mentoring Program in the Miami-Dade Regional Juvenile Detention Center (JDC) and in the Turner Guilford Knight (TGK) Correctional Center. E-SToPP’s Freedom School 2015 Summer Program will take place at Miami Northwestern Senior High School. For over 20 years, Dr. Pane has been a teacher, teacher educator, curriculum developer, and researcher in Miami-Dade County from elementary through university graduate levels. She was Lead Reading Teacher for 9 years at TROY Community Academy, a Miami-Dade County Public Educational Alternative Outreach Program for youth in the juvenile justice system. She is the 1998 Teacher-of-the-Year for M-DCPS Educational Alternative Outreach Program. Her research agenda focuses on transformative literacy and teacher education, critical communities of practice, classroom power relationships, empowering praxis, and critical social qualitative research methods that inform social justice to transform the educational outcomes and lives of disenfranchised youth. The book, Transforming the School-to-Prison Pipeline: Lessons from the Classroom (2014), by Debra M. Pane and Tonette S. Rocco, explores aspects of critical multicultural teaching and learning in oppressive educational settings.

Dr. Gregory A. Salters currently serves as the Investigations Bureau Major with the Fort Lauderdale Police Department, where he has worked for over 20 years. Dr. Salters facilitates courses for the Florida Department of Law Enforcement’s (FDLE) Florida Leadership Academy, serves as an adjunct professor at the Broward County Institute for Public Safety, and facilitates forums such as FDLE’s Minority Recruitment and Retention Forum. The courses he facilitates include, but are not limited to Ethics, Performance Management, Leadership and Supervision, and the Persuasive Leader.

He graduated from Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU) with a degree in Business Administration. After graduation, he had a career in finance that included banking, insurance and financial planning, and individual tax preparation. After his experiences in finance, he joined the Fort Lauderdale Police Department.

Dr. Salters has had a rewarding career with the Fort Lauderdale Police Department. He has worked in the following units as an officer: Patrol, Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E), and the Bicycle Patrol. As a Sergeant, Dr. Salters worked in patrol, and served in the Office of Internal Affairs.

Upon being promoted to the rank of Captain, Dr. Salters commanded a patrol district and shift prior to being assigned to the Administrative Services Division (ASD). In ASD, he was responsible for the following areas of the police department: Training, Budget/Finance, Payroll, Background Investigations, and the Alarm Unit. His last assignment as a Captain was as an Executive officer to a Major in patrol. As a Major, he served as a Patrol District Commander prior to his current assignment as the Investigations Bureau Major.

Dr. Salters has completed the following training courses: The Center for Advanced Criminal Justice Studies, Executive Leadership Program; the Police Executive Research Forum’s The Senior Management Institute for Police, Session 34; and the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s National Academy, session 240.

He earned his Master’s degree in Public Administration from Florida Atlantic University and his Doctorate degree in Adult Education/Human Resource Development from Florida International University.
He was recently honored as the 2015 Mentor of the Year for Broward County Public Schools. (http://www.browardschools.com/Web/info/CIA/Community-Involvement-Awards-2015/Community-Involvement-Awards-2015-mentors)(retrieved 4/12/15).

His life motto is “If I can help somebody as I pass along the way…my living will not be in vain.” Dr. MLK, Jr.

1:25 – 2:10 p.m.  
**Symposium 3, Concurrent Sessions 7 & 8, and Poster Session 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symposium 3</th>
<th>How Local Universities Support Graduate Student Writers</th>
<th>Room 101</th>
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| **Moderator:** Tonette Rocco, Florida International University  
**Discussants:** Lori Ann Gionti, Florida International University; Michael Record, Keiser University; and Sarah Nielsen, DeVry University |
| The limited literature available on the topic of addressing the academic writing needs of graduate student suggests that most universities do not offer graduate-level writing classes within the disciplines, that serving the needs of graduate students who need writing help becomes a “hot potato passed between university departments” (Simpson, 2012, p. 97), and that learning to write as a scholar is inextricably linked with the development of the scholar identity.  
Panelists in this symposium represent member-institutions of the South Florida Education Research Conference Consortium. They will speak briefly about their institution’s efforts to assist writers at all levels, efforts aimed at graduate students in particular, what they believe would work best at their institution and in academia in general, and implications of the needs of graduate student writers that might not be readily apparent. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session 7</th>
<th>Health Education</th>
<th>Room 102</th>
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| **How Can Fredrickson’s Broaden-and-Build Theory Enhance Personal Resources?**  
Jennifer Danilowski  
Keiser University, USA |
| **Health Literacy and Medicare Recipients’ Knowledge of Health Insurance Options**  
Marsha R. Lawrence  
Keiser University, USA |

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<tr>
<th>Session 8</th>
<th>Professional Development</th>
<th>Room 103</th>
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| **A Study of the Relational Component in an Academic Advisor Professional Development Program**  
Mia R. Heikkila and Craig M. McGill  
Florida International University, USA |

<p>| Poster Session 3: Student-Teacher Experiences | Andreas, Room 112 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session 4</th>
<th>Evaluating the Sandcastles Program: A Group Intervention for Children of Divorce</th>
<th>Room 101</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Moderator:</strong> Gerene Starratt, Barry University</td>
<td><strong>Discussants:</strong> Lauren Shure, Barry University; Alvaro Donenech, Miami Dade College; and Isadore Newman, University of Akron and Florida International University.</td>
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<td>The Sandcastles program has been utilized nationwide as a one-time group intervention to assist children of divorcing parents. For several years, Miami-Dade family court services mandated participation in the program for divorcing or separating families. Currently, there is a paucity of research and evaluation to ascertain the efficacy of the program. This symposium will provide details and discussion regarding the planning and process used to establish an evaluation plan to assess the effectiveness of the Sandcastles program for families in Miami-Dade County. Any preliminary outcomes available at the time of the symposium will also be shared.</td>
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<th>Session 9</th>
<th>Second Language Learning</th>
<th>Room 102</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>On the Possible Pedagogy to Teach English for Chinese Undergraduate Non-English Majors</strong>&lt;br&gt;Yu Zhang&lt;br&gt;Florida International University, USA</td>
<td><strong>Exploring Seventh Graders’ Perceptions of the Picture-Word Inductive Model in their Narrative Writing in China</strong>&lt;br&gt;Xuan Jiang&lt;br&gt;Saint Thomas University, USA</td>
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<tr>
<th>Session 10</th>
<th>21st Century Learning</th>
<th>Room 103</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Academic Risk-Taking in Higher Education</strong>&lt;br&gt;Yselande Pierre&lt;br&gt;Florida International University, USA</td>
<td><strong>Accountability, Quality, and Student Success in Online Education: A Literature Review of Empirical Studies</strong>&lt;br&gt;Michael Porter&lt;br&gt;Florida International University, USA</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Poster Session 4: Students with Autism and Other Disabilities

- **Repeated Readings to Promote Fluency for Students with Intellectual Disability**  
  Christina Armada, Florida International University

- **Positive Impact of Peer Mentorships in the Project Panther LIFE Program**  
  Salma Hadeed and Amanda Guist, Florida International University

- **Repeated Reading Strategy for Students with Intellectual Disabilities**  
  David T. Spell, Florida International University

- **Effects of the Use of the Educreations Application in the Reading Comprehension of an Adolescent with Autism and Speech Delay**  
  Alba C. Zamora, Florida International University

### 3:15 – 4:00 p.m.

**Symposia 5 & 6, Concurrent Sessions 11 & 12, and Poster Session 5**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symposium 5</th>
<th>Giving Voice to Voiceless: Engaging Urban Youth for Possibilities</th>
<th>Room 101</th>
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<tr>
<td>Chair: Donnie Hale, Jr., Florida International University; Discussants: Chaundra L. Whitehead, Florida International University; and Chanika Young, Booker T. Washington Senior High School.</td>
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This symposium will discuss the expansion of The Education Effect – Booker T. Washington, as a university community school partnership designed to engage urban youth for college and career readiness. The partnership is focused on developing collective impact and capacity for academic achievement, social success and college completion. The partnership aligns university expertise, resources and evidenced-based strategies to address educational needs through the improvement of teaching and learning, increase graduation rates, and parental involvement.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Symposium 6</th>
<th>Development and Application of a Multi-dimensional Strategy for Measuring Fidelity of Implementation of a Districtwide Intervention</th>
<th>Room 102</th>
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<tr>
<td>Moderator: Steve J. Rios, South Florida Education Research Alliance Discussants: Latrell Carr, Miami-Dade County Public Schools; Maria Ligas, Nova Southeastern University; Russell Clement, Broward County Public Schools; Gerene Starratt, Barry University; and Isadore Newman, University of Akron.</td>
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This symposium describes a multi-dimensional strategy to examine fidelity of implementation in an authentic school district context. An existing large-district peer mentoring program provides an example. The presentation will address development of a logic model to articulate a theory of change; collaborative creation of a data set aligned with essential concepts and research questions; identification of independent, dependent, and covariate variables; issues related to use of big data that include conditioning and transformation of data prior to analysis; operationalization of a strategy to capture fidelity of implementation data from all stakeholders; and ways in which fidelity indicators might be used.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session 11</th>
<th>Program Evaluation</th>
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| Program Evaluation Primer: A Review of Three Evaluations  
  Craig M. McGill, Ardith Clayton-Wright, and Mia Heikkila  
  Florida International University, USA |

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<tr>
<th>Session 12</th>
<th>Teachers in Education</th>
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<tr>
<td>Poster Session 5: Reading and Writing</td>
<td>Andreas, Room 112</td>
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| **Reading Between the Lines of Teaching and Learning**  
Maria Isabel Avonce, Florida International University |
| **READ180 Intervention for Struggling Adolescent Readers**  
Priscilla Ferguson, Florida International University |
| **Reader’s Theater: An All Encompassing Strategy**  
Alejandra Fernandez, Florida International University |
| **Can Peer Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS) Improve the Reading Levels of Struggling First Graders?**  
Jessica A. Naranjo, Florida International University |
| **Enhanced Alphabet Knowledge in Preschool Children**  
Ana Paz, Florida International University |
| **The Music and Reading Connection: Improving Literacy with Rapid Naming of Words and Music Notes**  
Karin Barbara Soria, Florida International University |

| 4:10 – 4:45 p.m.  
*Award Presentations and Raffle*  
Andreas Room 111 |

**The Lorraine R. Gay Award for Excellence in Research and Scholarship**  
Thomas G. Reio, Jr., Chair  
Laura Dinehart, Florida International University; Jesus Fernandez, DeVry University; and Joanne Sanders-Reio, Florida International University, Committee Members  
Award for Best Graduate Student Paper

**Keiser University Graduate School Poster Presentation Award**  
Michael Record, Chair  
Award for Best Poster Presentation

**Closing**  
Tonette S. Rocco,  
Chair, Conference Steering Committee
Sponsors

CLAVE Project: Creating Latino Access to a Valuable Education at FIU College of Education.