

Clash of Traditional and Contemporary Educational Philosophies in Pippi Longstocking

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Abstract

Regarding children's books' influences on a variety of social and individual components, this study aims to analyze educational components and philosophies in Pippi Longstocking. While there are a few studies which examined Pippi's feelings, thinking, reasoning, and developmental characteristics, there is a lack of research describing why and/or how those characteristics might emerge so. In this sense, this interpretative analysis aims to detect dominant educational philosophies in Pippi Longstocking; thereby, an understanding of the overarching phenomenon of education could be developed. Data, collected via document analysis methodology, included three classic books of Pippi Longstocking written by Astrid Lindgren, and those books were analyzed via interpretive content analysis method where the context and language investigated to make sense of participants' world via their experiences. While main educational philosophies set the themes, categories developed deductively regarding the components of education. Findings revealed that of 55 educational instances, ways of learning, functions of school, and decision making were the dominant categories. Also, there was a clash between the main character and the other social agents regarding their educational philosophies. While Pippi represented contemporary (Pragmatism, Reconstructionism, and Existentialism) educational philosophies via her reactions, behaviors, and responses, other agents including Tommy, Annika, the teacher, the policeman, and Rosenblom represented an Essentialist understanding of education. This piece of the world's literature may hold potential for teacher education. Instead of their studying educational philosophies as abstract concepts, Pippi Longstocking may provide pre-service teachers with an opportunity to practice (e.g., analyze, role play, counteract, create new characters, or change scenarios) educational philosophies, experientially.

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Children's books may be studied in a wide spectrum. Those books which are written specifically for children (Qi, 2012) are noteworthy for their social, emotional, educational, political, aesthetic, and commercial influences (Hunt, 1991; Huong, 2012; Qi, 2012). Also, children's personality

(Huong, 2012), upbringing (Qi, 2012), or perceptions may be shaped, accordingly as they may be exposed to books from the birth. Moreover, as Braun (2002) argued characters in children's books might be role models, and children might identify themselves with their favorite characters for their personal qualities and behavior (Frasher, 1977).

In this study, a character and her adventures to which the author was exposed during her childhood will be on the scope. As Qi (2012) stated people tend to recall the unforgettable experiences of their childhood including feelings and thoughts, and after 35 years I realized that I might have been impacted by the portrayal of education, learning, and teaching in Pippi Longstocking. In addition to its effects on me, I chose to analyze Pippi Longstocking (Lindgren, 2021a, 2021c, 2021b) for its unique characteristics. Pippi Longstocking was written by Astrid Lindgren in 1945 in Swedish, and the story was translated in many languages (60) and countries (80) around 1950s. Its movie has been broadcasted since 1970s around the world (Braun, 2002; Huong, 2012). Recently, Pippi Longstocking is also “on the list of 100 best books of the world's literature history... voted on by... 54 nations” (Huong, 2012). Such a success may be related to Lindgren's deep understanding of children's psychology specifically thinking and reasoning, and the books has no didacticism which frees the reader of any kinds of oppression (Qi, 2012). Pippi Longstocking was also published in Turkish, and the cartoon movies are also available online tough named as Uzun Çoraplı Peppe. In this sense, there may be “a common Pippi experience amongst readers across several generations and even across cultures” (Braun, 2002, p. 60).

While Pippi Longstocking may be one of the most interesting stories for parents and educators to understand children clearly and educate them (Huong, 2012), most research focuses on the character of Pippi. Especially the chapters where Pippi goes to school and tries to engage in traditional learning highlight some aspects of children's questioning, reflection, reasoning, as well as thinking (Qi, 2012). As those instances of thinking occur with and/or in reaction to other agents such as a teacher or the society, analyzing these children's books for educational practices using particular words, phrases, descriptions, and actions may hold potential for developing a broader understanding of education. In addition to parents and educators, the story may also hold potential to develop pre-service teachers' professional identity regarding its pedagogical potential. In this sense, this study will focus on the following questions;

- (a) which educational components can be traced in Pippi Longstocking, and
- (b) which educational philosophies were portrayed in Pippi Longstocking.

Literature Review

Pippi Longstocking

Pippi Longstocking, who is the protagonist of the story, is a nine-year-old child with red pigtailed, a small potato-shaped nose, freckles, and a wide mouth with strong wide teeth. Pippi is a self-sufficient and independent girl who makes her own clothes and food. She wears black shoes which her father bought two sizes too big; thereby, she can wear them when she gets older. Her dresses are made of patched fabric together and her long stockings were one brown and one black. In this sense, Pippi does not follow the rules that others do. Also, Pippi “is a free spirit” (Braun, 2002, p. 60) with a different and unique character; however, she can “live and thrive in relation with others” and operate within the community on her own way (Braun, 2002).

Pippi lives in Villa Villekulla with her horse and Mr. Nilson, the monkey, without any adult supervision because her father was shipwrecked and lost at sea, and her mother passed away. The house is furnished sufficiently with a beautiful garden, and Pippi has a suitcase full of gold which she spends generously to buy toys or candies for other children. Pippi also has two friends, Annika and Tommy, who live next door. They are *good* children who always do what their parents tell them. However, Pippi is a self-regulated character. She warns herself for example, to sleep early or behave well; however, adults around her impose judgements and show dismay at her attitude and behaviors although she tries hard. Also, Pippi does not know how to write properly and do arithmetic; however, her wise and naïve responses show that Pippi is good at using language and logic as well as recognizing right from wrong. Actually, this is how she shows that *what is believed to be good or true is just a perception* for the benefit of some, and those rules may go astray (Braun, 2002).

Research on Pippi Longstocking

Research on Pippi Longstocking came from different disciplines such as translation, gender studies, and literary criticism. There are some studies that may pertain to education, and most focus on the

child, Pippi, and her characteristics. While the books have reflected the intensity and freshness of a child's experiences of the world, the story might defy all conventions. Indeed, Lindgren was a proponent of child-oriented education, and Pippi was rooted in new ideas of child psychology and education of 1930s and 1940s; that is, respecting children for their thoughts and feelings (Metcalf, 1995). In this sense, the story may be a model for liberal child raising as Pippi challenges authority (Braun, 2002). Indeed, to Huong (2012) Pippi Longstocking hold potentials to educate children especially their personality as it presents optimism, strong belief in life, and compassion. Some other researchers (e.g. Erol, 1991) may identify Pippi as Russell's notion of a child who desires freedom and power. Similarly, Braun (2002) also depicted Pippi as a child who is joyful although she experiences sadness. Pippi can contemplate, reflect, and express herself.

In the realm of education, a study conducted by Qi (2012) analyzed Pippi's thinking and reasoning regarding Piaget's framework and interactions with adults and friends, Annika and Tommy. In this study, Qi (2012) stated that Pippi may be in the operational stage and Piaget's developmental processes may apply in specific and sort-term cognitive changes which are suitable for assimilation, accommodation, and equilibrium. They are interactive and mutually interdependent, and both the environment and the organism relate to these processes. Also, Pippi's understanding is based on the original schemas; in this sense, intelligence may be a kind of adaptation which constantly evolves.

While those previous studies realized educational mechanisms to a limited extent, it may be that they ignored an overarching phenomenon that impacted the way characters acted, thought, and felt. As Lindgren beautifully expressed the conflicts that Pippi experienced due to her lack of formal education and the expectations of adults, it may be that their philosophies were different. While Pippi is a self-made, independent, and skillful girl, the community wanted her to behave *well- like the rest of the children*. That is, their understandings of behaving and being educated well are different and it reflects via the roles of stakeholders. In the following section educational philosophies will be reviewed shortly to set a ground for the analysis.

Educational Philosophies

Educational philosophies that impact stakeholders' roles, positions, policies, objectives, and practices of teaching and learning (Alanoglu et al., 2022) may be categorized as contemporary and traditional. Traditional philosophies require the extant structure to be preserved and transmitted to the next generations (Ornstein, 1991). On the other hand, contemporary philosophies embrace change, and they aim for interest- or needs- based improvement (Alanoglu et al., 2022).

Major philosophies have been defined by some questions such as what is good? what is true? and what is real? (Wiles & Bondi, 2015). In this sense, perceptions or answers that cluster around some patterns that relate to the source, medium, and substance of learning and/or teaching are categorized as philosophies (Wiles & Bondi, 2015). While traditionally, educational philosophies may be classified as Perennialism, Essentialism, Pragmatism, and Reconstructionism, Wiles and Bondi (2015) also recognizes Existentialism. Due to the space limitations, the following table (Table 1) summarizes educational philosophies regarding some of the proponents including Beatty et al. (2009), Cohen (1999), Ornstein (1991), Taylor and Tisdell (2000), and Wiles and Bondi (2015). On this table, one can read the goals, core subjects, roles of the teachers, materials, and teaching practices regarding each philosophy. Although those components were presented separately, their combined effect acts through educational practices.

Table 1

Educational Philosophies

	Goal	Core	Teacher	Focus	Practices
Perennialism	Educate rational individuals, Cultivate intellect, Prepare for life	Mastery of facts, universal knowledge/truth	Authority Helps students think rationally, Teaches	Great books, classic and disciplinary subjects, literary analysis	Socratic method, Explicit teaching, Drill, Structured study
Essentialism	Educate the competent individuals, Promote intellectual growth	Mastery of concepts and principles of subjects, Laws of nature, Excellence in education	Authority, Expert in subject, Trains in rules of conduct, Imparts knowledge	Essential skills (three Rs), Subjects of mind,	Explicit teaching, Discussion, Demonstrating, Reciting,
Pragmatism	Promote democratic life	Growth and development Alternative and free schooling	Guide	Students' interests, human problems and affairs, interdisciplinary subject matter	Active learning, Problem solving, Scientific inquiry Project- based learning,
Reconstructionism	Improve society Education for change and social reform	Equality of education, cultural pluralism, international education	Agent of change, Project director and researcher,	Problems of society, Social sciences and research methods,	Active learning, Problem based learning,



			Consultant	Consensus	Project method
Existentialism	Develop essence/self	Arousal of personal awareness, questioning, and responsibility	Assists in personal journey	Subjects of choice Unregimented topics	Group inquiry Discussion, Dialogue Self-study,

Method

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research methodology (i.e., interpretative analysis) to examine Pippi's experiences and social realities of education in the Pippi Longstocking series. Interpretative analysis pertains to a systematic interpretive process where an outsider attempts to relate and make a social phenomenon or other human beings' experiences understandable for others through an empathetic and responsive process (Kadyschuck, 2023). "As a method, Interpretive Analysis embraces characteristic distinctions to give rise to authentic data that reflect the research pursuits as experienced by the participant" (Kadyschuck, 2023, p. 259) In this sense, the context and language are important in investigating how participants make sense of their world via experiences (Kadyschuck, 2023).

Data Collection Procedures and Tools

The research idea emerged when I came across the short trailer of Pippi Longstocking on YouTube. Tracking back 35 years, I remembered Bulgarian version of Pippi and my imitating her. I remembered how she joyfully chose her desk to sit and responded to teachers' questions, wildly. Then, I asked my parents about my reactions to Pippi Longstocking, and they assured me that I wanted to be like her; smart and courageous.

Realizing those silent effects of Pippi Longstocking on my development, I read the three books of Pippi Longstocking in Turkish (Lindgren, 2021b, 2021c, 2021a). Then, I watched the movie (Schaack & Smith, 1997) in English to enrich my visual memories. That is, I employed document analysis methodology to reach my data sources. However, as for the scope of this study I will specifically examine the book chapters where Pippi engages or decides to engage in any form of educational practices.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data were analyzed via the interpretive content analysis method. To Cohen et al. (2018), content analysis is an approach to reduce texts and interrogate them into a summary form by using both a pre-existing categories and emergent themes. As Tunison (2023) stated, content analysis sets linguistic units of analysis and categories for those units and then pores over the text to code and categorize them. Following this procedure, frequency of occurrence was selected to make

interpretations, explanations, or extrapolations. Interpretive content analysis, as a naturalistic alternative to content analysis, follows the same procedures with connotative interpretations. However, interpretive content analysis “recognizes... interrater agreement statistics are not appropriate” (Ahuvia, 2001, p. 149) but public justifiability as the means of quality control (p. 150). As the researcher makes interpretation from a particular perspective, it may provide a space for rival interpretations. Regarding public justifiability, Ahuvia (2001) stated that as long as the interpretations are plausibly and compellingly justified by the data, a single coder, who provides codings and if necessary a justification for the coding, is sufficient for the conclusions. In this study, deductive coding were employed and themes pertain to educational philosophies. Categories were as follows; functions of school, ways of learning, subjects to be learnt, functions of learning, ways of teaching, decision making, behaving in class or school, sources of knowledge, roles of a teacher, nature of assessment, and functions of assessment.

Findings

Educational Components in Pippi Longstocking

There were 55 instances where educational components were highlighted. Of those educational components, dominant ones were ways of learning ($N=10$), functions of school ($N=8$), and decision making ($N=7$). Roles of students and nature of a school, on the other hand, mentioned the least.

Table 2

Educational Components in Pippi Longstocking

Categories	<i>f</i>
Ways of learning	10
Functions of school	8
Decision making	7
Ways of being /self-expression	5
Sources of knowledge	5
Functions of assessment	5
Subjects to learn	4
Discipline in school or classroom	4

Ways of teaching	4
Functions of learning	4
Nature of assessment	3
Roles of a teacher	2
Roles of student(s)	1
Nature of school	1

Educational Philosophies of the Society vs. Pippi Longstocking

There were some characters that Pippi interacted throughout the series including the policemen, Tommy and Annika, the teacher, and Rosenblom. When Pippi and those characters interact regarding those educational components (categories), a clash between traditional and contemporary educational philosophies (Pragmatism, Reconstructionism, and Existentialism) may be observed. While Pippi represented contemporary educational philosophies via her reactions, behaviors, and responses, the society including her friends (Tommy and Annika), the teacher, the policemen, and Rosenblom represented an Essentialist understanding of education (see Table 3). On Table 3, educational components and philosophies were provided; however, regarding the space limitations few examples were provided. Upon request, data for the analysis may be provided.

Table 3

Educational Philosophies in Pippi Longstocking

Characters	Components	Educational Philosophies
The society (Book 1, Chp. 3)	Functions of school E.g.: The society thinks that a little girl cannot live on her own. Instead, all children must have someone to advise them, and <i>all children must go to school to learn the multiplication tables</i>	Essentialist
Pippi vs. Policemen (Book 1, Chp. 3)	Subjects to learn, Ways of learning E.g.:	Existentialism, Pragmatism vs. Essentialism

“Don’t you understand that must go to the school”
said the policeman.

“Why?” asked Pippi.

“to learn things, of course”

“What sort of things?” asked Pippi

“All sorts” said the policeman, “*lots of useful things,
for example multiplication table.*”

*"I have got along fine without any pluttifikation
tables for nine years,"* said Pippi, and *"I guess I'll get
along without it from now on, too."*

"Yes, but just think *how embarrassing it will be for
you to be so ignorant.* Imagine ... somebody asks
you what the capital of Portugal is, and you can't
answer!"

"Oh, I can answer all right," said Pippi. "I'll answer
like this: *'If you are so bound and determined to find
out what the capital of Portugal is... write directly to
Portugal and ask.'*"

Pippi vs. Tommy and
Annika
(Book 1, Chp. 4)

Functions of school

Decision making

Discipline in school or classroom

E.g.:

"It is absolutely unfair! I don't intend to stand it!"

"What's the matter now?" asked Tommy. "In four
months, it will be Christmas, and then you'll have
Christmas vacation. But I, what'll I get?" Pippi's
voice sounded sad. "No Christmas vacation, not even
the tiniest bit of a Christmas vacation," she
complained. *"Something will have to be done about
that. Tomorrow morning I'll begin school."*

Tommy and Annika clapped their hands with delight.
"Hurrah! We'll wait for you outside our gate at eight
o'clock."

"Oh, no," said Pippi. *"I can't begin as early as that.
And besides, I'm going to ride to school."*

She galloped wildly into the schoolyard, jumped off
the horse, tied him to a tree, and burst into the
schoolroom with such a noise and a clatter that
Tommy and Annika and all their classmates jumped
in their seats. "Hi, there," cried Pippi, waving her big
hat. *"Did I get here in time for pluttifikation?"*

Reconstructionism,
Existentialism vs.
Essentialism

Pippi threw herself down on a vacant bench without having been invited to do so, but the teacher paid no attention to her heedless way. She simply said in a very friendly voice, "Welcome to school, little Pippi. I hope that you will enjoy yourself here and learn a great deal." "Yes, and I hope I'll get some Christmas vacation," said Pippi. "That is the reason I've come. It's only fair, you know."

The teacher continued, "suppose we test you a little and see what you know. You are a big girl and no doubt know a great deal already. Let us begin with arithmetic. Pippi, can you tell me what seven and five are?" Pippi, astonished and dismayed, looked at her and said, "Well, if you don't know that yourself, you needn't think I'm going to tell you."

The teacher decided there was no point in trying to teach Pippi any more arithmetic. She began to ask the other children arithmetic questions. "Can Tommy answer this one?" she asked. "If Lisa has seven apples and Axel has nine apples, how many apples do they have together?"

"Yes, you tell, Tommy," Pippi interrupted, "and tell me too, if Lisa gets a stomach-ache and Axel gets more stomach-ache, whose fault is it and where did they get hold of the apples in the first place?"

The teacher decided to give up arithmetic altogether. She thought maybe Pippi would prefer to learn to read. So, she took out a pretty little card with a picture of an ibex on it. In front of the ibex's nose was the letter "i"

"Now, Pippi," she said briskly, "you'll see something jolly. You see here an ibex. And the letter in front of this ibex is called i."

That I'll never believe," said Pippi. "I think it looks exactly like a straight line with a little fly speck over it. But what I'd really like to know is, what has the ibex to do with the fly speck?"

And the teacher, who had now begun to think that Pippi was an unruly and troublesome child, decided that the class should have drawing for a while. ...

"But, Pippi," said the teacher impatiently, "why in the world aren't you drawing on your paper!"

"I filled that long ago. There isn't room enough for my whole horse on that little snip of a paper, said Pippi. "Just now I'm working on his front legs, but

	<i>when I get to his tail I guess I'll have to go out in the hall."</i>	
	The teacher thought hard for a while. "Suppose instead we all sing a little song," she suggested. All the children stood up by their seats except Pippi; she stayed where she was on the floor. "You go ahead and sing," she said. "I'll rest myself a while. Too much learning breaks even the healthiest."	
Pippi vs. the Teacher (Book 1, Chp. 4)	Functions of school Subjects to learn Discipline in school or classroom Ways of learning Ways of teaching Ways of teaching Nature of assessment Self-expression Decision making Roles of a teacher and students	Reconstructionism, Existentialism, Pragmatism vs. Essentialism
Pippi vs. Tommy and Annika (Book 1, Chp. 6)	Functions of school	Reconstructionist
Pippi (Book 1, Chp. 8)	Functions of learning	Pragmatism
Pippi (Book1, Chp. 11)	Functions of learning Ways of teaching Decision making	Pragmatism
Pippi vs. Tommy and Annika (Book1, Chp. 11)	Sources of knowledge Ways of being	Reconstructionism, Existentialism, Pragmatism vs. Essentialism
Pippi vs. Tommy and Annika (Book 2, Chp. 3)	Ways of learning Functions of school	Pragmatism, Reconstructionism vs. Essentialism
Pippi vs. the Teacher (Book 2, Chp. 3)	Functions of school Roles of a teacher Nature of school	Pragmatism, Existentialism vs. Essentialism

the Teacher (Book 2, Chp. 4)	Sources of knowledge Discipline	Essentialism
Pippi vs. the Teacher (Book 2, Chp. 4)	Decision making Sources of knowledge	Existentialism, Pragmatism vs. Essentialism
Pippi vs. Tommy (Book 2, Chp. 6)	Sources of knowledge	Pragmatism vs Essentialism
Pippi (Book 3, Chp. 4)	Decision making	Existentialism, Pragmatism
Rosenblom (Book 3, Chp. 4)	Decision making Functions of assessment Nature of assessment	Essentialism
Parents (Book 3, Chp. 4)	Functions of learning	Essentialist
Pippi vs. Rosenblom (Book 3, Chp. 4)	Sources of knowledge Nature and functions of assessment Functions of learning Ways of learning and teaching	Reconstructionism, Pragmatism vs. Essentialism

Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

Pippi Longstocking reflected a clash between traditional (Essentialism) and contemporary (Pragmatism, Reconstructionism, and Existentialism) educational philosophies. The series reflected an understanding of education via practices of learning, teaching, knowledge, subjects to learn, assessment, schooling, discipline, and roles of stakeholders. That is, as Youngs (1979) argued educational philosophies were reflected via an observable collection of behavior patterns.

In the series, Pippi represented contemporary educational philosophies where she criticized the foundational understandings of Essentialism whereas the rest of the characters represented each bit of Essentialism. When Pippi decided how, how much, and how long she wanted to learn, she rejected any dogmas of *traditional* education. Pippi was pragmatist in choosing to learn skills or knowledge to be accepted by society as well as maintain her daily life smoothly. As

Pippi was outside of the class, hanging down a branch.

“What do you want Pippi” asked the teacher.

“I was gonna say if you throw some pluttifikation out there, just to be enough to join the trip. And if you have new letters, throw them as well”

“Don’t you want to get inside” asked the teacher.

“I had better not” said Pippi “I get dizzy there. You are crammed with information, some need to be cut out. but what do you say teacher, some of the information flying out the window sticks to me? I mean, enough to get me on a field trip?” (Book 2, Chp. 3)

She was also reconstructionist. For example, when Pippi protected the dignity of children who failed in Rosenblom’s traditional rote-memorization type of assessment (Book 3, Chp. 4) and pushed aside the corner of shame, she reconstructed a new type of assessment to distribute the resources to the needy, equally. She somehow recognized the rights of the oppressed. Moreover, as Erol (1991) argued, Pippi may hold potentials for freedom-constructing a self. Aligning with Existentialism, Pippi made her own decisions without the supervision of any adults yet via reasoning. When she was asked what to become, she replied that she would become a pirate. This is because being a pirate is in her nature. In addition to those instances, Pippi reflected the nature of Existentialism and Reconstructionism by depicting a school which may be completely the opposite to the traditional one. In that school, students are free to act in their nature and essence (Book 1, Chp. 4; Book 2, Chp. 3; the school in the very south of Austria). While students are depicted optimistic, joyful, and compassionate as Huong (2012) and Braun (2002) stated, the teacher is a companion to help construct their identity and for decision making.

Pippi Longstocking may be a collection of Lindgren’s reflections up to 1945. While the series reflected Lindgren’s deep understanding of children’s thinking (Qi, 2012), it may dramatically portray a different understanding of education and in broader sense, the world. Until 1945, the world, specifically the continent of Europa, experienced two world wars and its devastating effects. It is probable that Lindgren was reconstructing a world for justice and freedom through education. Pippi, indeed, many times criticized the school (*does it say in your schoolbooks that such a thing can't be done?*; Book 1, Chp. 11), and her criticism was to promote justice (*ah, how bad! People think they can do whatever they want just because they go to school and know*

pluttifikation table; Book 2, Chp. 3). Indeed, Pippi found no good reasons for others to make decisions for people.

This piece of the world's literature may also hold potential for teacher education. While pre-service teachers may have a chance to observe Pippi's, Tommy's, and Annika's thinking and reasoning and relate it to various forms of child development frameworks as did Qi (2012), they may analyze other educational components to examine how educational philosophies operate. Instead of studying educational philosophies as abstract concepts (Beatty et al., 2009; Günay, 2018), Pippi Longstocking may provide pre-service teachers with an opportunity to experience various educational components in a joyful manner. Depending on the course objectives, pre-service teachers can analyze, role play, counteract, create new characters, or change scenarios in Pippi Longstocking to practice educational philosophies. In return, such experiential experiences may help enrich their professional identities (Mockler, 2011; Pryor et al., 2007) as educational philosophies form a critical framework for educational perceptions, decisions, and actions (Beatty et al., 2009; Ornstein, 1991; Taylor & Tisdell, 2000).

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